

Why is Nepal Politically so Unstable?

Deconstructing the Instability Conundrum through Cross-Country Comparison

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History is the record of the crimes and follies of mankind.

Eric Hobsbawm¹

If you allow anyone to stoke up a boiler until the stem-pressure rises beyond danger-point, the real responsibility for any resultant explosion will lie with you.

B. H. Liddell Hart²

Stability... has commonly resulted not from a quest for peace but from a generally accepted legitimacy..., (meaning) an international agreement about the nature of workable arrangements and about permissible aims and methods of foreign policy.

H. Kissinger 1964³

1. SETTING

Why is Nepal always unstable?

Can instability be foreseen?

And, is it possible to stabilize a political order?

These were some of the curiosities Silwal's volume⁴ raised in this observer's mind when Ukraine's fratricidal war and its troubling similarity with the turmoil unleashed by the melodrama of the Millennium Challenge Corporation in our sharply divided nation is not only evoking the fears of a second Cold War in Nepal's neighborhood, but for many people, the rumblings of a third World War, too, are now neither too far, nor too faint to hear.

As a malady familiar to the layfolk and the learned alike, instability is not of mere academic interest. In Nepal's context, the ignorance, or rather the sheer inability to attend to the problem, has often aborted both democratization and development, derailing quite a few plans and policies of crucial natural significance. The scope that a cross-country approach to the hermeneutics of political instability that a cross-country approach could unfold remains almost a *terra nova*.

If one objective behind this study is therefore to understand what political instability is, whether it is a conundrum as the General claims, another one is to see where Nepal stands compared to other countries of the world, for which purpose a political stability index is proposed as a composite of ten variables, adopting the empirical approach in a comparative frame.

¹ Hobsbawm 1995, 584.

² Hart 1970/2014.

³ Kissinger 1949, 818.

⁴ Silwal 2021.

Comparison was chosen as a method here not only because it brings order into the diversity of information available, throwing up new possibilities for exploring, but also because it facilitates prediction.⁵ As an engine of knowledge, international comparison increases tenfold the possibility of explaining political phenomena, say Mattei Dogan and Dominique Pelassy.⁶

Divided into seven parts, the first section of the exercise introduces the theme undertaking a review of General Silwal's volume. Section 2 tries to explain political instability prior to a summary review of the literature in Section 3. The next section (4th) deals with the dilemmas arising in the course of making decisions in situations of political instability setting forth hypotheses. The fifth section formulates a Political Instability Index as a proxy indicator before appraising Nepal's case in Section 6 that also suggests measures to stabilize its politics. Section seven then rounds up the discussion.

1.1 Conundrum or Syndrome?

The dominant discourse on political instability remains focused on the theme as a consequence of causes whose relationship to each other as also to political instability as a dependent variable, that is, the effect, has often been explored, but the impact it brings on the political order of the day or later, as an independent and intervening variable, remains inadequately explored. As far as Nepal is concerned, political instability is a virgin area approached only peripherally or sporadically. Given the scarcity of material available, it will be hard to ignore the utility of General Silwal's volume, or the background the author brings to bear on the issue.

As a senior professional soldier of Nepal Army and as a ringside witness to five successive phases of Nepal's political transition—Panchayat, the Twin Pillar Days, Maoist Insurgency, absolute Monarchy, and Federal Republic—the author writes on the issues with an authenticity missing from many others sans his experience of three decades and a half of training.

By choosing a theme for his volume which now is of concern virtually to everyone here, but whose murky depths few have dared to delve into, the General tries to push the issue to the center of the nation's debate, forwarding stability as a conundrum that, however, is likely to raise no few eyebrows.

A "syndrome" says the Webster's Dictionary, is "a group of symptoms that together are characteristic of a specific disorder," "a group of related or coincident things, events," "...the pattern of symptoms that indicate a particular social condition," (and) "a predictable pattern of behavior that tends to occur under certain circumstances."⁷

The Oxford Dictionary lists out a similar set of features to define syndrome as "a way of behaving that is typical of a particular type of... social problem" (and) "a set of physical conditions that show you have a particular disease or medical problem."⁸

⁵ Burnham et al. 2004, 68-70.

⁶ Dogan and Pelassy 1984, 8.

⁷ Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language. (New York: Random House, 2001).

⁸ Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. Ed., A.S. Hornby, Oxford University Press, 2015.

A conundrum, the same two dictionaries define as a riddle, something puzzling or enigmatic. As far as political instability is concerned, however, it is neither an enigma nor a puzzle beyond comprehension. It, rather, is a political malady diagnosed and explained by scholars from Claude Ake and David E. Apter to Edward Shils and Thomas J. Volgy. The real issue thus is not explication of the malady, but the tendency to procrastinate the problem. Definition-wise, political instability can be regarded as the pathological state of a political system which fits the term *syndrome* rather than *conundrum*; instead of remaining a mysterious malady, it exhibits features structurally discernible in the behavior of states like Nepal in a particular order. In Nepal's case, it has been congenital – almost since the day the state was born, the problem started; *geophysical* in base; *multi-form* in shape; *chronic* timewise; *progressive* in nature; *cumulative* in impact; and *metastatic* in its mode of evolution. The last three characteristics also render the malady pervasive, and often so disruptive and so wide ranging that, left unaddressed for long, it has now become a regional, even universal issue. Except for a few fortunate states, most of the states on the world's map are already in its firm grip.

In his maiden debut, certainly not everything the author dishes out is entirely new; much of the material in the text is based on the past political history of this land that could taste bland to anyone familiar with it, yet the author also invigorates his analysis with fresh materials to illuminate various aspects of the episodes to show how they have made Nepal's politics fragile and unstable.

But so much has already been written about Nepal's politics at home as well as abroad that a heavy burden falls on the shoulders of those who venture to strike a new path or believe they have something new to say. Wading into the drama of the high politics of this land as it lurched from one phase of political instability to another, the reader will find a rich vein of expositions and evidence marshaled by the author to boost up his arguments that make it a handy reference to consult and critique.

Offering **Prithivian Trinity**, a combination of three elements—Leadership, Peasants, and the Military—as the Foundation of Nepal's national unity, power, security, and stability, the General argues, the failure to apply the principle to deter external interference and aggression has made Nepal the most unstable country in the region.⁹ Despite the inconsistency in the use of pronominal terms for concepts like 'state' and 'nation'¹⁰ Silwal keeps the terms *Security* (Surakshya), and *Defense* (Pratirakshya) apart which often get mixed up in everyday parlance.¹¹ A set of figures and tables also elucidate the ideas used in the book.¹² All this apart, the four premises the author forwards and of particular relevance to our discussion are:

One: External players *always* (stress added) backed the opposition powers during all political changes.¹³

Two: External political support hardly came for the system's stability.¹⁴

⁹ Silwal 2021, 142, 92.

¹⁰ Ibid., 306, 327.

¹¹ Ibid., 47, footnote 3.

¹² Ibid., 85, 89, 93, 200, 203.

¹³ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 37.

Three: The Rana regime shifted its focus from the security of the state to the security of the regime.¹⁵

Four: A state facing a traditional external military challenge is likely to have a stable civil-military relationship (CMR) and a state facing a traditional internal military challenge an unstable CMR.¹⁶

Arguments can be made to support as well as to refute the first three statements, depending upon the interpretation one makes of stability (short-term or long-term), the player's intent, and the context. Britain, for instance, sent its delegation in 1950 to support the Rana regime, on the eve of the Nepali Congress uprising in 1950. One motive behind the Nehru government's support for the movement for democracy in 1950 was to forestall possible destabilization in the Himalayan region after the communist takeover of China in 1949.¹⁷ And, in a longer time frame, the security of the ruling Rana regime was also in a certain sense stabilizing the state in a fast changing security environment of the subcontinent where Nepal's political order remained probably the most enduring one, albeit it also jeopardized Nepal's democracy and development for a whole century.

That the author refers to instability or its cognate terms nineteen times in the seven-paragraphed preface indicates the importance he gives to the issue in order to affirm that instability is the main hurdle in advancing the nation's interests. He examines the 'conundrum' through five lenses – a conceptual frame, political culture, civil-military relations, the state's response to internal insurgency and external interference, organized into five chapters apart from two others – introduction as a background and the last one as a summary of the discussion in terms of change, continuity, and prospects.

The author spares no pains to sustain his premise on political instability as the consequence of a whole set of factors, a view offered in multiple contexts. Distilling his explication of stability and its inverse instability, Figure 1 sums up the author's discussion on the central motif of the volume as a set of 26 dependent variables subdivided into six sectors and another set of five independent variables that explain the role of political instability as a cause as well as a consequence.

For the reader's convenience, the causes of political instability in Nepal in the figure have been grouped here under six dimensions—Governance, Security, Political Sector, Political Parties, Political Movement, Foreign Policy, and Economy, although some of the variables may overlap (variable 5.5, for instance, could belong also to Economy, or the case of variables 5.2 and 5.6). Governance with eight variables, and Foreign Policy with seven can be regarded as the most consequential in impacting upon political instability as a cause, followed by security (five) and political movement (four).

¹⁵ See, in this context, Sam Cowan: "Nepali politicians of all shades, were like Ranas prioritizing personal and regime interests over nations." Cowan 2018, 245.

¹⁶ Desch, M. C. 'Threat environment and military mission,' in L. Diamond and M. F. Platino (Eds.), *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy* (London: John Hopkins Press, 1996), cited by the author, 137.

¹⁷ John Whelpton believes Nehru tried to counter China's advance into Tibet with the strategy of holding stable Nepal as a buffer. Whelpton 2013, 47.

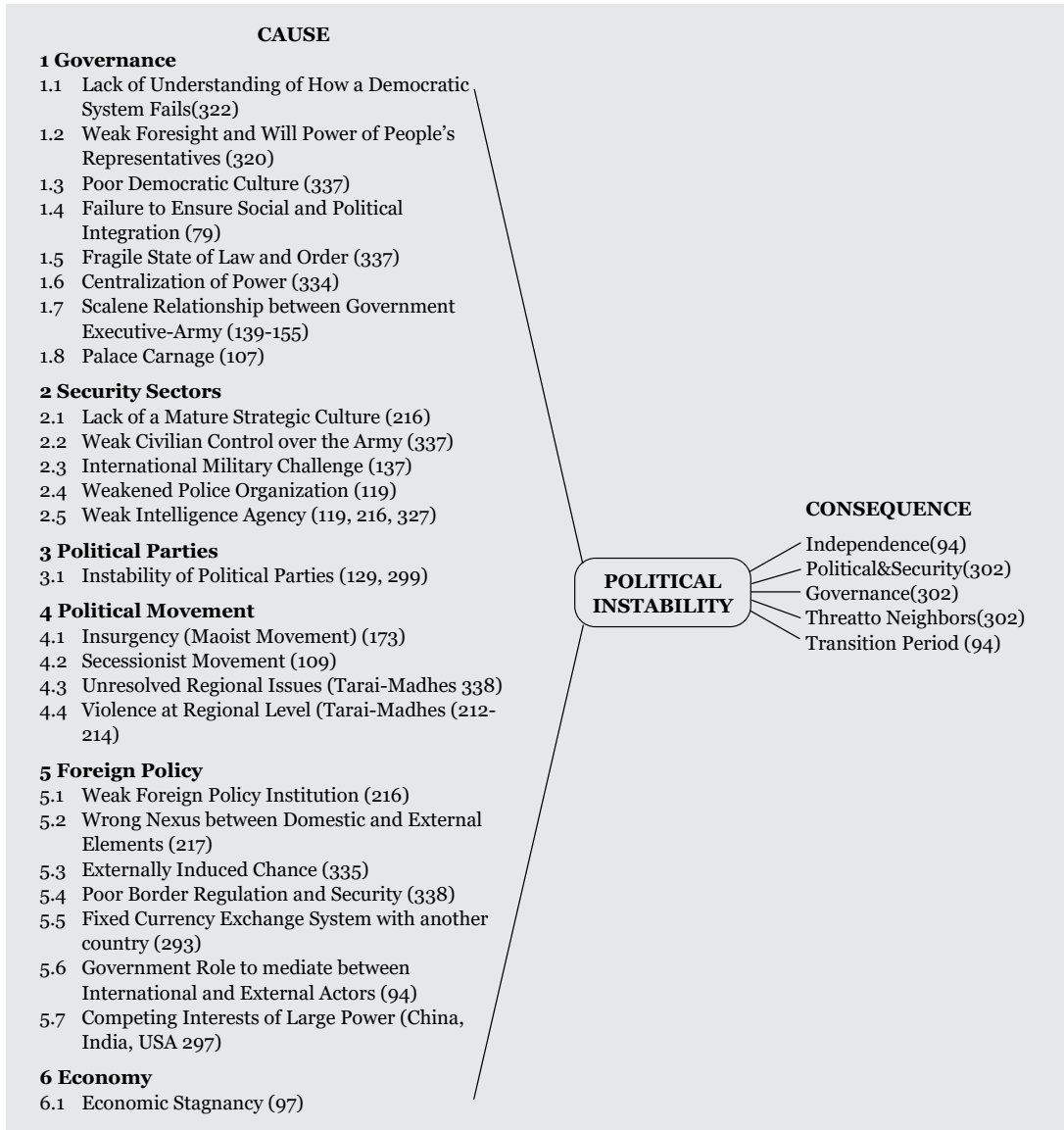


Fig. 1 Political Instability as a dependent and independent variable

(The figures in parentheses stand for page numbers of the book where the citation occurs.)

Contending throughout that political instability is one key feature of Nepal’s politics, the General also claims that it has become “the new normal since the 1950s” (p.329). Has it? One group of observers, for instance, notes that the death of King Prithvi in 1779 AD [sic] was followed by political instability in the royal court of Nepal¹⁸ and since then the series of coups, carnages, and takeovers that followed offer ample evidence to tell us otherwise.

¹⁸ Borre, Panday, and Tiwari 1994, 6.

The author also believes that charismatic leadership can provide stability (pp. 82, 333, 339), but the research underway in sociology differs on this point. Doesn't an old Nepali adage remind that saplings overshadowed by giant trees hardly grow well?

Moreover, the argument advanced by the author on assimilation (p.338) offers another point to disagree. Assimilation in Nepal is an issue of hot controversy, fueling debate whose dust is yet to settle. Would the minorities yield to assimilation or would they prefer a mosaic-like model of existence? There is no dearth of views which perceive assimilation as a hegemonic design for dissolution, recalling Uma Pradhan's *Assimilation-Pluralism Paradox*,¹⁹ the tension between assimilation and the demands for identity which pose no small challenges.²⁰ (Annex 1 continues the review.)

2. RETHINKING POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Given the sporadic nature of the debate on political instability, given the sparsity of literature in Nepal,²¹ given, moreover, the paucity of a workable strategy on the problem most of which turn out to be palliatives rather than proactive – the need to probe it more profoundly instead of taking it epiphenomenally is hard to overstress.

There is certainly no dearth of institutions and associations, agreements and interactions, visits and relations with countries. But how often do we examine how the public attitude influences democratic stability?²² The problem with us is: we don't understand the role political stability plays in institutionalizing governments and as a government we are not prepared to deal with the problem when it arrives at our door. Compared to the coverage made abroad, literature on the issue is generations behind in Nepal. While the people at large may be vaguely aware that their country is unstable, they are hardly in a position to be sure how unstable it is, whether it is moving upward or sliding downward and how it ranks on this parameter vis-a-vis other countries. Even more disconcerting is our attitude toward the problem. If Almond and Verba's claim that among all the demographic variables – sex, residence, occupation, income, or age – none compares with education in determining the political attitudes of the public is valid,²³ this begs the question how crucial education and civic socialization may be in attuning people's behavior toward stabilizing the political order. Also, if political participation by the mass public is related to political efficacy, as Huntington and Dominguez²⁴ contend, would their political involvement affect the image of the system? One telling indicator is the total absence of any strategy for *stabilization* of the political order. Making stabs in the dark is not going to help. Indeed, were one to chart out a stability curve over time and space with its peaks, plateaus, and troughs on a cross-country basis,

¹⁹ N. Hopfburger 2000.

²⁰ Uma Pradhan 2020.

²¹ Political instability, in general, is conspicuous by its absence from the indices of books. Among the analysts of Nepali politics, here is what Sebastian Von Einsiedel, David M. Malone and Suman Pradhan have to say on the problem: "... governments during the 1990s, in particular after 1994 election, were increasingly instable [sic] – with the period of 1991-2003 seeing no less than 12 governments – a disaster that the Maoists as well as the palace readily exploited" (p. 17). That political instability is indexed only once can be taken as a rough indicator of the importance given to the issue.

²² Dalton, 1998, 339. Drawing upon the 1981 World Values Study, Ronald Inglehart (1990: Chapter 1) offers evidence on congruence between political attitudes and democratic stability for a set of 22 nations.

²³ Almond and Verba, cited by Huntington and Dominguez in Greenstein and Polsby, Vol. 3, 34.

²⁴ Ibid., 35.

it could reveal fascinating aspects of the way countries evolve politically. That nothing remotely reminiscent of such a purpose exists in the armamentarium of political tools devised in the one and half decades of this republic's existence should be a fitting comment on this gaping hole.

Also, while there is in general agreement that political instability is the mother of all instabilities—social, cultural, economic, and environmental—we have next to no idea what it is, when it starts taking its shape, how long it endures and why, and when it starts mutating into its chronic form. The capacity to learn in the context of education can play a crucial role in stabilizing political order, but this is where our political order appears to suffer from an acute deficit. That capacity, Karl Deutsch says, is two-fold: the capacity to accept information and the capacity to change behavior, both of which are a function of the amount of recommittable resources in the system.²⁵ “The hunger for stability”, says Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., “is entirely natural,”²⁶ yet when the problem knocks at our door, few of us receive it with the seriousness it demands. Instability fails to draw the attention of those at the helms of power, fixated on their perks and privileges. Divided more than united, the literati fail to do anything meaningful; the glitterati, with time merely for glamor and glory, care least about it; and the large mass at the bottom of the power pyramid, stand paralyzed without a voice and vision. But bothered or not, instability affects us all, often extending over a longer stretch of time than we imagine and with consequences barely anticipated beforehand. In what follows, we, therefore, make a modest beginning to comprehend instability in Nepal's context.

2.1 Issues Left Lingerin

The complacency shown toward dynastic kleptocracies and dictatorships in Southeast Asia and the Middle East may have brought a stability of the virtual kind for a few decades, exemplified by Batista in Cuba, Noriega in Panama, and Pinochet in Chile in Latin America, but the fate of Col. Gaddafi, Hosney Mubarak, Saddam Hussain, and Osama Bin Laden in the Middle East at the onset of the Arab spring shows how illusive such stability can be. On quite a few issues, the culprit was the binary outlook of decision-makers clinging to the black and white version of truth in their hubris of power. The instability that ultimately followed was inevitable, but a predictable consequence of the confusion to discern the right from the wrong approach.

The militarized approach to democracy promotion among the host of illiberal practices initiated during President Bush's regime is one specimen of such blunder,²⁷ bred by western universalism – the belief in the universality of Western culture which Samuel F. Huntington warns, is not only false and immoral but also dangerous because he says, it can lead to a major inter-civilizational war between the core states that may bring defeat for the West.²⁸ Structural adjustment imposed on transitional economies was another failure and the huge political costs overclassification of state secrets are claiming, underscored by Oona Hathway²⁹ is a third problem. The gallery of errors and facile assumptions does not end here. Contrary to the long-held belief, the poverty of the backward regions, Davidson and Rees-Mogg claim,

²⁵ Deutsech 1987, 184.

²⁶ Schlesinger 1986 (in Foreword).

²⁷ Cooley and Nixon 2022, 106.

²⁸ Huntington 1997, 310-311.

²⁹ Hathaway, O. 2022, 89-91.

has little to do with the history of Western colonialism, nor is inequality a hindrance to growth.³⁰ Also interdependence between states, in contrast to the view that prevails, does not make the world safer, claim the Tofflers.³¹ Even the role of market³² and the IMF³³ is now being heavily contested. Challenging the belief that factors such as conflicts, war events, and processes like centralization of power in a state produce similar effects in institutions, Felix Gross argues they can produce different types of impacts on different types of institutions and systems, depending on the context.³⁴ Even the question whether a parliamentary system or a strong presidential government can bring greater political stability is far from settled.³⁵

It is thus clear that the role of political instability as both a cause and consequence deserves a nuanced approach to the intricate relationships between actors, agencies, and factors not only because each relationship, as Arnold Toynbee says, is going to affect in the days ahead as never before,³⁶ but also because the relationship between the rules and roles and between rights and responsibilities, even the conventional relationship between resource use and the risks and opportunities they hide are going to be different and more complex than they have been so far.

A number of factors may thus be at work behind the elusiveness of political instability. The first one, of course, is the definitional confusion and the problem of interpretation. In this regard, Robert A. Dahl draws the reader's attention to the need to distinguish between a regime's stability and constitutional, that is systemic, stability³⁷ in terms of the ideological consensus among the ruling groups plus mass acquiescence of the underclass to the routine demands imposed by the institutions in the name of ideology.³⁸

A second factor at play may be the difficulty of deciding the right kind of trade-off between the short-and long-term impact of a certain policy which may not be very clear at the time of decision-making. Also, what may look like a destabilizing factor in the short turn may become a stabilizing element in the long run. Let me explain from a couple of cases of history.

When the Spaniards banned human sacrifice in Mexico, an abominable practice in their eyes, but one which was playing so prominent a part in the Middle American life because, from the Aztec point of view, it was an indispensable means of keeping the universe going and hence the wicked decision to suppress the practice that could bring the universe to a full stop was a shocking abuse of the conquistadors' power. The theologies and codes of moralities of the two civilizations were poles apart and the Spanish intervention may have at first appeared as a *profoundly destabilizing* force to the Mexicans. Yet it was a case where the behaviors of the two peoples were standardized to *induce stability* in the long term on that particular issue: standardization of behaviors by the imposition of a minority conquerors' ruling on the conquered majority.³⁹

³⁰ Davidson and Rees-Mogg 2000, 102, 408-409.

³¹ Toffler, A. and N. 1993, 260-261.

³² Soros 2009, XI. Soros says imposing market discipline invites instability.

³³ See William Easterly 2006, 218-229 on the failure of the IMF in the collapse of eight national economies.

³⁴ Gross 1966, 206.

³⁵ Goran, Court, and Mease 2005, 19.

³⁶ Cited by Robert D Kaplan 2017, 345.

³⁷ Dahl 1991, 362, footnote 7.

³⁸ Connor 1987, 110, footnote 5.

³⁹ Toynbee, 146-147.

The ban put on Sutte system by Lord William Bentick in India is another example, as also the abolition of slavery in the USA, although the protagonists of the Deorala episode (Rajasthan in India) and those who rose in rebellion to start the Civil War in America would surely disagree, however ludicrous their stand looks for a modern day critic.

The third concern is the fungible nature of the problem. In order to untangle the knot, stability in politics can be considered at five closely connected levels:

1. Micro (local) – Individual political actor and agency
2. Mini (sub-state) – Organized groups like political party
3. Meso (state) – Parliament, Judiciary, Executive, Army, Civil Society
4. Macro (Region) – Supra-state, continental, peninsular level
5. Mega (global) – Universal level

A couple of observations may help here to clarify the fungibility premise:

One: Political instability can originate at any one of these five levels.

Two: Once it starts, instability tends to spread vertically and horizontally and can persist over time.

Three: The higher the level of origin, the more sustaining it tends to become.

Four: The longer the delay in stabilization, the more complex the stabilization agenda.

2.2 Stability: Virtual and Real

Like an image in optics, stability can assume two forms – real and virtual, but whereas a virtual optical image can be easily differentiated from its real source, *virtual stability* poses a challenge, making it difficult at times for the observer to separate it from positive stability. It often manifests itself in seven different forms:

1. Mass emigration of people abroad, as in present-day Nepal, when the exodus of hundreds of youth and adults almost every day in the prime of their life makes a whole generation lost for political involvement.
2. Spectacular expansion of the administrative organ of the state when massive bureaucratization absorbs a significant part of the country's population rendering them unavailable for political activities.⁴⁰
3. Growth of the size of political party membership when a considerable part of a state's population with the potential to become politically active are mobilized otherwise and coopted into ideological faith as party cadres who are scarcely available to join the public agendas of the day in a secular non-partisan way.
4. Absorption of segments of the country's ethnic groups into power elite who become apathetic and neutral in anti-regime activities – largely the Brahman, Chhetri, and Newar professional elites of the Kathmandu Valley coopted by the Shah and Rana regimes, absorbed into *chakari*, a form of institutionalized servitude.
5. Patronage, perks, pledges, and privileges conferred by the ruling parties to cadres and voters in the form of pecuniary gains and patronage politics.

⁴⁰ Blaikie, Cameron, and Seddon 1980, 3.

6. Benefits and projects awarded to external agencies to placate or pacify foreign intervention as monopolies in the form of appeasement to keep them silent.
7. A regime based on hard power, fear, coercion, and pressure that paralyzes the citizens and can still the scope for overt resistance and movement.

To take the analysis further, Table 1 offers a three-fold classification of political instability – monocratic, hegemonic, and civic – along with their salient characteristics.

Table 1. Three Kinds of Political Stability and Their Salient Features

Variable\Kind of Stability	Monocratic Stability	Hegemonic Stability	Civic Stability
1 Nature of Rule	Absolute, Dictatorial	Oligarchy	Democracy (PR)
2 Constitution	Non-Existent or Nominally Existent	Majoritarian	Federal
3 Government Type (Nature)	Despotic-(benevolent)	Delegator	Broadly Representative
4 Role of Government	Autocratic	Selective Appointment	Republican (Inclusive)
5 Role of Political Party	Non-existent (Banned)	Pre-dominant	Regulatory
6 Command Mode	Peremptory	Control	Cooptation
7 Diplomacy	Selective	Club	Public
8 Regime Type	Survival	Subsistential	Sustainable
9 Mode of Representation	Selective	Delegator	Substantive
10 Level of Transparency	Opaque	Low	High
11 Relational Base	Closed/ based on secrecy	Semi—open	Broad, Open
12 Type of Power Used	Hard, Military, for coercion	Hard (for Pressure)	Hard, Soft, and smart
13 Level of Public Participation	Rulers	Political Elite	Citizens
14 Track Used in Agenda Building	One	Two (Ruling Elite & Professionals)	Three (Mass)
15 Regime Capability	Extractive	Extractive & Regulatory	Highly Distributive, Symbolic, Responsive
16 Rule/Policy Implementation	Low	Erratic	Regular
17 Tenorial Security (Executive)	Fragile	Low	High
18 Role of Civil Society	None (Dormant)	Accessory	Active
19 Pattern of Nationalism	Ruler, Race, Religion-region-centric	Hegemonic	Civic
20 Stake	Stakes defined & decided by rulers	Stakeholding	Public Stakebuilding
21 Predominance of Issue/ Agendas	Parochial/ Local	National	Global
22 Issue Distance	Maximum	Medium	Low
23 Scope for Conflict Crisis, violence	Dormant	Depends on the Balance of Power	Minimum
24 Efficacy (Psy)	Non	Low	High
25 Legitimacy-Ownership	Oligarchic	Power Elite & Professionals	Mass

Table: Author.

2.3 The Stability-Instability Paradox

Nepal offers a curious case of unstable politics in a relatively stable society and a comparatively resilient state that despite its whole set of crisis syndrome⁴¹ and fault lines,⁴² has survived when many others have disappeared from the map. The state and society in Nepal have survived but despite the profusion of its institutions that Alt and Alesina proclaim increase predictability, reduce uncertainty, and induce stability, the system here has become neither predictable, nor certain, nor stable, a paradox that can precipitate consequences intended as well as unintended. One intended consequence of the 2006 movement, for instance, was the abolition of Monarchy, till then regarded by nearly everyone as impossible or unlikely. The unintended consequence was the end to the dream of dictatorship of the proletariat and the steep decline of the Maoist Party.

One clue to that paradox may lie in the propensity of our planners to remain fixated with the political and economic dimension, dimensions which are essential, but far from sufficient. If *trust* and *justice* remain absent from their concern, the keys to the best policies, as Nimmo and Unga emphasize,⁴³ this would keep the door open for all forms of instability, including the political one.

In a larger regional context, the geopolitical script of the whole subcontinent began to change with the arrival of British power. After the retreat of Islam, the shift that this induced was of seismic proportions: if it destabilized the whole political order here on a peninsular pace and scale, it also stabilized it in short as well as long-term. If some of the causes are still at work, many of the consequences will take time to surface, because they operate slowly and subtly below the surface.

On a global scale, a semblance of stability did seem to persist from the late 1945's until 1985. But it is difficult to equate this period of geopolitical equilibrium with the events in the South, Latin America, and other parts of the world if one contraposes it with the hot peace that ensued in the wake of the Cold War that soon enveloped the whole world.⁴⁴ This may be related to another paradox Baylis, Smith, and Owens mention: the belief that stability at the level of nuclear war would lead to instability at lower levels of conflict. Although the debate over whether the spread of nuclear arms leads to more stability and less conflict or more instability continues,⁴⁵ many believe nuclear powers may feel emboldened to launch low-level conventional attacks,⁴⁶ confirmed by one study executed by a team which included this observer⁴⁷ as also by the Ukraine crisis still underway.

2.4 Paradoxes Galore

Stability has so far been defined in a conventional way and explained predominantly in terms of conflict,⁴⁸ violence, war,⁴⁹ power, or hegemonic control,⁵⁰ all of which look negatively

⁴¹ Aditya 201, 21-22.

⁴² Ibid. 2016: chart 4, 44.

⁴³ Nimmo and Unga, 321.

⁴⁴ Barton 1997, 74.

⁴⁵ Baylis, Smith and Owens 2014, 382.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 423.

⁴⁷ Aditya, Upreti, and Adhikari 2008, 2008, 29-32.

⁴⁸ "a state of conflict between countries in which none of them has the possibility of using force of arms ... to achieve its political goals." Julian Nida-Rümelin in Pauling, Vol. 2.

⁴⁹ "absence of Major ... war ... characterized by minimum violence" – Spanier 1990, 118.

⁵⁰ "... concentration of power contributes to stability," Keohane 1989, 78.

conceptualized. The new century demands a more positive theorem of stability, a theorem based epistemically and empirically on a sound foundation since the stability premises prevailing so far are heuristic, scattered, and by and large untested. Making them more convincing and acceptable at the international level in a comprehensive form at the inter-state level is the need of the hour.

If stabilization of a political order is not to end up, as usual, as an esoteric agenda of the few, by the few, and for the few, the new approach must honor the social contract of democratic societies by making the people *en masse* integral to stability management, which is a form of risk management.⁵¹

Human progress, in fact, the advancement of the whole human race and civilization, now depends on the enhancement of the state's capacity to combat discrimination and dominance in all forms⁵² and to accelerate social harmony. But this is possible only when human society braces itself everywhere to activate what Acemoglu and Robinson regard as the **Real Queen Effect**.⁵³ Probably this alone would stem the indeterminacy and uncertainty referred to by Norbert Wiener as the inevitable products of the globally expanding market situation with its large number of players devoid of homeostatic control.⁵⁴

Political evolution of humanity today essentially faces five paradoxes, each of which, in one way or another, originates from the 'crash egotism'⁵⁵ of humans and the agencies they have created which brought two full centuries of conflicts, crises, and confrontations in the form of alliances and agendas – most of which are not free from the propensity to think alone, go it alone, and have it alone.

Paradox of Violence – "...The chief deterrence to predatory violence is the threat of still greater force, sufficient force to ensure that violence ... will not play."⁵⁶

Utility Paradox – "Positive feeling for the collectivity or the public interest decline as utilities are maximized. This means that the most successful utility system is, from the standpoint of the psychological model, an increasingly unsuccessful system."⁵⁷

Paradox of Participation – David E Apter states that study after study has shown that those with the greatest need for participation, which he regards as the most important single value in plural politics, are the least likely to participate.⁵⁸

Paradox of Consociational Democracy – "The more homogeneous the segments and the more each bloc breaks down into a common political culture, the more commitment to compromise and negotiation declines and the more apathetic or withdrawn from politics is the bulk of the electorate."⁵⁹

⁵¹ Fischhoff and Kadvaný 2011, 129-131.

⁵² Acemoglu and Robinson 2019, 496.

⁵³ Ibid. 2019, 41. Stressing the need on the part of the state, the Leviathan, to activate this effect, the authors define it as "a situation where you have to keep on running just to maintain your position" (like the society running fast to maintain the balance between them).

⁵⁴ Cited by Apter 1977, 338.

⁵⁵ Harari 2018, 182.

⁵⁶ Davidson and Rees-Mogg 1994, 53-54.

⁵⁷ Apter 1972, 352.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 343-344.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 321.

Stability Paradox – The more there is of market competition the more uneven the playing field and hence imposing market discipline, says George Sores, means imposing instability.⁶⁰ Robert L. Rothstein, on his part, argues that a concern for political stability always prevails over a concern for economic development,⁶¹ raising in turn the second dilemma mentioned in Section 4.

2.5 What More is at Stake

Stability demands reevaluation also because certain dimensions remain inadequately examined in terms of the relationship they bear to each other in ways different from the way they have been understood so far. One such dimension can be policy; another environment; a third one fiscal policy; a fourth one inter-state boundary on each of which the decisions taken and approaches adopted can go a long way to handle the paradoxes and dilemmas faced in the course of stabilization. To be more specific, how does policy stability impact the overall stability of a ruling regime? How would eco-stability influence a system's stability? How would fiscal dependence on another state render a state's economy vulnerable and unstable? When do the boundaries of states render relations sensitive? What happens if more than one of these factors come into play in a synergic or dysergic way to influence a regime's stability? Also, why would strategic stability matter? Stabilization of regimes and states handled in a strategic way could not only have saved quite a few regimes in the past from the disasters they faced (*Perestroika* in the soviet case, for one instance), but can also spare many others the costs extreme instability is likely to claim now and in the future. It is in this regard that Jan A. Lustick forwards the proposition that a well-developed concept of *State Contraction* (stress added) could have helped the former Soviet Union preserve itself within smaller boundaries or transform itself in an orderly manner.⁶²

Apart from the reasons mentioned above, a closer study of stability/instability becomes compelling also due to the scarce attention that the conventional study pays to the new genre of social movements and the way they may impact on the political stability of states like Nepal.⁶³ One reason for the stability 'conundrum' could be the extraordinarily diverse forms of sources of its genesis, rooted in a very wide range of causes – from aspirations for power and status to Security Dilemma, from the buffer factor to shifts in the Balance of Power, from fiscal policies to factionalism, from demographic influx to fears of encirclement, from sanctions to blockade,

⁶⁰ Soros 2009, XIV.

⁶¹ Rothstein 1977, 183.

⁶² Herbst 2002, 205.

⁶³ Atsuko Sato defines such movements as those arising since the late 1960s, including the ecology, animal rights, anti-nuclear energy, new age, peace and women's movements. Fig 8.3, New Social Movements, in 'What Makes a Social Movement? Understanding the Rise and Success of Social Movements'. The eight basic features identified by Hank Johnston, Enrique Larana, and Joseph R. Gusfield (1994) of such movements are: diffuse social status in gender, social attention, profession rather than class-based one, pluralism of ideas and values rather than clear-cut Atsuko Sato defines such movements as those arising since the late 1960s, including the ecology, animal rights, anti-nuclear energy, new age, peace and women's movements. Fig 8.3, New Social Movements, in 'What Makes a Social Movement? Understanding the Rise and Success of Social Movements'. The eight basic features identified by Hank Johnston, Enrique Larana, and Joseph R. Gusfield (1994) of such movements are: diffuse social status in gender, social attention, profession rather than class-based one, pluralism of ideas and values rather than clear-cut ideological stand, ethnic or historically based identity, blurred distinction between the collective and the individual, relative stress on non-economic issues and agendas (abortion, alternative medicine, smoking, sexual behavior); use of radical strategies for disruption and resistance, skepticism toward conventional modes of democratic participation and segmentation, diffuseness, and decentralization in approach.

Table 2. Structural Sources of Political Instability

	SECTOR	SOURCE	ISSUE
A	Political System		
	Constitution/Legislature	• Adversarial Model of Governance	• Unhealthy Competition for Power
	Security Sector	• Civil-Military Relations	• Unbalanced Relationship
		• Absence of Human Rights	• Personal Community-based Insecurity
		• Mutiny-Rebellion/Coup d'État. ⁶⁴	• Discrimination-Discontent/Lust for Power
	Governance/ Administration	• Centralized Mode of Governance	• Autocratic Governance
			• Extractive Rule
			• Exploitation/Domination
			• Nepotism
	Law	• Non-implementation of Rule of Law (RoL)	• Law and Order
		• Implementation	
	Election	• Majoritarian Rule ⁶⁵	• Responsivity
		• Arbitrary Rule	• Representation
			• Responsibility/Accountability
	Foreign Policy	• Clandestine Covenants	• Inter-State Relations
		• Absence of Public Mandate	
B	Society	• Ethnic Diversity	• Hegemonic Dominance
		• Faith-based Governance	• Religion-based Discrimination
		• Ideological Domination	• Political Marginalization
		• Corruption	• Social Decay
		• Institutionalized Discrimination	• Injustice
C	Economy	• Poverty	• Iniquity and Exclusion
		• Extractive Resource Policy ⁶⁶	• Ratio of Financial Assets to Tangible Assets ⁶⁷
D	Ecosystem	• Pollution	• Disruption of Eco-Balance

Table: Author.

and from proxy wars to annexations, exemplified by the still fresh Putin's Donbas and Luhansk takeovers. Table 2 presents the structural sources of political instability.

If in the context of such multiply structured sources of political instability, one is to agree with the Sydney Tarrow (1994) that the political opportunity structure or changes in the structure create the impetus for social movements, the fast altering political environment and unpredictably rising momentum of change in the future is also likely to produce more demands, more resistance, and possibly more turmoil; in other words, more instability, in the days to come rather than less. The capacity of a state and political system to address them is therefore going to be more important in the future.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ See Limbu-Angbuhang 2014, 141-145 on how and why mutiny can pose a threat to stability. On the way the militant groups of political parties, given their heavy presence, can create political disturbance, see Bhattarai 2014, 92.

⁶⁵ Nations fail, say Acemoglu and Robinson, because of extractive institutions (p. 398).

⁶⁶ "... the more peaceful and stable a nation, the greater will be its financial assets, relative to tangible assets." Davidson and Res-Mogg 1994, 103.

⁶⁷ The role of ecology from local to global levels in destabilizing a particular system is only recently being understood. Apart from the climatic shift four millennia ago that brought monsoon failure and abandonment of the Harappan cities after river Saraswati disappeared (see Sanjeev Sanyal 2016, 51), the scenario unfolding looks far from assuring whose destabilizing impact on the total human system remains to be assessed objectively, with one-third of flowering plants and between 25-50% all animal species at risk of disappearance. See Bill McGuire 2014, 111-112.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 274.

If, moreover, Wagner's law is valid (the law of increasing state activity),⁶⁹ the problems are likely to grow further, since the scope for the issues and agendas involved in the course of the growth of a state's role will also tend to expand. But this hardly means an assured proportional rise in the capacity of the state to handle them adequately that would leave a certain disparity. Larger such disparity, the greater the scope for political instability.

3. COMPREHENDING POLITICAL (IN-)STABILITY

Defining a problem is the first step to its comprehension. But defining political instability poses no small problem, not just because it is a social construct with different meanings in different contexts, but also because it influences a number of social sectors, and is in turn influenced by them, often in more than one way. In other words, it acts both as a dependent and independent variable. There may, moreover, be situations of ambiguity rendering it difficult to discern it as it may be influenced by either of these two variables. If, therefore, the analysis is not to end up focusing on the symptoms rather than the real causes of instability, the effort must delve deeper than usual.

Whereas Rudolf J. Rummel defines instability in terms of riots, demonstrations, and revolutions,⁷⁰ regarding stability as the lack of violent conflict, constancy in the number of the major actors in the system, the pattern of linkage among the members of the system, and the identity of the major actors, and David E. Apter regards stability as a measure of the government's implementation of the "greatest good for the greatest number by means of establishing and realizing beneficial agendas and programs," Bruce Russett and Harvey Starr define stability as 'the lack of change in the fundamental pattern of interactions in the system.'⁷¹

One problem with the Russett-Starr definition could be how under certain specified circumstances, the pattern of system interactions is to undergo fundamental change without compromising the stability of the system, but this presents a major dilemma for decision makers, which is not going to be the sole one. There will be more of such dilemmas to which we return later, in Section 4.

Defining political development in terms of eight different elements, Lucian W. Pye takes up stability and orderly change to stress that mere stagnation or arbitrary support of the status is not development and that any form of economic and social advancement becomes possible when uncertainty decreases, rendering predictable planning possible and order is maintained.⁷² Leon Hurewitz lists five different views on political stability.⁷³ Huntington, in turn, emphasizes *order* and *continuity* by which he means the relative absence of violence,

⁶⁹ Alfred Wagner, a German public finance theorist, advanced the postulate that the process of industrialization in the increasingly affluent societies generated problems forcing them to devote ever larger parts of the national income to provide collective goods. The increase in the activity and role of the state, however, also brings a paradoxical diminution in the significance of the role of traditional politics as its formative influence on policy choice begins to decline along with the rise in the role of parapolitical, apolitical or nonpolitical actors and agencies. Pp. 218-219.

⁷⁰ In Singer 1998, 187-214.

⁷¹ Russett and Starr 1986, 109.

⁷² Pye 1966, 33-45.

⁷³ 1. Existence of a legitimate political regime; 2. Relative absence of violent civil conflict; 3. Absence of structural change in the political system; 4. Relative longevity of governments (executives and cabinets); 5. Presence of multiple social attributes (economic and social well-being and political variables). Hurewitz. 1973, 469-473.

force, coercion, and disruption from the political system as also lack of discontinuity in its political evolution, but without *fundamental changes* (stress added).⁷⁴

While one could take up the case for the scope on meaningful political development of a system sans structural change which is what Hurewitz seems to argue for, or sans fundamental change under certain conditions (perfect autocracies, or dictatorships, for instance), which is what Huntington contends, *order* and *continuity* remain the two central elements common to both of them.⁷⁵ But Huntington's hypothesis that the importance of political party in providing legitimacy and stability in a modernizing political system varies inversely with the institutional importance of the system from traditional society appears to pose a binary separable distinction between the roles and values of political party and traditional institutions as two incompatible entities whose norms and principles are incapable of synthesizing into something common, a process that may take a long time to make it possible or feasible. However, the evolution of political parties in a country like India and elsewhere and its after-effects (evident in the movement launched by J. P. Narayan in the mid-seventies), particularly the world-wide upsurge of alienation of the public mass toward political parties points to a yawning gap in the roles and scope traditionally accorded to them. The clash between the West and the East over democracy could partly be attributed to this gap.

One curiosity that the discussion at this point raises is: To what extent can change be acceptable and under what conditions order and continuity – the two factors in opposition – can be traded off? Mediating on these two issues poses the central puzzle in any strategy for system transformation and it is here that the policies of the ruling regimes tend to differ, producing differing outcomes.

3.1 Stability Discourse: A Running Review

As a favorite staple in political discourse, instability has produced a noticeable amount of literature, but there is still little tangible agreement over the findings that could be synthesized into a coherent body of conclusions or a set of propositions on the confusions clogging comprehension of this malady, in order to frame up a convincing agenda for stabilization. While it is neither possible nor the purpose here to cover the whole range of exercise done by scholars, what follows below tries to briefly scan some of them in order to distil the common strands into a semblance of conceptual framework. This may help to appraise the nature of the problem as a rough and ready guide for the moment to estimate the intensity and magnitude of the malady in the form of a proto-index.

Lucian W. Pye lists factors that may disrupt the equilibrium of an existing political order as the features of the non-western political process, many of which apply to the developing countries in general and to Nepal in particular.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Huntington and Dominguez, Vol. 3, 7.

⁷⁵ Huntington offers political instability as a ratio of two processes – political participation and political institutionalization, arguing that larger the participation and less the political institutionalization, the greater will be the political instability. Huntington 2009, 78-92. See also Huntington and Dominguez 1975.

⁷⁶ Cliques, revolutionary nature of the aspiring elites, lack of integration among the political participants, high rate of recruitment of new elements into political roles, sharp differences in the political orientation of generations, little consensus on the legitimate ends and means of political action, high degree of the substitutability of roles, and absence of brokers. Russett and Starr 1986, 82-86, 121.

Elaborating the relationship between size and democracy, Robert Dahl and Edward Tufte suggest that both severity of conflict and the chances of a state's survival do not appear to be related to a country's size, and that in the case of small states, the procedures for dealing with organized group conflicts are less institutionalized; group conflicts are more explosive; and more likely to polarize the whole country – premises that are relevant to explaining the instability of a country like Nepal. But other arguments they forward – that small systems are more homogeneous and consensual compared to the larger systems; the incentive to conform to a uniform code of behavior there are stronger; and the number of dissenting viewers there is fewer, while affirming the hypothesis on institutionalization they propose, fail to get confirmed in Nepal's case.⁷⁷

The case of small states unfolds other findings of possible relevance to Nepal, particularly Paul Sutton's observations in Lino Briguglio et al. Picking up the six aspects of governance referred by the World Bank⁷⁸ he notes, the smaller the state, the better the record.⁷⁹ Carmen et al., too, agree that 21 states with per capita income above USD 4,000 show lower levels of political instability⁸⁰ and as a group their rank order of success is highest on the stability dimension.⁸¹ Results of the Ivo Feierabend-Rosalind Feierabend study of 62 societies, moreover, reveal an extremely strong statistical correlation between their levels of political stability and of economic development as also that the rates of political instability are greatest in societies making the transition from agrarian to industrial stage, though statistically, the results are not significant.⁸² As to the reasons for the political stability of the Western industrial democracies, Nolan and Lenski say, their largest productivity and higher standards of living give the majority of the population a vested interest in political stability, and the democratic ideology of these regimes strengthens the allegiance of most segments of the population as well as the Army, weakening support for revolutionary events, and that the complexity of the structure of industrial societies generates a readiness to compromise on most controversial issues, in addition to the multiple roles groups and individuals can play, leaving a moderating effect on the issues at stake.⁸³

The Latinobarometric study brought out by the UNDP, moreover, says that if the majority of the citizens in a country are not loyal to the democratic system, are more active than the rest of the population, and only a small distance separates them from the ambivalents, such

⁷⁷ Dahl and Tufte 1972, 91, 92, 113, 122.

⁷⁸ Kaufmann, D., A. Kray, and M. Masruzzi 2007, "Governance Matters VII: Aggregate and Individual Governance Indicators 1996-2006," World Bank Policy Research Paper No. 4280. Washington DC: World Bank. The six aspects are: Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Lack of Violence, Governance Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, Control of Corruption.

⁷⁹ The benefits of being very small, the author says, appear to diminish once the population exceeds 300,000, raising the question whether the particular category of "microstate" should be adopted to aid analysis and policy (p. 204). Anckar (2004, 15) defines a microstate with a population below 1 million (cited by the author: D. Anckar 2004. "Regime Choices in Microstates." *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol, 42 (2). 206-2223 (sic).

⁸⁰ Paul Sutton, 202.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁸² Ivo and Rosalind Feierabend, "Aggressive Behaviors within Politics, 1948-1962: A Cross-National Study. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 10 (1966), cited by Nolan and Lenski, 255.

⁸³ Nolan and Lenski, 225-256.

system is more vulnerable to crises. Nepal's multiple crises to which we return later (in Section 6) seem to confirm that study.⁸⁴

Among others who have analyzed political instability, S.P. Huntington and Jorge I. Domínguez suggest a curvilinear relationship between economic development and political instability, but a positive correlation of high level of urbanization with stability.⁸⁵ Nepal's case confirms the Huntington-Domínguez hypothesis on high urbanization and stability.⁸⁶ Edward Shils, on his part, believes that a democratic order must be supported by six social and cultural preconditions to render it stable and effective: democratic self-control among the political actors, acceptance by the society of the government's authority, coherent relationship between the political leaders, inter-party mutual solidarity, secular but adequately skilled bureaucracy, and adequate security mechanism.⁸⁷

In Karl W. Deutsch's model of governmental stability, the ratio of the government's budget to its total national income, literacy, political participation, and the share of the top 10% of the population in the nation's income as an indicator of income inequality retain the key roles. The eleven social indicators proposed by Deutsch in 1961 were used by the author in 2016 to identify the pace of social mobilization in Nepal which clearly suggests that the ratio of the growth rate of the mobilized differentiated population to the growth rate of the mobilized assimilated population is here already larger than one and unless strategies are devised by the government to address the situation, the instability that such disparity is likely to bring in the days ahead may prove difficult to handle.⁸⁸

Altogether, Michael Brecher enumerates 12 elements as the causes of instability – poverty, antipathy to government, oppositionalism, autocratic governance, limited experience with democracy, habits of violence (stress on force), shortage of civil servants, small middle class, quality of leadership, nature and character of political parties, social heterogeneity, and lack of tolerance.⁸⁹ Willian Komhauser's thesis that a high rate of mass behavior in the form of political movements against the existing political order is most likely when the nonelite mass is available for direct mobilization by the elites in the absence of associational groups mediating between the two communities⁹⁰ closely echoes Deutsch's hypothesis on mobilized differentiated populations. Claude Ake believes that the politically disintegrative effects of mobilization are best minimized under four conditions – centralized authoritarian political control over politics and other resources, paternalistic authority, identific mutual relationship between the rulers and the ruled, and consensual solidarity among the ruling elite.⁹¹ In the case of the ruling elites of Nepal, however, while the first two factors apply,

⁸⁴ UNDP, 224-232.

⁸⁵ 'Political Development in the New States', cited by Davies and Lewis 1971, 100-101.

⁸⁶ In 2010, out of the 194 countries for which data were available, Nepal's 18.6% figure for urbanization stood at the bottom, with only four countries below it, that is 97.4% of the cases. Aditya 2011.

⁸⁷ For elaboration on his prerequisites of democratic order and the condition, see Shils and Gurr 1971, 285-286.

⁸⁸ Aditya 2015, 44-46.

⁸⁹ Brecher 1989, 617-637.

⁹⁰ 197, cited by Gurr.

⁹¹ Cited by Gurr 1971, 285.

the other two do not. They would join to share power, perks, and privilege, not for the core national interests.

The tension created by the process of social change, David Singer believes, can be mitigated by the government through “regulation of social life by introducing coherence of the values and institutions and through *retraditionalization*, that is, validation of the current practices by symbolic reference to or use of the traditionally familiar patterns of social control. A large measure of the failure of the Maoists to materialize their goal of social transformation in Nepal lay in the abrupt disruption of the social order tried through their avowed policy of *Kramabhang*, that is, their failure to contextualize. The social order often was disrupted, but little social transformation could be seen.

Grouping political instability under three forms – Internal War, Turmoil, and Conspiracy – Tedd R. Gurr analyzes it in terms of Dissident Coercive Control and Regime Coercive Control, suggesting internal civil war and insurgency are likely when their ratio approaches one; turmoil (in the form of riots, rebellions, and clashes) varies inversely with the degree of dissident institutional support; and the likelihood of conspiracy (coups, mutinies, small scale terrorism, and assassinations) varies with the intensity and low scope of dissident institutional support.⁹²

Highlighting the challenge refugee flows are posing to the demographic balance of various states, Professor Myron Weiner outlines the need for a new security/stability framework for study of international migration focused on state policies toward migration, adding that taking up migration as both a cause as well as consequence of internal and international conflict would not only direct us to study different aspects of international migration, ask different questions, offer different explanations, and create different conceptual tools, but also would help to devise different strategies for the solution of global migration as a problem that is likely to intensify in the days ahead.⁹³ The role of migration became dramatically evident when the exodus of East Germans to Austria in July August 1989 compelled the East German Government to open its western borders, propelling a massive migration westward, which brought the fall of the East German government and ended in the absorption of Eastern Germany by the Federal Republic. It was, Weiner notes, mass flight, not invasion that destroyed the East German State.⁹⁴

The Almond-Powell study on the productivity of political systems differentiates political goods at three levels (system, process, and policy) and three classes of such goods, distinguishing system maintenance and system adaptation at the system level. Compared to the earlier emphasis on system goods of order, predictability, and stability, now change, growth, and development are receiving a larger priority. But since the regularity and predictability of processes in domestic and international politics (system maintenance) are in conflict with adaptability (structural and cultural) in response to the environmental change and challenges (system adaptation), a certain balance between the two kind of goods has to be maintained

⁹² Gurr, 1971, 277-282.

⁹³ Weiner 1995, 183-218, 186.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

in the context of which they forward a number of observations for strategizing stabilization which we take up before concluding.⁹⁵

Analyzing Nepal's and India's patterns of influence behavior in terms of the five elements that Holsti offers under his hypothetical frame allows us to explain the kind of relationship developed by the two neighbors in the last seven decades and to understand their potential role in stabilizing and destabilizing the overall course of their relationship. Rather than elaborating in detail, suffice it here to summarize Holsti's five elements into three dimensions – capability, need, and response. The gap in the overall capability of these two states (India and Nepal) – the quality and quantity as well as the skills available to each party, and their threat-reward capability (factors 1, 2, 3 in the list presented above) – were already large enough in the past to explain why Delhi could exert an overwhelming impact on Kathmandu. That gap, given India's steady rise as a would be superstate of the future in contrast to Nepal's stagnant growth, is likely to grow further with obvious consequences for Nepal's political (in-) stability. One corollary of that premise would be an increase in the need (read here dependence) of Nepal as a consequence of the expanding gap between these two neighbors. The situation will then be determined, not just by how the need is perceived relatively, but by how these two parties interpret each other's needs and use the dependence to formulate policies to maximize their putative gains. Response is thus the ultimate factor which is going to decide how the game is likely to unfold to denominator not just the process of exchange between the two neighbors, but also political stability there and beyond.

At the international level, Thomas J. Volgy and Alison Bailin argue that significant imbalances in the different facets of state strength pose threats to international stability and inequalities in growth are likely to further destabilize international politics.⁹⁶ Identifying the sources of (in-) stability and change in the global system, K. J. Holsti enumerates the costs of developing major economic, nuclear or military strength, (in-) compatibility of revolutionary ideology with liberal philosophies, scope for collaboration between major powers (the US and Russia), virulence of nationalism, and the scope and status of direct satellite broadcasting.⁹⁷ While both Raymond Tanter's and Rummel's works show a weak covariation between foreign and domestic conflict behavior and Michael Skrein's study of 69 countries for the period 1966-69, fail to establish a clear relationship between domestic instability or violence and foreign policy,⁹⁸ and thus to confirm that governments display aggressive behavior to cope with domestic instability, the study by Istvan Kende shows that of the 97 tribal, ethnic, civil, and inter-state wars that took place in the 26 years between 1945 and 1970, external intervention occurred in a majority of cases,⁹⁹ underscoring the critical role outside intervention by a state can play to destabilize another state. It is in such a situation that Holsti suggests that “regardless of the quality, quantity, and credibility of a state's capability,¹⁰⁰ the more

⁹⁵ Almond and Powell 1980, tables 8 and 9, 125-146.

⁹⁶ Volgy and Bailin 2005, 82-86, 121.

⁹⁷ Holsti, 1981, Table 3-3, pp. 95-96.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 387.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 459.

¹⁰⁰ Defined by him as 'any physical or mental observation or quality available as an instrument or inducement to persuade, reward, threaten, or punish. *Ibid.*, 165.

State B needs (Nepal for instance), or is dependent upon State A (India as an exemplar), the more likely that State A's acts – threats, promises, rewards, or punishments – will succeed in changing B's behavior"¹⁰¹ Holsti then concludes that the successful wielding of influence behavior (between the two states) varies with five factors: 1. the quality and quantity of capability at a state's disposal; 2. skill in mobilizing these capabilities in support of the goals; 3. the capability of threats and rewards; 4. the degree of need or dependence; and 5. the degree of responsiveness¹⁰² among the policymakers of the target country.¹⁰³

It is in this regard that Bruce Russett and Harvey Starr's analysis of the issue of stability (in terms of alliances, war, and stability that postulates stability as a matter of not being war-prone in the course of explicating its scope in terms of uni-, tri-, and multi-polar world order) becomes relevant to our analysis, in considering the advent of transregional agendas like the Belt and Road and the Indo-Pacific Strategy as well as the polarization the Millennium Compact Corporation has triggered in Nepal.¹⁰⁴

Yet, whereas the widely held view that nations afflicted by domestic instability are likely to witness more foreign conflict than others stands refuted by the empirical findings available from the DON (Dimension of Nations) project (that domestic instability has little relation to a nation's foreign conflict behavior), Nepal's case appears to strongly support the opposite stand in this regard, apparently corroborating a positive correlation between domestic instability and foreign conflict,¹⁰⁵ particularly in the context of its relation with India.

Based on the preceding analysis, the chart below presents a list of 14 authors summing up the discussion into a set of seven dimensions of 22 variables that may directly or indirectly influence the political stability of a country. Categorizing the variables is far from easy or simple and certainly not without a certain measure of controversy, whichever way it is done. Hence, some of the groupings here may look arbitrary; subjectiveness in such efforts, after all, is almost impossible to avoid. For more or less the same reason, the chart also excludes the case of the new social movements and the overall instability caused by environmental pollution, a decision the ecoradicalists could take strong exception to.

Among the variables listed here, the first one of self-control and solidarity-accommodation tops the list figuring in the analysis of seven authors, followed closely by central authority and control, referred to by six of them. Loyalty-opposition to government authority and economy rank third, followed closely by division (socio-cultural or ethnic homogeneity) and factionalism (as the focus of four authors).

Dimension-wise, the role of the state and regime with seven variables and socio-political processes (four variables) appear most salient, followed by political orientation-cum-status,

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 173.

¹⁰² 'a disposition to receive another's requests with sympathy, even to the point where a government is willing to sacrifice some of its own values and interests.' Ibid., 174.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 176.

¹⁰⁴ Russett and Starr, 1986, 107.

¹⁰⁵ Rummel 1968, 208.

division, and social strata-groups. The second dimension, the habit of use of force, as also the duration of democratic experience, cited by one single author (Karl W. Deutsch), are of no small consequence, as also the sixth dimension of economy which can critically influence political stability in any system. History offers ample cases of deep instability demolishing regimes and political orders of various hues. The departure of Britain after the Great Bengal Famine in India and the rapid decline of the American hegemony following the global economic crash in 2008 are two instances of the point made.

4. FIVE DILEMMAS OF DECISION-MAKERS AND FIVE HYPOTHESES

Dilemmas are a familiar feature of politics, but they assume a particular poignancy when the political situation becomes unstable, because dilemmas start to confront decision-makers on more than one front and can appear in several forms. The approach usually adopted by decision-makers in Nepal is no approach, reflecting ignorance, complacency, even outright neglect. Hypothetically, *The more unstable the situation, the more acute the dilemma* (Hypothesis One). One could add, *Longer the instability, higher the frequency of dilemmas* (Hypothesis Two). Also, *Larger the domain of instability, larger the number of the forms in which they appear* (Hypothesis Three). Dilemmas are thus a part and parcel of an unstable political regime, becoming embedded into it, but it is the tendency to postpone resolution or procrastinate that renders it chronic. This gives rise to the fourth hypothesis that explains the present malady of Nepali politics: *Larger the delay in addressing political instability, the more chronic, complex, costly, time-consuming, and difficult the malady becomes* (Hypothesis Four: Institutionalization). What Nepal suffered in the course of battling the Maoist insurgency offers dilemmas in their classic forms to which we return below. The delay, dilation, and deliberate neglect shown in resolving them are explained by General Silwal in the course of exposing the blunders committed by the decision-makers, but the etiology of such failures could be explicated better in terms of the concepts and hypotheses some scholars have proposed. For instance, there is what Ken Booth and Nicholas I. Wheeler regard as **Other Minds Problem** – the inability of decision-makers to get fully into the minds of their counterparts (rivals, here the Maoists) to understand their motives, intentions, and feelings that can induce a certain level of uncertainty into the process of decision-making.¹⁰⁶ **Inattentional Blindness** (the inability to detect the dynamic element of a complex scenario may hamper perception when attention is diverted to another object or task and the observers often fail to perceive an unexpected object, even if it appears at fixation.¹⁰⁷ Another possible barrier is the **Educated Incapacity** of those in government who are likely to develop what Herman Kahn and B. Bruce-Briggs regard as ‘an acquired or learned inability to see a problem, much less a solution,’ due to fear of the new or individual or ideological biases aggravated by the inertia of acquired learning that results in the failure to see what lies outside an accepted

¹⁰⁶ Paper ‘Uncertainty’ in Paul D. Williams 2008, 136.

¹⁰⁷ Chabris and J. Simons, 2010.

framework.¹⁰⁸ As if all this were not enough, veto players may, moreover, put up another barrier to serve their own interests in formulating the right kind of strategy.¹⁰⁹ Then there is also the **Thomas Theorem** (named after W.I. Thomas) that says that societies often behave as if they think a certain idea is true or right regarding certain situations as real which pushes organized groups like political parties to promote their own interests confounding their desires and objectives with the interests of the societies at large. The problem here is the lack of empathy among the players who often succeed in preserving the status quo and thus their vested interests by falsely convincing the public at large that they are serving the nation's interest.¹¹⁰

Cognitive Dissonance is another issue that Morton R. Davies and Vaughan A. Lewis¹¹¹ take up in the course of explaining what happens when a sociocultural and technological change happens too fast in a modernizing society, too fast for it to absorb the shocks and stress that modernization may bring that may turn out to be too complex and difficult for the population to tolerate or accommodate. What they leave untouched here, which is of crucial relevance to our context, is how such an incongruence impacts on the overall stability of the system. Hypothetically, *Larger the cognitive dissonance* (which means more sudden, rapid or larger the intensity and momentum of the political change), *the greater the political instability* (Hypothesis Five). Conversely, slower and more incremental the structural changes, less the incongruence, and larger the probability of success. Testing this hypothesis in Nepal's context could explain the whole array of failures of plans and projects related to democratization and development, but the evidence and information needed for this purpose are scant and explanation remains limited to descriptive depiction of historical narratives.

Finally, even if none of the six elements operate to damage right perception in the course of decision-making, neglect can undo the whole process. In the course of invading North Vietnam in the mid-sixties to contain communism, if, as Robert McNamara clearly admits, President Lyndon Johnson and his whole cabinet "had not truly investigated what was essentially at stake and important to us," the question that arises here is: What stopped them from exploring fully whether there were other routes to their destination or to start a national debate on a war that was to bring a national disaster for both sides (three million Vietnamese lives plus fifty-eight thousand body bags to America) in the hubristic glow of their power? as the *New York Times* asked on April 12, 1995. The way the American government responded to suggestions and protests at home indicates, apart from hubris, neglect was another factor¹¹² behind their failure to handle the dilemmas they were facing.

The five hypotheses stated above may not just help to explain better the confusion in decision-making in unstable situations, but they also relate to quite a few dilemmas faced

¹⁰⁸ Herman Kahn and B. Bruce-Briggs 1972, 82. This proposition echoes the second hypothesis on misperception explained by Robert Jervis whose fourteen hypotheses on how misperception can lead policy and decision-makers astray may help in clarifying the vision problem. See 'Hypotheses on Misperception', in Klaus Knorr (Ed.) 1987, 152-177, 157.

¹⁰⁹ Kelman 2002, 174. A Veto player is an individual or collective actor whose agreement is required to change a policy. For explanation on the Veto Player Theorem, the interested reader is referred to Tesebelis 1999, cited by the author.

¹¹⁰ Chirot 1977, 201.

¹¹¹ Davies and Lewis 1971, 118-119.

¹¹² McNamara 1996, 354-355.

by the decision-makers in politics. Five of them deserve mention. But since the first three of them are fairly familiar to observers, two others deserve explanation.¹¹³

Five Dilemmas

Dilemma One: Stability vs Liberty

The tradeoff between stability (regularity, consistency, security, order) and Liberty (or adaptation), say Almond and Powell, is not easy to make “where the very concepts imply giving up some of one for some of the other.”¹¹⁴

Dilemma Two: Growth vs Stability

In the context of choosing between Growth and Stability (Security), David E. Apter underscores the incompatibility between political democracy and economic growth where stability becomes the priority.¹¹⁵

Dilemma Three: Equity vs Liberty

Conflict over Equity (justice) and Liberty (growth) arises when demand for more equitable distribution of resources and the policies to enhance the nation’s economy (through industrialization that brings economic disparities alienating the communities effected) become difficult to resolve.¹¹⁶

Dilemma Four: Liberalization vs Stabilization

That overly rapid, premature liberalization under the guise of privatization and hasty political opening, however pious the purpose, can unhinge the whole political regime became evident in the last decade of the past century which witnessed the Soviet debacle. This, however, is a lesson left unlearned in Nepal. When there is low political accountability, World Development Report 2006 warns, premature liberalization can be captured by a group, increasing not only financial fragility, but also the risk of opportunistic default,¹¹⁷ which can destabilize the whole financial sector as it did in Nepal, but to which the parties responsible chose to keep their eyes shut.

How accountable have Nepal’s ruling regimes been so far in this regard? The Voice and Accountability Indicator of governance in Nepal does not fetch satisfaction on this test. Nepal’s score of -0.06 in 2000-01 among the 168 countries for which data are available, places 95 countries above Nepal which is too low to ensure the State against the two risks the report mentions—financial fragility and opportunistic default. The dubious way adopted and the undue hurry made to dispose of the whole set of the four or so enterprises gifted by China, ignoring even a semblance of

¹¹³ Some of these dilemmas have been cogently explicated by Almond and Powell (1980) who also elaborate how they were handled by various kinds of political regimes, 140-146.

¹¹⁴ Almond and Powell 1980, 142.

¹¹⁵ Apter 1977, 477.

¹¹⁶ Almond and Powell 1980, 145.

¹¹⁷ World Development Report 2006, 182.

regulatory oversight, exposed the devious intent of those at the helm of affairs to capture the sale. Nepal, of course, was not the sole victim of such maldecisions. That report explains similar things happening in 18 countries from Brazil, France, Indonesia, and Korea to the USA (in the early 1800s) as also Zimbabwe.¹¹⁸

Dilemma Five: Sovereignty vs Ecoscurity

Does Ecoscurity, a global public good, make an iota of sense when one clings to National Sovereignty? If it does not, as is axiomatically evident, then the reason is the logical incompatibility between Ecology which is global and seamlessly undivided and Sovereignty which by definition is separationist, isolatory, and self-centered. Combining the two terms is therefore meaningful only at the global level. But for this to happen, the boundaries and the frontiers of states and nations set up by human hands must be tossed away. Neither Mother Nature nor climate recognizes sovereignty.

How the Government and the Nepal Army handled their Dilemmas

In the course of explaining the background to the dilemmas, General Silwal has tried to expose the weaknesses behind the decisions taken up to handle the insurgency.¹¹⁹ If one central clue to the series of dilemmas that each agency-actor in the scalene power triangle of relations between the Palace (King) – Army – and the Parliament would face in the midst of the Maoist turmoil was the ban put on debate on Army in the National Panchayat,¹²⁰ another problem, partly a product of that ban that repeatedly appeared was that of time lag in the regime's response to the Maoist attack at Dang, which certainly was not the only slip. If Information was available to the Army from some Chinese source on the impending Dang attack, as is claimed,¹²¹ why did it go unheeded? Despite the Royal Nepal Army's claim that it was cognizant of an internal threat in the early 80's, some hold that neither the National Investigation Department (NID) nor the Army had foreseen the prospects of a 'People's War'.¹²² The government declared Emergency and mobilized the Army through the National Defense Council only on 26 November 2001, after a delay of full three days;¹²³ and advice was sought only after the situation went out of hand.¹²⁴ Conflict of interests was another factor (in the ruling party Nepali Congress).¹²⁵ The task force group set up to study the problem under the presiding prime ministers took one to four years,¹²⁶ and was membered by just one single party. As if all of this were not enough, the first peace talks took five years to start¹²⁷ and the second stage came two years later. Indecision

¹¹⁸ Ibid., Table 9.2, 181.

¹¹⁹ See for his explanation, pp. 117, 134, 182, 185, 186, 188, 189, 191, 197, 199, 205, 208, 217, 218, 220, 223, 321, 323.

¹²⁰ Silwal, 138.

¹²¹ Shah 2067 BS, 253.

¹²² On Nepal Army's shortcomings and its contempt for the political establishment, which allegedly verged on the pathological, see Mehta 2005, 71-75.

¹²³ Ibid., 152.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 117.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 153.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 185.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 186.

of the National development Council on policy and the clash of interests between the King plus the Army and the Prime Minister, too, ended up benefiting only the insurgents.¹²⁸ Delay and dilatory decision-making¹²⁹ and inconsistency and discontinuity of plans such as Internal Defense and Development (IDAD) (later Internal Security and Development Plan-ISADP) showed the level of confusion and indecision further eroded the ruling regime's overall capacity to handle the situation,¹³⁰ not to mention the Civil Military National Camping plan (CMNCP), conceived after ten years of army mobilization and abandonment of the ISDP.¹³¹

The series of dilemmas, delays, and dilatory decisions does not end here. Since the King and the Army insisted the NDC's decision was a prerequisite to army mobilization, the mutual suspicion between the King and the Prime Minister held the NDC back from conducting meetings, regulating its work procedures, and formulating the policies and implementing strategies the crisis demanded. Who prevented the NDC from deciding for several years? asks the General.¹³² Apart from the inability to raise the agenda of reformulating the Nepal-India Treaty of 1950, long due for revision, the Government in Kathmandu faced one more dilemma in handling its foreign relations with China, India, and USA after the Belt and Road and Indo-pacific Strategy appeared on the scene, which got compounded further after India signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) in October 2020 and the MCC issue that deeply divided not only the political parties and the House, but also the whole public mass.¹³³ The ideological dilemma that was soon to confront the Nepal Communist Party, turned out to be no less perturbing, reflected in the statements released by one of the Maoist ideologues.¹³⁴

5. ANALYSIS: APPROACH AND OPERATIONALIZATION

For this exercise, overall, ten variables representing ten sectors of society have been selected to assess Political Stability in a total of 130 countries (N).

Political stability Index (PSI) has been proposed as a proto-index or proxy variable to compare globally the stability status of the 130 countries on which data are available on a 5-point ranking ordinal scale (very high – high – medium – low – very low).

Variable	Sector	Variable	Sector
Voice & Accountability (VOAC)	Democracy	6. Global Terrorism Index (GTERI)	Terrorism
Corruption (GRAFT)	Corruption	7. Life Satisfaction Index (LISAI)	Social satisfaction
Human Development Index (HDI)	Development	8. Confidence in Judicial System (CIJUS)	Image of Judiciary
Social Cohesion Index (SOCOI)	Integration	9. Trust in National Government (TINAG)	Trust in Government
Quintile Ratio (QUIRA)	Economic Disparity	10. Global Peace Index (GLOPI)	Level of Peace

¹²⁸ Ibid., 321.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 197.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 191.

¹³¹ Ibid., 199.

¹³² Ibid., 295.

¹³³ Ibid., 223.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 323-324.

The hypothesis is: The aggregated 5-point ranking score of countries on the ten dimensions should correlate closely with their Political Stability (here, Political Stability and Lack of Violence – POSLA) ranking score, the variable used by the Human Development Report 2002.

The sources of data on the 11 variables are (with page numbers for definitions bracketed):

POSLA, VOAC, GRAFT – Human Development Report (HDR) 2002, Table 1.1

HDI – HDI 2017 (29)

LISAI – HDII, T14 (7-4)

SOCOI – Briguglio et al., (292-294)

CIJUS – HDII, T14 (74)

QUIRA – Table 3, HDII (33)

TINAG – HDII, T14 (77)

GTERI – GTR 2018 (8-9)

GLOPI – Col.1 (pp. 8-9), GPI 2018 (IEP) (8-9)

Annex 2 explains the measures and methodology used as also the sources.

The Table in Annex 3 presents the data for 130 countries on the eleven variables and the 5-point ranking based on the conversion scale given above. The last column (the 11th one) tallies the aggregated rank of each country with the POSLA rank and Table 4 shows the results in a Tally Matrix with the findings shown on the right side.

FINDING: In 38 cases (i.e. 29.2% of them, which is close to one-third), the rankings tested correlate exactly and in 64 others they do so closely. Combined together, they total to 102 out of 130 cases, that is 78.4 percent correlating closely or exactly. Hence, the inference can be safely drawn that political stability can be projected up to a substantially high level, if the relevant data are available. Given the time gaps on some of the data used in this analysis, POSLA's for instance which is drawn for the year 2002, one may expect the correlation to rise further if updated data become available.¹³⁵

Table 5 also presents separately a list of the 42 countries figuring as most stable and Table 6 lists 12 whose stability status is uncertain due to data unavailability or political reasons (see the world map).

Five-Point Conversion of Scales

Ranking Variables	1, 2, 11	3, 4	5	6	7	8, 9	10
Very Low (VL)	-2.50 to -1.50	0 to <0.20	21 to >21	9 to 10	1 to 2	0 to 20	>3.00
Low (L)	-1.50 to -0.50	0.21 to 0.40	16 to 20	7 to 8	3 to 4	21 to 40	>2.50 to 3.00
Medium (M)	-0.50 to <0.50	0.41 to 0.60	11 to 15	5 to 6	5 to 6	41 to 60	>2.00 to 2.5
High (H)	0.50 to <1.50	0.61 to 0.80	6 to 10	3 to 4	7 to 8	61 to 80	>1.50 to 2.00
Very High (VH)	1.50 to 2.50	0.81 to 1.00	1 to 5	0 to 2	9 to 10	81 to 100	1.00 to 1.50

¹³⁵ The Policy IV Score suggested by the IEP (Institute of Economic and Peace, Sydney) as a potentially useful proxy for political stability covering 55 countries in 1918 and increasing to over 100 for 1961 and 158 by 2012 is the only alternative this observer is aware of so far measuring comparatively status of the political instability of countries. Fig 2.13 (pp 36-37) in the Global Peace Index 2018 – brought out by the Institute that purports to show the score for the 94 years from 1918 to 2012 as a simplified measure of the competing values of autocracy and democracy in direct comparison indicates a global overall rise in political stability. One problem with the Policy Score IV is the rationale and methodology left unexplained. Another is the range of sectors included to develop the score which, too, remains unexplained, with stress focused on democratization which certainly is important, but not important enough to represent the other sectors, such as economy, geopolitics, external relations, social well-being, corruption, political violence (terrorism), and environment. Obviously, the larger the number of domains such a score incorporates, the more robust, valid, and reliable the indicator.

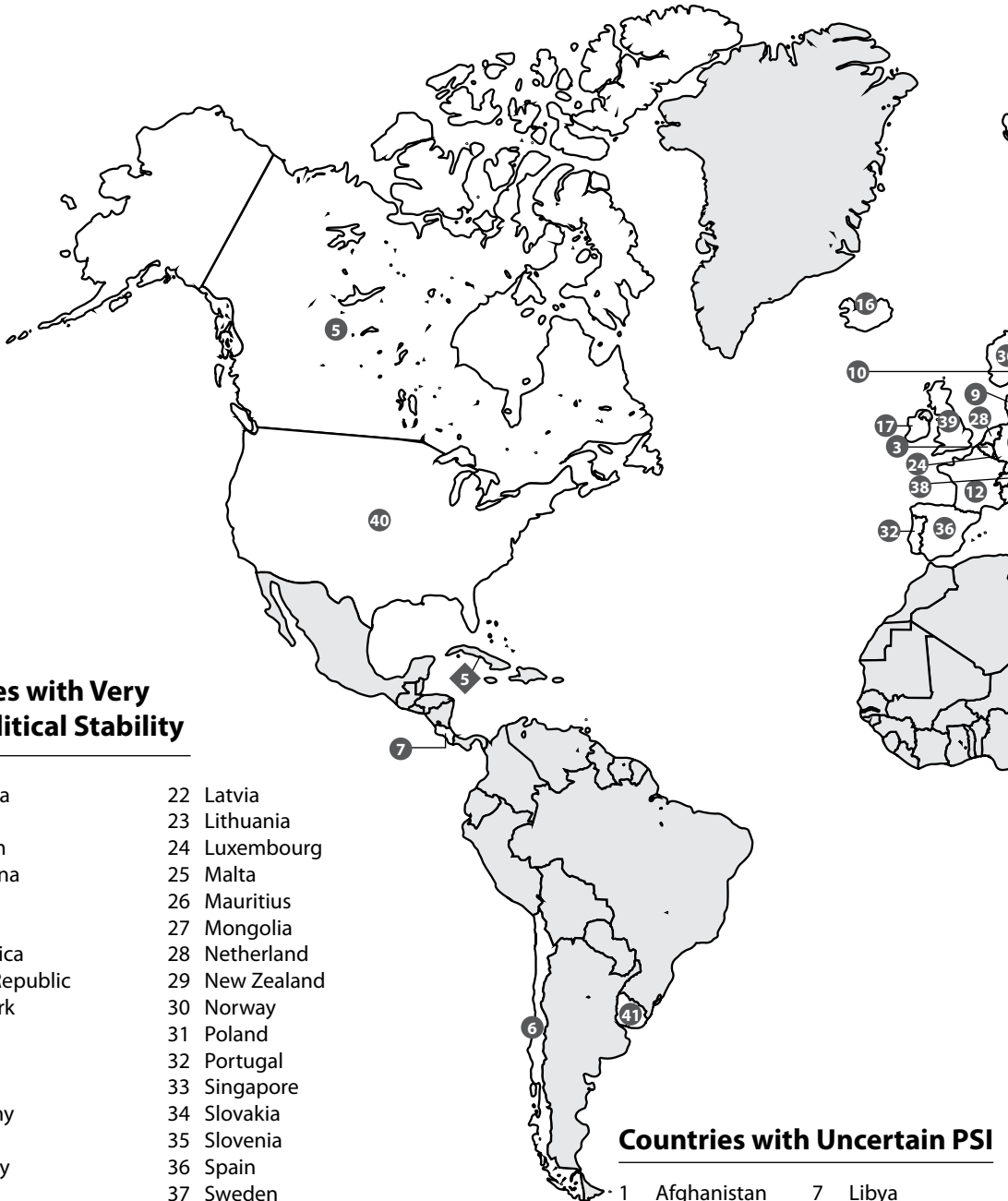
Table 5. Forty-Two Countries with Very High Political Stability

	1 VOAAC	2 GRAFT	3 HUDEI	4 SOCOI	5 QUIORA	6 CTERI	7 LISAI	8 CIJUS	9 TINAG	10 GLOPI	
1 Australia	VH	VH	VH	VH	H	VH	H	H	M	VH	AB
2 Austria	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	H	H	M	VH	AB
3 Belgium	VH	H	VH	H	VH	M	M	H	M	H	BB
4 Botswana	H	H	H	H	VL	VH	L	H	H	-	BB
5 Canada	VH	VH	VH	H	H	H	H	H	H	VH	AB
6 Chile	H	H	VH	H	M	H	H	L	L	H	BB
7 Costa Rica	H	H	H	H	M	VH	H	M	M	H	BB
8 Czech Rep.	H	M	VH	H	VH	VH	H	M	L	VH	BB
9 Denmark	VH	VH	VH	-	VH	VH	H	VH	M	VH	AB
10 Estonia	H	H	VH	H	H	VH	M	M	M	H	BB
11 Finland	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	H	H	VH	M	H	AA
12 France	H	H	VH	VH	H	M	H	M	L	H	BB
13 Germany	H	H	VH	VH	H	M	H	H	H	H	AB
14 Greece	H	H	VH	VH	H	M	M	M	VL	M	BB
15 Hungary	H	H	VH	H	VH	VH	H	M	L	H	BB
16 Iceland	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	H	M	L	VH	AA
17 Ireland	VH	H	VH	VH	VH	H	H	H	M	VH	BB
18 Israel	H	H	VH	H	H	M	H	M	L	L	BC
19 Italy	H	H	VH	VH	H	H	H	L	L	H	BB
20 Japan	H	H	VH	VH	H	H	M	H	M	VH	AB
21 Korea Rep	H	H	VH	VH	H	VH	H	L	L	H	BB
22 Latvia	H	M	VH	H	H	VH	H	L	L	H	BB
23 Lithuania	H	M	VH	H	H	VH	H	M	L	H	BC
24 Luxembourg	VH	VH	VH	H	VH	-	H	H	H	-	AB
25 Malta	H	M	VH	VH	VH	-	H	M	H	-	AA
26 Mauritius	H	M	H	H	H	VH	H	H	H	H	BB
27 Mongolia	H	M	H	H	H	VH	M	L	L	H	BB
28 Netherland	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	H	H	H	H	AB
29 New Zealand	VH	VH	VH	H	-	VH	H	H	H	VH	AB
30 Norway	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	H	VH	H	H	AB
31 Poland	H	M	VH	H	VH	VH	H	M	M	H	BB
32 Portugal	H	H	VH	H	H	VH	M	M	M	H	BB
33 Singapore	M	VH	VH	H	-	VH	H	VH	VH	VH	AB
34 Slovakia	H	M	VH	H	VH	VH	H	L	L	H	BB
35 Slovenia	H	H	VH	H	VH	H	H	L	L	VH	BB
36 Spain	H	H	VH	H	H	M	H	M	L	H	BB
37 Sweden	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	H	H	H	M	H	AB
38 Switzerland	VH	VH	VH	H	H	VH	H	VH	H	VH	AA
39 UK	H	VH	VH	VH	H	M	H	H	M	H	AB
40 USA	H	H	VH	M	H	L	H	H	L	M	BB
41 Uruguay	H	H	VH	H	H	VH	H	M	M	H	BB
42 Vietnam	L	L	H	H	VH	VH	M	H	VH	H	BC

Table 6.12 Countries with Uncertain Status in PSI

	1 VOAC	2 GRAFT	3 HUDEI	4 SOCOI	5 QURA	6 GTERI	7 LISAI	8 CIJUS	9 TNAG	10 GIOPI	
1 Afghanistan	-	-	.498M	-	-	9.391VL	2.7L	24L	26L	3.585VL	D--
2 Bahrain	-.96L	0.04M	.846VH	0.774H	-	3.883H	6.2H	-	-	2.437M	A-0.04C
3 Bhutan	-1.2L	-	.612H	0.605H	6.9H	0.019VH	5.1M	97VH	95VH	1.545M	B--
4 Brunet D. S.	-0.93L	-0.17M	.852VH	0.694H	-	-	-	-	-	-	B.86B
5 Cuba	-1.49L	-0.12M	.777H	0.503M	-	0.000VH	-	-	-	2.037M	B.07B
6 Kuwait	-0.08M	0.59M	.803VH	0.728H	-	3.126H	6.1H	-	-	1.799H	B.64B
7 Libya	-1.35L	-0.90L	.706H	0.520M	-	6.987L	5.6M	-	-	3.262VL	B-38
8 Qatar	-0.54L	0.57H	.855VH	0.630H	-	0.057VH	6.4H	-	-	1.869H	A1.40B
9 Saudi Arabia	-1.07M	-0.35M	.854VH	0.806VH	-	5.479M	6.3H	-	-	2.417M	B.51B
10 Syria	-1.40L	-0.83L	.536M	0.728H	-	8.315VH	3.5L	27L	-	3.6VL	C-.28C
11 Turkmenistan	-1.42L	-1.12L	.706H	0.603H	-	0.000VH	5.2M	-	-	2.283M	B.11C
12 United A. E.	-0.51L	0.13M	.862VH	0.609H	-	0.105VH	7.0H	-	-	1.82H	B1.09B

Map of the World Showing Countries with Very High Political Stability and Countries with Uncertain Political Stability



Countries with Very High Political Stability

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Australia | 22 Latvia |
| 2 Austria | 23 Lithuania |
| 3 Belgium | 24 Luxembourg |
| 4 Botswana | 25 Malta |
| 5 Canada | 26 Mauritius |
| 6 Chile | 27 Mongolia |
| 7 Costa Rica | 28 Netherland |
| 8 Czech Republic | 29 New Zealand |
| 9 Denmark | 30 Norway |
| 10 Estonia | 31 Poland |
| 11 Finland | 32 Portugal |
| 12 France | 33 Singapore |
| 13 Germany | 34 Slovakia |
| 14 greece | 35 Slovenia |
| 15 Hungary | 36 Spain |
| 16 Iceland | 37 Sweden |
| 17 Ireland | 38 Switzerland |
| 18 Israel | 39 United Kingdom |
| 19 Italy | 40 USA |
| 20 Japan | 41 Uruguay |
| 21 Korea Republic | 42 Vietnam |

Countries with Uncertain PSI

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 Afghanistan | 7 Libya |
| 2 Bahrain | 8 Qatar |
| 3 Bhutan | 9 Saudi Arabia |
| 4 Brunei D.S. | 10 Syria |
| 5 Cuba | 11 Turkmenistan |
| 6 Kuwait | 12 United A.E |

Countries with Very High Political Stability and Countries with Uncertain Status in PSI



- ◆ Countries With Uncertain Status in PSI
- Countries With Very High Political Stability

Map : Author.

6. INSTABILITY AND NEPAL'S CRISIS SYNDROME

6.1 *Is Instability Unique to Nepal?*

Instability has become so pervasive in Nepal's politics that it may convince a common citizen it is unique to it. Riaz and Basu regard it as a defining character of Nepal's politics after 1990.¹³⁶

Between 1996 and 2006, the INSEC report claims 13,190 lives were lost in the course of the Maoist Movement (8,457 killed by the State and 4,733 by the Maoists). In the 3,840 major attacks on public property facilities recorded and 3,162 incidents, the loss was estimated to be worth NR 3.52 billion (government property worth NR 2.39 billion damaged) and the country suffered a sharp drop of 1.9% in its average annual growth rate of 4.9% recorded in the 90's.¹³⁷

In the five years between 2008 and 2013 alone, a total of 4,451 events of general strike have been recorded by the UN Department of Safety and Security, started by political parties, rebel groups, and local or business communities, resulting in a Total Factor Production (TFP) loss which was the largest in South Asia. As for terrorism, the Terrorism Index on Nepal stood at 5.59 between 2002-2009, reaching an all-time high of 6.68 in 2004 with a record low of 4.39 in 2016. One school of thought to which there is no dearth of subscribers holds that even the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India ended up destabilizing Nepal's sovereign status through its several biased and unfair provisions. Proximity to India and over 1,200 km of continuous border with all the assets and benefits such vicinity to a rising superstate's democracy and development may bring is not without its downside. In terms of **conflict-years**, explained as 'a calendar year in which a country has been involved in a state-based armed conflict of any type',¹³⁸ the Human Security Centre shows that among the 27 countries listed as the most conflict-prone countries of the world between 1946 and 2003, India figured second (behind only Myanmar) with 156 conflict-years for the 57 years intervening, that means 2-7 conflicts every year. That report explains India's "many long-running infra-state conflicts and its wars with neighboring states" ensured its second place. Would there then also be a neighborhood effect on Nepal?

It looks relevant at this point also to see in brief how the people at large perceive political instability.

6.2 *What Survey Polls Say*

Asked what kind of change followed the restoration of democracy in 1990, the second largest category of respondents (62.6%) said it increased *political instability*, agreeing strongly, compared to 31.7% who just agreed. Also, whereas 74% of the respondents were found attributing as the reason strongly to the leaders' lust for self and party interest rather than national interest, 20.6% just agreed. Among the choices offered — decrease in social disparity and equality, mobilization of marginalized groups for their rights, growth in development infrastructure, increased *political instability*, and leaders' lust for self-and party interest—the last two items came up as the two most important responses (94.3% and 94.6% respectively which are almost equal).¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Riaz and Basu 2007, 23-24.

¹³⁷ Dhakal 2006, 131-133.

¹³⁸ Human Security Centre 2005, Fig. 1.4, 26-28.

¹³⁹ Kathmandu: SDSA 2004, 143.

However, in the context of identifying problems at the personal level, when asked what causes them anxiety personally, *political uncertainty/instability* consistently figured as the 5th, that is, the last, factor behind poverty (1), price hike (2), unemployment (3), and lack of development and infrastructure (4) in the three surveys done from August 2010, February 2011, to June 2011, where the percentage figures oscillated between 7 and 9, and the urban respondents exceeded the rural ones on a 14:6 ratio,¹⁴⁰ compared to 43% of the respondents who said the inability of the political parties to formulate a new constitution lay behind the country leading in the wrong direction, where 36% put the blame on the country's.¹⁴¹

When asked what are the two most damaging consequences that the failure of political consensus among the political parties could induce (phrasing modified due to problem in the original text, p. 10, V 19), 34% of the respondents attributed it to *political instability* (highest response, as the first consequence) and 15% figured it as the second consequence.¹⁴²

But when asked what were the two most important reasons behind the failure of the first Constitution Assembly to deliver constitution, compared to 53% who blamed leaders' lust for power and 28% claiming in-party split, only 3% regarded foreign intervention as the first factor, the percentages on the second most important reason standing at 27, 23, and 10.¹⁴³

Another small sample survey, carried out on a group of 44 social observers (N=44) based on a 5-point scale (1-very negative, 2-negative, 3-moderate, 4-positive, 5-very positive) on 6 indicators (with 2 value Indicators – Freedom and Constitutional Freedom and 4 Performance Indicators – Rule of Law, Periodic Elections, Accountability, and Stable Good Governance), shows the government's performance scoring just 2.09, where an overwhelming proportion of the observers rated it to be very weak or weak (95.6%) with stable, good governance obtaining the minimum score 1.36).¹⁴⁴

6.3 Stabilizing Nepal

Can stability be planned into a system? The approaches adopted often so far look *ad hoc*, ambivalent, and ambiguous rather than assuring, but there is little ambiguity in the inferences deducible from the foregoing analysis or the lesson one could draw from the attempts made in this regard. This does not mean the task is going to be easy or simple. Far from that. It demands a studied effort at an inter-sectoral, multi-disciplinary level based on empirical evidence as also a holistic strategic investment that combines the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the issues at stake.

The next query that raises its head is: Is it possible to nationally direct the change meditated as a time-bound process in order to stabilize the political order rather than merely respond to it as a point event in time? If yes, the effort has to be more than just an adjustative mode of approach toward one which is systematically designed, that incorporates a certain number

¹⁴⁰ IDA, 17-18.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 24-25.

¹⁴² Ibid., 10.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴⁴ Rawal 2073, 32-35.

of phases, each with clear adjectives some of whom can be concretely assessed or measured over time and can be compared on the progress made. Only such a strategy can take due account of the disruptions that the various elements brought in the nation's political system.

Hypothetically speaking, the less the care given to the implementation of the stabilization agenda and policy, the larger the measure of failure that will result. Two clear instances of misapplication of public policies in Nepal still fresh in public memory are Land Reform and the New Education Plan, both of which ended in considerable social instability, less because they were wrong *per se*, but more because the strategy adopted was poorly conceived and designed. The catalogue of such policy errors unfortunately is far too long to describe here.

Table 3 presents a three-stage scenario analysis on Nepal's political stability and shows how instability can worsen further (Stage 1) if strong steps are not taken to improve the status quo (Stage 2) toward Stage 3.

Table 3. SCENARIO ANALYSIS ON POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN NEPAL

	1 WORSE MONOCRACY (AUTOCRACY)	2 STATUS QUO HEGEMONIC OLIGARCHY	3 (OPTIMALLY) SATISFICING REPUBLIC
1. Political Order	Autocracy	Party-state (captive state)	Direct & Delegated
2. Key Role Player (SB)	King, Autocrat, Dictator	Power Oligarchs (Iron Triangle)	Government Civil Society, Private Sector
3. Model of Power Use	Hard, Coercion, Command	Control	Predominantly Soft, Influence, Cooptation
4. Regime's Natural Capability	Nominated/V. Weak	Appointed, Delegators/ Medium	Broad & Substantive Robust
5. Agenda Builders	Rulers, Religious Elite	Political & Economic Elite, Political Party	Public, Govt, Private Sector
6. Mode of Election	None, Pseudo-, Selective	Delegatory	Direct + Delegatory
7. Representation	Proxy	Nominal	Substantive
8. Diplomacy	Informal	Club	Public
9. Nature of Policy/ Strategy	Uncertain	Intermittent	Continuous, Consistent, Coherent
10. Mode of Political Mobilization	State	Professional Elite	Mass
11. Pattern of Resource Use	Largely Extractive	Top-Heavy Distribution	Relatively Equitous Distribution
12. Rational Status	Isolated	Broad	Extensive, Deep
13. Track Used	One	One, Two	One, Two, Three
14. Awareness of issues, Agenda, Policy	Dormant, Limited	Limited to Power Elite	Mass Awareness
15. Inclusion	Virtual	Narrow	Broad
16. People's Participation	Lowest	Passive	Active, Broad Continuous
17. Transparency	Opaque	Semi-Transparent	Largely Transparent

	1 WORSE MONOCRACY (AUTCOCRACY)	2 STATUS QUO HEGEMONIC OLIGARCHY	3 (OPTIMALLY) SATISFICING REPUBLIC
18. Accountability	None. V. Low	Low	High
19. Ownership	V. Weak, Ruler-based	Weak	Strong
20. Legitimacy	None	Low	High
21. Safety & Security	V. Low	Low	High
22. Crime	High	Medium	Low
23. Scope for Conflict, Violence, Crisis	V. High	Medium	Low
24. Human Rights Situation	Virtually Non	Civil and Political	Civil, Political, Economic, Identity
25. Law & Order	Negative	Medium	High
26. Status of Civil Society	Non-Existent (Ban)	Accommodation but Polarized, Passive	Active, Vibrant
27. Public Sector	Largely Absent or Directed	Predominant Political (Govt.) Sector)	Autonomous & Interactive
28. Access to Resources & Opportunities	Power Oligarchs	Pol. Party, Power Elite	Mass (Public)
29. Subsidiarism	None	Low	High
30. Level of Political Ethics (Integrity) ¹⁴⁵	Largely Missing	Medium	Optimum
31. Socio-Economic Disparity	Great	Medium	Minimum
32. Equity	V. Low	Medium	High
33. Public Efficacy	Absent	Low	High
34. Political Stability	V. Low	Low	High
35. Solidarity (Nation-State)	Fragile (Assimilatory)	Weak (Hegemonic)	Strong (Mosaic)
36. Existential Scope for System	Survival	Substantial	Sustainable

6.4 Strategy to Stabilize

Stabilization in the conventional sense means “actions undertaken by international actors to reach termination of hostilities and consolidate peace, understood as the absence of armed conflict.”¹⁴⁶ This, in fact, was the interpretation given to the word when the Multinational Implementation Force (IFOR), later named the Stabilization Force (SFOR), started operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996 which by 1998 achieved considerable progress in stabilization without a single casualty among the international troops or any significant flare-up between the former warring parties.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Values, Principles, and Norms.

¹⁴⁶ Call 2009, 5 (Box).

¹⁴⁷ Cox 2009, 255, in Call 2009.

The overwhelming force available did reinforce division of the country, yet it was successful and stabilization remains one key goal (the two other being reconstruction and transformation) that the European Union pursues in its strategy of post-conflict statebuilding.¹⁴⁸ Earlier, the CIA had in 1994 appointed POLITICAL STABILITY TASK FORCE (PTTF), its prototype named State Failure Task Force when US officials were beginning to hold the failed states as one cause of global problems.¹⁴⁹ Both *Stability* and *Stabilization* have been taken in this study to embody a broader process and feature in space and time. It is an approach that demands a longer timeframe and a mechanism far more complex than the case just mentioned. This, however, poses a challenge which may look formidable at first. But is it really so?

How is Nepal likely to fare in the stabilization agenda and how would the people take to it? Responding to the query demands at least a cursory glance at the character of the population at large in terms of their attitude toward violence, their feelings about safety and security, entrepreneurship, as also the image they bear of the key institutions of the political order and how distanced they remain on the issues and agendas of the day. Fortunately, some information is available on these issues and on that basis, it may be possible to suggest measures for stabilization in a preliminary form.

On unconventional political behavior (violent approach to politics), such as taking up arms against the government, more than four-fifths of the respondents asked in a survey stood against it (with only six for it) and nearly the same proportion opposed damaging government buildings (vs three who supported).¹⁵⁰

Comparing this with the results of the findings on Nepal that the *Human Development Report 2010* has brought out on certain aspects of the political sector here can be of help in formulating the stabilization strategy. Whereas only 5.3% of the country's population say they are satisfied with their life, no more than 11% voice their opinion to the public officials.¹⁵¹

Considering the low level of issue salience, among the public at large, of stability and the low level of political and social values and of institutional trust that people carry about the political institutions,¹⁵² as also the large issue distance between the mass public and the politicians, the hope that an agenda on political stabilization may generate at first among the public, the political (the government) and the private sectors may not be very high. Yet, one reason to retain hope and sustain a belief in the feasibility of this agenda could be the finding reported by another survey of 1994 that tells us that the potential for entrepreneurship development in Nepal is an immense one, and their hard working habits, internal locus of control, openness to change for the better, risk taking ability, above all, a positive attitude toward life in general, can offer a large public platform and constituency for stabilizing the political order; in other words, to turn the vicious cycle of instability into a virtuous one.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Anastasakis, Captain, and Economodes 2018, 159-160, in Berdal and Zaum (Eds.)

¹⁴⁹ Matthew and Upreti 2007, 17.

¹⁵⁰ Borre, Pandey, and Tiwari 1994, Table 7.

¹⁵¹ *Human Development Report 2010*, tables 9 and 6.

¹⁵² Among all the eight public institutions on which an image survey was done by IDEA in 2008, political parties were at the bottom, less than three-fourths said they trusted them and barely 68% said they trusted the government. IDEA 2008: V 20 A-H. See also Tables T 4.2-4.11 (246-254).

¹⁵³ Karki et al., 1994, VII.

In this context, what anthropologists Clayton and Carole Robarchek report is truly heartening; in just thirty years after 1958, homicide rate dropped from 1,000 per 100,000 population to 60 per 100,000, registering a straight 94% reduction among the Waorani people of Ecuador, regarded as the most violent society known to anthropology (note: the reduction was 94%, not 90% reported wrongly by the author), which shows humans are capable of rapid no-killing change.¹⁵⁴

6.5 A Menu for Stabilizing Nepal

Stabilizing Nepal’s political order demands incorporating elements in five areas critical to it, each of which is either missing so far or has not been tried well enough.

- 1. **REPRESENTATION** NOTA,¹⁵⁵ Recall, Referendum, Initiative, Tenurial Stability
- 2. **JUDICIARY** Measures against Impunity, Fast Track Justice
- 3. **ELECTION** PR, Fixed Date for Election, State funding
- 4. **ECONOMY** Land Reform, Red Book for Everyone
- 5. **CIVIL SOCIETY** PIL (Public Interest Litigation) Ombudsman

But since political stability is not just a national good, but also a regional and global public good, before trying our hand at the stabilization agenda, a holistic approach has to be adopted, on which the four caveats Almond and Powell forward should come handy to facilitate the process.

- One: All public goods cannot be pursued simultaneously.
- Two: All of them don’t have only negative trade-offs, which are not the same under all circumstances.
- Three: The problems are often so formidable that no single strategy may ensure the goals of growth.
- Four: No ideology and political science available can solve the problems objectively.¹⁵⁶

7. ROUND-UP

Work started on the theme with an outline hardly anything like its present form, but as it progressed, the temptation rose to get a deeper view of the problem rather than just to keep the exercise limited to a book review, but without overstretching the time and space at hand and avoiding what David Fisher dubs ‘the Holist Fallacy’.¹⁵⁷

The holistic approach adopted in this study was intended to push political stability toward the epicenter of debate in Nepal’s contemporary politics. Cross-country comparison was done, keeping in mind what Al-Biruni, an Iranian mathematician, said – learning about each other contributes to knowledge as well as peace – apart from the fact that only a fuller view, rather than a fragmentary one, can do justice to such an effort.

¹⁵⁴ Paige 2003, 160. The rate is 10 or less per 100,000 for the US.
¹⁵⁵ None of the above.
¹⁵⁶ Almond and Powell 1980, 142-146.
¹⁵⁷ The holist fallacy, argues David H. Fisher, is an exceedingly common form of error, an absurd effort to know the whole about a thing, adding “a project designed to explain everything ends...by explaining nearly nothing.” Fischer 1970, 65-68.

While the analytics of this exercise compels a closer look at stabilization, four caveats are in order at this point before the study concludes: the key role of harmony in the agenda with peace as the first order of priority, with respect for diversity in social relationship as a viable bridge between the East and the West;¹⁵⁸ stress on consensus in deciding not *what*, but *what stabilization is about in the course of decisions*, adopting what Peter Drucker regards as the Japanese approach to decision-making;¹⁵⁹ the need to adopt *resilience in decisions* (how, for instance, John F. Kennedy turned the failure of the Bay of Pigs strategy into success in handling the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962;¹⁶⁰ and given the hysteretic nature of modern technology, including cybersecurity techniques (*the better the security technique and products, the higher the attack techniques and methods*¹⁶¹), given, moreover, the various dilemmas and paradoxes the strategists of a stabilization agenda may face, constant vigilance along with *caution and countermeasures of various sorts* will remain at a premium to optimize the scope of the stabilization agenda to success. Still, however smart the strategy, it will fail if the *Sovereignty Strategy and the Santiago Principles* are not followed in the course of its implementation.¹⁶²

Covering the ground somewhat cursorily, this paper has tried to explain political instability as a syndrome rather than a conundrum. The objective was neither to be very comprehensive nor exhaustive, but to explain the problem as a structural malady rather than a mere symptom, transcending space and time with universal and indigenous features built into it. Including a fairly large number of countries, it offers a comparative base to draw inferences of projective and hypothetical scope. The inferences each reader could derive from the findings may differ and so may the implications, but some of the lessons and impacts look assuredly common for applied politics and strategic planning in system stabilization.

The key conclusion of this study is that, as an instrument of statecraft, the utility value of positive stability is impossible to ignore; it deserves systematic and systemic, sustained, and serious attention.

The Second Conclusion responds to the second query raised at the outset as a corollary of the syndrome proposition – Political Instability Syndrome (PIS) can be projected, which evolves in stages, but to make it a genuinely valid and reliable predictor of countries' political instability, collective and sustained efforts in study and investment at both the state and inter-state level is needed. Both the risk culture¹⁶³ and the Paradox of Globalization Thesis¹⁶⁴ which Baylis,

¹⁵⁸ Daniel Bell, quoted by Parag Khanna 2016, 385.

¹⁵⁹ Drucker, 196-197; see also Kissinger (1994, 829) on the Japanese way of decision-making.

¹⁶⁰ Diamond, 439-440.

¹⁶¹ Samuel 2016, 325.

¹⁶² *Sovereignty Strategy*: Alignment of internal and external stakeholders of states to the goals through joint formation and adherence to the rules of the game mandated by citizens to mobilize resources, perform critical tasks - ensuring reflexive monitoring and adjustment of implementation.

Santiago Principles: International standards to ensure that the investment to be made and the mechanisms set up for public work and projects are professionally and honestly utilized to prevent misuse by those in power.

¹⁶³ The emerging realization that the global risks of pollution and HIV/AIDs states alone cannot handle. Galbraith 1984, 10.

¹⁶⁴ Whether Asian economies rejecting Western values can modernize successfully. Galbraith 1984, 11.

Smith, and Owens refer to, demand that a broader outlook be adopted on the stabilization agenda, but a globally inclusive strategy, too, becomes essential if we are not to forget that even in the course of establishing the Westphalian system nearly four centuries ago in the year 1648, some 200 delegates were involved in the draft;¹⁶⁵ that a stable international order is a principled international order¹⁶⁶ with an ethical foreign policy based not just on sovereignty and deterrence as before, but on democracy, relatively free private sector, and rule of law; that a stable world order, as Kissinger reminds, cannot be achieved by any single country acting alone, but demands a global culture transcending the ideals of a single nation and region;¹⁶⁷ that inter-regional struggles can be more debilitating than those between states;¹⁶⁸ that Europe modernized not in a spasmodic burst of change, but as Francis Fukuyama reminds, through piecemeal shifts over a period of some fifteen hundred years;¹⁶⁹ that the spirit of **Deep Ecology**¹⁷⁰ can no more be ignored; and that the Euro-American polities have survived and sustained to become more stable than most other political orders because, in contrast to the frequently fracturing and fragile polities elsewhere, they have the capacity for *epigenesis*¹⁷¹ as well as *autopoiesis*¹⁷² in contrast to our largely *allopoietic*¹⁷³ propensity.

“For decision-making,” says E.S. Quade,” the value of a forecast does not necessarily lie in whether or not it comes true, but in its utility in helping the decision-makers to choose a satisfactory course of action to do it in time.¹⁷⁴

The last leg of the exercise concludes that stabilization is a worthwhile agenda, but it is an agenda that will demand investment of vision, resources, humanpower, and time from both the government and the people all focused on the five areas mentioned. A wide debate, as General Krishna N. S. Thapa suggests on matters of public concern (such as treaties and here, system stability) is essential to make the agenda legitimate and broadly owned.¹⁷⁵

As a matter of fact, every transition in the course of evolution and every disruption of the status quo tends to invite a new phase of crisis or instability and every solution of such problems also opens the door to challenges in some new form or shape. Would the resolution of terrorism in its present shape give rise to a new genre of the issue? How will the larger opening of Africa, Antarctica, and the Arctic Ocean impact regional and global stability in the days to come? How would the emergence of Brazil and Indonesia, the would-be superstates of the future, influence world events? And the future inroads of humankind into space and cosmos? These are queries better left for future probing.

¹⁶⁵ Kissinger 2014, 373.

¹⁶⁶ Steve, Hadfield, and Dunne 2012, 230.

¹⁶⁷ Kissinger 2014, 373.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 371.

¹⁶⁹ Fukuyama 2011, 460.

¹⁷⁰ A green ideological perspective that rejects anthropocentrism, prioritizes maintenance of nature, and is associated with values such as bioequality, diversity, and decentralization. Heywood 2014, 397.

¹⁷¹ Progressive emergence of structural differentiation.

¹⁷² Self-production and self-renewal in an organism.

¹⁷³ Not self-producing. See Dobuzinskis 1987, 213.

¹⁷⁴ Quade 1978, 239.

¹⁷⁵ Thapa 2078 BS, 245

At the end of the quarter-millennium of its evolution as a state-nation, when a whole array of other states appeared and disappeared from the world's map, Nepal struggled through a century of state formation, through two World Wars and a Cold War, etching a glorious saga of its valor on the sands of history. The challenge that this oldest state of South Asia¹⁷⁶ today faces to sustain itself in the emerging new world order, that of volatile political scenario, is going to be the agenda of the first order whose chronic instability is not beyond cure.

Chronic political instability is a symptom of system failure. Cognitive psychology, says Chris Clearfield, has given us a window into how small mistakes blossom into massive failures and how small steps can prevent them. Many of the instability factors mentioned in this study can be seen originating from small errors, left ignored, or unexamined which later snowball into large system failures. Large system failures, said Ben Berman in the spring of 2016, are incredibly costly, but easy to underestimate. The good news here is, as Berman put it, everyone can make a real difference.¹⁷⁷ What we all need now is the conviction to try, but we can succeed only if we all try together.

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