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Nationalism and Regional Relations in Democratic Transitions: Comparing Nepal and Bhutan

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NATIONALISM AND REGIONAL RELATIONS IN DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS: COMPARING NEPAL AND BHUTAN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

By

DEKI PELDON
Bachelor of Arts, Asian University for Women, 2014

2018
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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY DEKI PELDON ENTITLED NATIONALISM AND REGIONAL RELATIONS IN DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS: COMPARING NEPAL AND BHUTAN BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

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ABSTRACT


Democracy is facing crisis as its values including political rights and civil liberties are declining around the world. If democracy is to prevail, the reasons for the decline need to be addressed. To this end, the research question is: how nationalism and regional influences affect the political transitions of Bhutan and Nepal. The research question is answered by analyzing leadership stability, ethnicity and the caste system, as well as the roles of regional giants India and China in Bhutan’s and Nepal’s political transitions. The findings show that the contested conceptions of nationalism in Nepal and strong internal nationalism in Bhutan explain much of the varying nature of the transitions. In addition, regional influence, especially the significant role exerted by India in both cases, help explain the differences in the political transitions of Bhutan and Nepal.
# Table of Contents

Abstract  
Table of Contents  
List of Tables and Figures  
Acknowledgments  
List of Acronyms  
Glossary

**Chapter One- Democratic transitions in Bhutan and Nepal (post-2008)**

- **Introduction**  
  - 1
- **Historical Overview**  
  - **Bhutan**  
    - 7
  - **Nepal**  
    - 10
- **Methodology and Research Design**  
  - 13

**Chapter Two- Nationalism and regional influence in Nepal’s Political Transitions**

- **Country Profile**  
  - 17
- **Nationalism in Nepal**  
  - 21
- **Regional influence in Nepal**  
  - 34

**Chapter Three- Nationalism and regional influence in Bhutan’s Political Transitions**

- **Country Profile**  
  - 40
- **Nationalism in Bhutan**  
  - 44
- **Regional influence in Bhutan**  
  - 53
Chapter Four - Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

Violence during the Nepali Transitions  60
Tensions during the Bhutanese Transitions  62
Analysis  65
Revisiting Proposed Hypotheses  76

Conclusions  77

Bibliography  81
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table/Figure Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nepal Social Hierarchy (2.1)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Surnames in Nepal (2.2)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caste Categories of Muluki Ain, 1854 (2.3)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Groups in Nepal (2011) (2.1)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some distinct ethnic/caste features reported in the 1991, 2001 and 2011 censuses, Nepal (2.4)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal’s annual trade with India (2003 – 2010) (2.5)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution of Domains to GNH Index (3.1)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic groups in Bhutan (3.2)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages in Bhutan (3.1)</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imports and Exports between Bhutan and India (2001-2010) (3.2)</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India’s Foreign aid (3.3)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMs of Nepal since 2008 (4.1)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMs of Bhutan since 2008 (4.2)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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List of Acronyms

BDC – Block Development Committee
CPA- Comprehensive Peace Accord
CPN-UML – Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist-Leninist
CPN(M) – The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CSRDSP – Committee for State Restructuring and Distribution of State Power
DDC – District Development Committee
DPT – Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (Bhutan Peace and Prosperity party)
EC- European Community
GNH – Gross National Happiness
HLSRC – High-Level State Restructuring Commission
IGO – International Governmental Organization
INSEC – Informal Sectors Service Centre
KLO (Bhutan) – Kamtapur Liberation Organization
MPRF – Madhesi People’s Rights Forum
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NC – Nepal Congress Party
NDFB – National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
PDP – People’s Democratic Party
PM – Prime Minister
ULFA (Bhutan) – United Liberation Front of Assam
UNMIN -United Nation Missions in Nepal
USD – United States Dollar
Glossary

*Chathrim* – first codified law of Bhutan

*Driglam Namzha* – code of etiquette

*Druk Desi* - the title of the secular (administrative) rulers of Bhutan under the dual system of government between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries

*Dzong* – Distinctive type of fortress

*Dzongdas* - district collectors (Bhutan)

*Dzongkhag* - district officers (Bhutan)

*Dzongpoens* – Lord of the Dzong

*Gho* – Bhutanese traditional dress for men

*Jana Andolan I* – The First People’s Movement

*Jana Andolan II* - The Second People’s Movement

*Jat* – ethnic groups

*Jatiya-Sanghhiyata* – ethnic-based federalism

*Kira* - Bhutanese traditional dress for women

*Lhotsampa* - ethnic groups in the southern part of Bhutan

*Matwali* – alcohol-consumming classes

*Mulukhi Ain* – National Legal Code of Nepal of 1854

*Ngalop* – ethnic groups in the western part of Bhutan

*Ngolops* – anti-nationals

*Pahican-Sahito Sanghhiyata* – identity-based federalism

*Panchayat System* – party-less system established by King Mahendra in 1962 in which the King will rule the country directly

*Penlops* – provincial governors

*Sharchop* - ethnic groups in the eastern part of Bhutan

*Tagadhari* – the scared thread people wear on their wrist

*Tsawasum* – Three foundation of Bhutan (Country, King and Government)

*Tsheri (Bhutan)* – slash and burn agriculture practiced by Sharchops

*Zhabdrung* – A title used when addressing a great lama in Tibet
Chapter 1

Introduction: Political transitions in Bhutan and Nepal

I. Introduction:

In this thesis, I examine why some political transitions, especially transitions to democracy, are more successful than others. In order to examine this important question, I study the cases of Bhutan and Nepal, focusing on their democratic transitions since 2008. Specifically, I will examine the impacts of nationalism and regional influences and the degree to which they impact the role of violence in these important transitions.

The internationally recognized non-governmental organization (NGO), Freedom House marks 2008 as the year when global freedom suffered its third year of decline, a decline that continues through 2018 (Freedom House, 2008 and Freedom House, 2018). Although 121 countries had achieved some level of consolidated democracy by 2008, many other countries were still struggling in a transitional stage (Freedom House, 2008). Countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Italy, Greece, and others were experiencing democratic deterioration in 2008 (Lim, 2010: 180). Concurrent with these struggles for democracy, both Bhutan and Nepal, were just beginning to adopt democracy in 2008.

According to scholars, a successful democratic transition requires strategic patience, prolonged negotiation between the emerging opposition and the upper ranks of the former regime, and courageous actions by both leaders and the people (Basora, 2016: 1). In addition, Diamond also makes it clear that successful democratization involves a long, difficult and non-linear process (1999: 65). Similarly, scholars such as Rustow, Diamond and others have listed various criteria...
for a successful democratic transition. Diamond contends that the chances of sustaining democracy increase with economic development, such as improvement in levels of education, and per capita income, rather than aggregate economic growth alone (2009:1). Democracy is quite difficult to adopt. Transitions take time and involve at least some level of uncertainty and instability.

Scholars have long conceptualized the meanings of democracy. To Rousseau, democracy is a social contract in which an individual becomes a part of an association, which will defend and protect each member, and each member in return will unite with others to express “general will” while remaining as free as before (1762: 2002: 11). In contrast, Schumpeter defines democracy as a system where those who command more support than the competing individual or teams get to reign the government (1976: 250). Przeworski, diversifying from Schumpeter, defines democracy as the possibility of being able to change governments in a non-violent fashion, by voting (2003: 13). O’Donnell and Schmitter view democracy as a system with at least minimal procedures such as a secret ballot, universal adult suffrage, regular elections, partisan competition, and executive accountability (1993: 8). In this thesis, I conceptualize democracy as a system in which citizens are able to express and exercise their general will freely through procedures including voting, freedom of expression, and the rule of law.

Political scientists have engaged in vigorous debates about what "causes" democratization and what is necessary for a successful democratic transition. Modernization theorists including Lipset believe that democracy is related to the state of economic development (1959:75). Lipset further believes that the more economically developed a nation is, the more sustainable their democracy will be. If a nation is economically developed (beyond high economic growth), it can mean that the nation has a strong education system, health care facilities and more equality. To Lipset, these factors make democracy easier to attain and to sustain. Huber, Rueschemeyer, and
Stephens contend that economic development is related to democracy because it shifts the balance of class power by weakening the power of the landlord class and by strengthening the subordinate classes (1993:73). The capacity for self-organization (an important aspect of democracy) improves due to changes including urbanization, factory production, communication, and transportation (1993: 73). Huntington identifies five factors to account for his perceived “third wave” of democracy in the late twentieth century: legitimacy problems of authoritarian governments; rising expectations especially by the middle class; liberalization within the Roman Catholic Church; advocacy of democracy by multilateral organizations and the USA; and the demonstration effect of democratizing nations (1991:13). For Rustow, both economic (per capita income) and social factors (literacy, the need for beliefs among citizens and preexisting “social and political structure”) are helpful for a successful democratic transition (1970: 337 – 338).

According to Rustow, the conditions that make democracy possible include the ability to connect a stable democracy to certain economic and social background conditions. The conditions include per capita income, widespread literacy and prevalent urban residence (1970: 337); "the need for beliefs or certain psychological attitudes among citizens;" (p. 337) and the need for certain preexisting "social and political structure" (p. 338). Yet, while Rustow viewed these as helpful, he was careful to argue against the need for any pre-conditions. To him, national unity was the most important. Gill and Grugel believe that the presence of civil society is imperative for a democratic transition to take place (Turner, Chuki & Tshering, 2011: 186). Im says economic crises lead to democracy, whereas Almond and Verba emphasize the development of civic culture (Turner, Chuki & Tshering, 2011: 186). Similarly, Bollen and Jackman looked to the British experience of colonization as a factor in promoting successful democratization (1985).
In the Asian context, studies conducted on democratization have highlighted the role of popular mobilization and elite factors. According to Lee, political protest, in the form of boycotts, demonstrations and strikes, is the defining element of Asian democratization (2011:192). Similarly, Bithar and Lowenthal give huge credit to the essential traits of leaders for a successful democratic transition (2016: 2). These traits include leaders’ sense of direction; an ability to bond with citizens; inclusiveness and coalition building; courage; patience and tenacity; self-confidence; communication skills; and the ability to attract external support when needed (Bithar and Lowenthal, 2016: 2).

Because of their disruptive nature, many have studied the role of violence in democratic transitions. According to Paul Collier, political violence can occur due to two reasons: lack of accountability and low legitimacy. In the former case, if the regime is not able to deliver performances as expected by the general public, this leads to grievances that might resort to violence (2009: 18). A legitimate government has a clear sense of tasks they would do, such as improve the economy or infrastructures, and this entitles it to face down the opposition. But when the government is not able to fulfill such tasks, they seem illegitimate and this provides a reason for political violence (p.19). Bermeo claims that high levels of popular mobilization do not always lead to democratic transitions (1997: 314). She contends that extremist demands and high levels of mobilization in civil society often occur amidst democratic transitions which can also lead to violence (Bermeo: 316).

Similarly, Charney believes that businesses helped the South African transition by creating and running institutions to curb political violence (1999: 182). He further believes that there are implications from the South African transition that could be helpful for understanding other transitions. Businesses serve as stabilizing agents when states cannot fulfill their normal public
function of regulating social conflict (1999: 183). For instance, in 1989, business management's threats of closing factories in Mpumalanga and in Natal brought the concerned parties to the bargaining table. In a sense, the South African businesses took up the role of an intermediary in order to cease violence.

Similar to Bermeo, Roberts believes that political leaders exist at the top of a pyramidal structure of relationships (2002: 525). At the base of that pyramid are the people who support the elites who in return, reward the base (2002: 525). Violence often occurs when this relationship is challenged (2002: 525). Mansfield and Synder believe that a lack of institutional capacity to sustain democratic politics increases the risk of international and civil war in countries (2009: 381).

To some, nationalism is a key causal mechanism, in addition to factionalism and foreign scapegoating, which links incomplete democratization to conflict (Mansfield and Synder, 2009: 382). What happens, according to them, is that in an incomplete democracy with weak institutions, the desire to expand their political participation often spurs nationalism in ethnic minorities (2009: 384). At the same time, ethnic or statist nationalism of dominant groups might also intensify because they want to regain their control (2009: 384). That is the point where the conflict starts. Hoglund, too, believes that the overall objective of electoral violence is to influence the electoral process (2009: 415). In addition, he claims that most internationally sponsored peace agreements today revolve around holding free and fair elections (Hoglund: 414).

Although nationalism is a widely employed concept, its meaning differs. According to Gellner, nationalism is a) a political consciousness shared by a set of people who also share a similar national interest; b) a political ideology which considers the nation as the main determinant of a nation-state; c) a preference for the protection of interests of the members of a nation over the interests of ethnic groups; and d) an overestimation of the characteristics of one nation or ethnic
country at the expense of other nations or ethnicities which can lead to intolerance and ethnic conflicts (1997: 5). Nationalism evolved as an expression of aspirations for those who wished to achieve national independence, freedom, and sovereignty in the 18th and 19th century and it became stronger during anti-colonial movements around the world (Llunji, 2014: 55). For instance, in Kosovo, the Yugoslav federation suppressed nationalist sentiments for a long period of time stirring collective frustration among people in Kosovo (Llunji: 57). This factor, in addition to others (such as ethnic tensions and authoritarianism), led to an explosion of nationalism in Kosovo (Llunji: 58).

Jack Snyder believes that the connection between democratization and conflicts are often fueled by nationalism (2000: 27). He argues that generally, during the early stages of democratization, popular nationalism (which tends to be weak among the masses) typically arises because elites exploit this nationalism approach for their own benefit (Snyder: 32).

Although there is an emotional and psychological factor associated with nationalism which makes it difficult to quantify, I draw on Webster (1995), by adopting his key expressions of nationalism, and apply them to my respective cases. Some of the key expressions of nationalism that I will be looking into are: laws and policies concerning citizenship and loyalty, the use of language and the use of surnames; and the importance of caste and ethnic identities.

In addition to nationalism, regional influences may impact the nature of transitions. According to Pevehouse, democracy is often viewed as a domestic political process which is not influenced by actors outside of the nation-state (2002: 515). Yet, Pevehouse claims that the promotion of democracy has become a foreign policy goal for many existing democracies and International Governmental organizations (IGOs) such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Union, among others (516). For example, in the 1980s, the European
Community (EC) played a key role in consolidating democracies in southern Europe (Huntington, 1991: 14). In countries such as Greece, Spain, and Portugal, the EC played a significant role in making sure these countries not only transition into democracy but sustain it (Huntington: 14). These countries adopted democracy in order to secure the economic benefits of EC membership. The EC influenced these countries in order to live up to its status as a “guarantor of the stability of democracy” (Huntington: 14). Some of the potential causal mechanisms that might have either served as external guarantor or threats are: diplomatic and economic pressure from outside; and social elites and their roles in the transitions (525). I will use these potential causal mechanisms and see if regional powers, including India and China, used such tools to influence Bhutan and Nepal’s transitions to democracy.

II. Historical Overview:

i. Bhutan:

Bhutan has almost 1400 years of history. In the 1640s, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel created the “Dual System” where the religious and the spiritual aspects of the country were handled by the Zhabdrung himself and the political aspect was handled by the Desi, a secular ruler designated by the Zhabdrung (Phuntsho, 2008: 227). Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel is credited with unifying Bhutan and creating the "Bhutanese identity" that remains present to this day (Mathou, 2009:229). The Desi appointed Penlops (provincial governors) who further appointed Dzongpoens (lord of the dzong) as sub-district authorities (Mathou, 2009:229). Penlops would fight the Desi for power or among themselves for more territory. The same applied to Dzongpoens.

Bhutan was under the autocratic rule of the Wangchuck Dynasty since 1907. Prior to 1907, there were many power structures in Bhutan which were consumed by infighting. Bhutan had various experiences of a democratic system in the past under the monarchial system of Bhutan.
The third King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, established the parliamentary body, known as the National Assembly, in 1953, instituting a consultative and a law-making body (Chhoden, 2009: 3). It was then followed with the establishment of the judicial system in 1960 and the Royal Advisory Council in 1968 (Chhoden, 2009: 3). Furthermore, the third king of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, passed a royal decree in 1968 which vested the National Assembly with institutional sovereignty and the power to remove the king through a vote of no-confidence (based on a two-thirds majority) (Bothe, 2015). This decree came into force in 1969 (Bothe, 2015). In a continuation of the process of decentralization, the District Development Committee (DDC) and Block Development Committee (BDC) were introduced in 1981 and 1991, respectively (Chhoden, 2009: 3). These institutions were established in order to transfer the responsibility for planning, financing, and managing certain public functions from the central government to district level (DDC) and further, to the most local, block level (BDC). On September 4, 2001, the King issued a Royal Decree commanding the drafting of a constitution which became another bold step by the King on the path to democratization (Turner & Tshering, 2014: 197).

The fourth king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, instituted more significant changes. He dissolved the former council of ministers in 1998 and announced that ministers formerly appointed by him would instead be approved by the National Assembly via votes (Bothe, 2015). Similarly, in 1998, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck reduced his role to being head of the state alone, calling for the election of a prime minister as the head of the government (Bothe, 2015). The post of the prime minister was selected annually from among the cabinet ministers who were elected by the National Assembly (Bothe, 2015). Power sharing, even in a rudimentary form, was present in Bhutan long before institutional democracy was adopted. Traces of democracy may have existed even when Bhutan was an absolute monarchy. These traces could be seen in events
such as the formation of a parliamentary system by the third king, vesting the parliament with the power to remove the King if need be, decentralizing power from the central government to national and sub-national levels, and the election of ministers in 1998. Bhutan was experimenting with democracy even when it was not a democratic state. Democracy in Bhutan was a top-down-approach. Bhutan's democratic journey began from the palace. "Democracy is a gift from the golden throne," says most Bhutanese (Phunstho, 2008). When there was reluctance from the people for change, the fourth king insisted on establishing a democratic system (Phunstho, 2008).

Bhutan has three broad ethnic groups: The Ngalop in the West, of Tibetan origin; the Sharchop in the East, of Indo- Mongoloid origin; and the Lhotshampas in the South, believed to be of Nepalese origin (Hutt: 399, 1996). The idea of Bhutanese nationalism was first introduced by Zhhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel in the 1600s when he devised Bhutanese customs, traditions and ceremonies in order to develop a unique cultural identity for Bhutan (Mathou, 2009: 229). This idea was further expanded by the government of Bhutan which came up with various programs since the 1980s. For instance, in 1980, the government introduced the Marriage Act, which restricted marriage with non-Bhutanese (Hutt: 410). In addition, in 1985, the Citizenship Act was introduced, which allowed citizenship to one whose both parents were born in Bhutan (Hutt: 401). If a Bhutanese married a non-Bhutanese, in order to achieve citizenship, the non-Bhutanese should have at least 15 years of residency, as well as be able to speak, write and read Dzongkha, the national language of Bhutan since 1979 (Hutt: 410). Furthermore, the policy of Driglam Namzha (national customs and etiquette) was brought to light during Bhutan's Sixth Five Year Plan (1987-92) (Hutt: 403). It included a policy of “one nation one people” and made it mandatory for all to adhere to traditional Bhutanese dress (Gho for men and Kira for women) and
etiquette (Hutt: 403). These policies were introduced in order to create and preserve cultural identity and to bolster Bhutanese nationalism.

Regionally, Bhutan has a very strong bilateral relationship with India. This relationship started with the signing of the 1949 treaty of India-Bhutan Friendship (Indian Embassy: Bhutan, 2017). According to the treaty, India will “guide” Bhutan on its foreign and defense policies. The treaty was revised again in 2007, when the two sides agreed to “cooperate with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and the interest of the other” (“Why is Bhutan special to India”, 2017). By 1968, India had appointed a resident representative in Bhutan which was taken as a sign of strengthening friendship between the two countries (Indian Embassy: Bhutan, 2017). In addition, India is Bhutan’s largest trading partner since 1972 and, during Bhutan’s 11th Five Year Plan (2013-18), India committed to supporting Bhutan with 4500 Million Rupees (Indian Embassy: Bhutan: 2017). These points demonstrate an influential relationship between India and Bhutan. Although Bhutan has diplomatic relations with 52 states, India is its closest ally (Foreign Ministry of Bhutan, 2017). Bhutan and China lack diplomatic ties. They have engaged in almost 19 rounds of high-level talks regarding a border dispute where China was accused to constructing roads in Bhutanese territory, and India sent its troops into the disputed area in order to help Bhutan (“Why is Bhutan special to India”, 2017).

Nepal:

Nepal was under the leadership of a monarchical family, the Shah Dynasty, for almost 265 years (16th century to 21st century) (Parajulee, 2000). Nepal attempted to transition to democracy when it was under the autocratic rule of the Shah Dynasty. The first ruler of the dynasty, Prithvi Narayan Shah is credited with unifying Nepal and creating a nation-state in the 1700s (Osmani
and Bajracharya, 2007). Prior of the 1700s, Nepal was divided into more than 50 principalities and Prithvi Narayan Shah was the ruler of Gorkha, a principality (Osmani and Bajracharya, 2007). Prithvi Narayan Shah brought all the principalities together and became the first King of Nepal.

Nepal’s journey to democracy, unlike Bhutan’s was a bottom-up approach and can be divided into four phases. Nepal’s first transition took place from 1950 to 1959, when King Tribhuvan fled to India when Ranas (who were a hereditary family of Prime Ministers of Nepal from 1846 – 1951) became a perceived threat to the king (Kantha, 2008: 62). The Delhi Agreement of 1951, which was a negotiation between the king, the Ranas and the Nepali Congress, decided that a democratic system would be established by an elected Constituent Assembly (Kantha, 2008: 62). It did not work out well because the traditional elites, including the King, violated the Delhi Agreement, and further, it was poorly implemented. King Tribhuvan died in 1955 and was succeeded by his son Mahendra. In violation of the Delhi Agreement, although Nepal held its first general election in 1959 (in which the Nepali Congress Party won), by late 1960, the king had the cabinet arrested and seized power for himself (Parajulee, 2000).

The next transition took place from 1979 to 1981, during a time of growing turbulence against King Birendra after he had tried to centralize the system, hereby alienating the opposition (Osmani and Bajracharya, 2007). A referendum was held in 1980 which was ordered by King Birendra on May 24, 1979 (Osmani and Bajracharya, 2007). The referendum was on whether the Nepali public wanted to continue with the party-less Panchayat System or to opt for a multi-party system (Osmani and Bajracharya, 2007). The no-party system which was favored by the King secured victory in the referendum with 55% votes (Kantha, 2008: 64). From 1979 to 1981, political parties functioned even without any legal recognition and the press was unrestrained too (Kantha, 2008: 64).
The third transition took place from 1990 to 1991 when there was a movement for the restoration of democracy by the Nepali Congress (Kantha, 2008: 64). The fourth transition then took place in 2008. Nepal had tried to transform to democracy a couple of times before they completed it in 2008, but it was driven by rupture and conflict between King Gyanendra and Nepal's parliamentary parties (Parajulee, 2000).

Nepal has long struggled to create a formal constitution (Kantha, 2013). In 2012, Nepal was still using the interim constitution that was drafted by the Constituent Assembly in 2007 (Kantha, 2013). In addition, on May 27, 2012, the Constituent Assembly of Nepal was dissolved, leaving the country without any proper parliament (Kantha, 2013). Political parties were often fighting. As an illustration, when there was a debate on the fashioning of Nepal’s federal system (in 2012), people were split into two camps. For example, the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist wanted weak federalism whereas Madhesis (who are considered low caste) demanded ethnic-based federalism with an autonomous Madhesis province (Parajulee, 2000).

With regards to the diversity within society, Nepal is approximately 86% Hindu and although it does not establish Hinduism as the state religion, it is the only official Hindu state in the world (CIA World Factbook: Nepal, 2017). According to the latest estimates (2011), Nepal has almost 125 ethnic groups including Newars, Indians, Tibetans, Gurungs, Magars, Tamangs, Bhitias, Rais, Limbus, Sherpas (CIA World Factbook, 2017).

Regionally, Nepal’s relations are dominated by a bitter relationship with India. On one hand, they signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1950 and India has been providing Nepal with substantial financial and technical development assistance since 1951 (Indian Embassy: Nepal, 2017). For instance, the total economic assistance from India under the tag, "Aid to Nepal" budget for FY 2016-17 was 300 Million Rupees (2017). On the other hand, India and Nepal have
significant disputes over a region, the source of Kalapani River (which is almost 400 Square Km). According to the Saguali Treaty which was signed between Nepal and British-India on 4 March, 1816, Kali river belongs to Nepal (CIA World Factbook, 2017). Nepal claims that the river to the west of Kalapani river is the Kali river but insists that east of the Kalapani is the main Kali river (CIA World Factbook, 2017).

III. Methodology and Research Design:

Why was Nepal’s transition to democracy marred by violence, while Bhutan’s has been largely peaceful? There are many variables to analyze this difference.

a) Variables:

Although political scientists have examined various factors that explain democratic transitions, not all of those factors can be applied in any singular case, and their importance varies. Factors such as economic crisis, popular mobilization of people for democratic values and international pressure join multiple other factors to holistically analyze democratic transitions.

Scholars such as Burton, Gunther, and Higley claim that democratic transitions can also take place when there is an endogenous process of consensus building among elites in regard to rules and codes of political institutions (Schneider, 2001, 218). In addition, they also state that elites can come to consensus through either settlement with themselves or through convergence (218). Yet, it does not seem that democracy in Nepal was not elite-driven. Instead, when people pushed for it in 1950, 1979 and again in 1990, the king of Nepal tried to suppress them by either ignoring it in the first place or accepting it but never actually implementing it (Kantha, 2008: 62). In the minds of many people, such actions by the leaders of Nepal shattered the aura and the mythology that
kings of Nepal were a reincarnation of Lord Vishnu (“Last Nepal King breaks ancient Taboo”, 2010).

Similarly, other factors that might help explain the difference in the process would be income level, the presence of young people, adult literacy rate and rule of law. As Lipset has put forward the importance of economic development as a condition for democracy to work, when it came to operationalize it, he measured it in terms of wealth and industrialization which was further measured in terms of per capita income (1959:75). As per the World Bank, the income level of Nepal was 12.454 Billion USD in comparison to Bhutan's 1.258 Billion USD in 2008. Due to the huge gap between the GDPs of the two countries, it would not be appropriate to compare the respective income levels. Furthermore, although Lipset also talked about how education is another important indicator of democracy (1959:75), the adult literacy rate of both Bhutan and Nepal cannot be used as a factor. Although according to the Human Development Index, both countries had a similar level of adult literacy rate in 2008 (Nepal had 52.8% and Bhutan had 57.4%), the two countries have a huge difference in terms of overall population. For instance, 2017 estimates show that Bhutan has a population of roughly 0.8 million, whereas Nepal has roughly 29 million people (The World Factbook). This population gap of 2017 is similar to the gap in 2008. In that regard, the literacy rates of both countries were also not similar in 2008.

Scholars such as Huntington, Lee and Bitar and Lowenthal have pointed out the importance of popular mobilization as a defining element of Asian democratization which was mostly carried out by younger generations. The percentage of young people cannot be used as another indicator of this study due to the huge difference in total population number. According to UNICEF, the percentage of young people (aged 15 to 24) was 21.86% in Nepal and 19.21% in Bhutan in 2008.
It will be interesting to see if the presence and absence of popular mobilization in Nepal and Bhutan had to do with the presence of the young generation in both countries.

Most of the conventional indicators such as GDP, GDP per capita, Literacy rate and popular mobilization seem to not have much explanatory power in the case of the transitions of Nepal and Bhutan. Factors such as nationalism and regional influences might prove better in explaining the cases, as I will examine.

**Proposed Hypotheses:**

a) A stronger sense of statist nationalism in Bhutan explains its peaceful transition whereas contested conceptions of nationalism in Nepal explains its comparatively violent transition. I will measure nationalism by looking at laws and policies, ethnic and caste identity, and importance or surnames.

b) A strong and supportive regional influence helped Bhutan have a peaceful democratic transition whereas a lack of a positive regional influence in Nepal helps explain its comparatively violent democratic transition. Because of the large influence of India in both countries, I will closely examine its role.

**IV. Organization:**

The four chapters of this thesis will develop an explanation of why Bhutan and Nepal had violent and non-violent democratic transition post-2008. In Chapter 2, I will examine the role of nationalism and regional influence in Nepal’s democratic transition after 2008. Chapter 3 studies the role of nationalism and regional influence in Bhutan’s democratic transition in the same time period. Chapter 4 reviews the principal findings, considers responses to my arguments, examines
alternative explanations, and discusses limitations of comparing two similar cases with different outcomes and offers thoughts for future research.
Chapter Two:

Nationalism and Regional Influence in Nepal’s Political Transitions

This chapter will look into a brief history of Nepal and will highlight key events that occurred in Nepal prior 2008 and also after 2008. This chapter also discusses how nationalism and regional influences have impacted the political transitions in Nepal. In terms of nationalism, factors such as surnames, caste and ethnic identity will be studied, and the roles of India and China will be studied to understand their influence in Nepalese transitions. Nepal’s political transitions have been marred by violence as noted by Shah (2016) and Jha (2016).

Country Profile:

Nepal is a South Asian state of approximately 29 million people (CIA World Factbook, 2018). It is an immensely diverse country in many aspects: geography, ethnicity, language, religion, and caste. It was born as a nation in 1768 when Prithvi Narayan Shah took control of the city of Kathmandu and its surrounding principalities and declared a unified state (The Carter Center, 2009: 21). Prithvi Narayan Shah’s descendants ruled Nepal as hereditary monarchs until 1846, when another family, the Ranas, took absolute power and ruled as hereditary Prime Ministers for more than a century (The Carter Center, 2009: 21).

The Ranas were toppled in 1951 by a movement which was led by the Nepal Congress Party (NC) which was supported by then-King Tribhuvan (“Nepal profile – Timeline,” BBC, 2017). In the same year, the Nepali Congress Party and Rana family members agreed to form a coalition government. In 1959, King Mahendra put forward a new constitution under which a general election was held, and the NC won with the majority vote and formed the government (“Nepal profile - Timeline,” BBC, 2017). King Mahendra staged a coup in 1960 and assumed
direct power by dismissing the Nepali Congress government (The Carter Center, 2009: 21). A new constitution was put into effect in 1962, according to which, the King was supposed to rule the country directly (The Carter Center, 2009: 21). This new regime was known as the party-less system (*Panchayat System*). In 1990, a people’s movement (*Jana Andolan*), led by the Nepali Congress and the United Left Front, erupted against the Panchayat regime (The Carter Center, 2009: 21).

In 1990, King Birendra agreed to dissolve the Panchayat System and a new democratic constitution was drafted. This system rejected most of the King’s direct powers but still allowed him to keep his constitutional status and maintain this title (Savada, 1993). The Nepali Congress Party won the general election of 1991 and Girija Prasad Koirala became the Prime Minister. In 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist began an armed rebellion calling it the “people’s war” against the government (The Carter Center, 2009: 21). King Birendra was assassinated by the crown prince Dipendra, who then shot and killed himself, in 2001. Gyanendra, King Birendra's brother, was crowned the new King of Nepal. In 2002, King Gyanendra dissolved the parliament and also terminated the Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, who was blamed for not being able to hold an election (“Nepal profile - Timeline,” BBC, 2017). Afterwards, a series of governments were formed which were led by Prime Ministers who were chosen personally by the King. In February 2005, King Gyanendra staged a coup and took direct power. He also expressed his intention to fight the Maoists. In November of the same year, the Maoists and the major parliamentary parties came to an agreement on starting a movement to end the direct rule of King Gyanendra (“Timeline-Milestones in Political History of Nepal,” 2008). Following such extensive discussion, in April 2006, The Second People’s Movement (*Jana Andolan II*) took place, which was advocated by political parties and the Maoists. Due to massive street protests and widespread

In November of 2006, a peace agreement was signed between the government and the Maoists which brought an end to the decade-long conflict (1996 – 2006) known as the “People’s War.” In April, 2007, the Maoists became a part of the interim government which was led by Prime Minister Koirala. In May of 2007, the Constituent Assembly election was postponed from June to November due to a lack of adequate preparation for the election.

In September of 2007, the Maoists left the interim government and demanded the immediate abolition of the monarchy and changes to the electoral law ("Timeline-Milestones in Political History of Nepal," 2008). In October, elections were postponed as the Maoists refused to participate unless their demands were fulfilled. The government negotiated with the Maoists, who joined the government in December. Elections took place in April 2008, in which the Maoists won 38.2% of the seats, followed by the Nepali Congress with 19.1%, Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) with 18.1% and lastly by Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF) with 8.8% (The Carter Center, 2009: 22). In May of 2008, the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly took place and Nepal officially embarked on its path as a federal, democratic republic (Parakh, 2015).

In July of 2008, Ram Baran Yadav was elected as Nepal’s first president, and Paramanand Jha as Nepal’s first vice-President. They were both victorious in the presidential run-off held in the Constituent Assembly where he got 308 votes while the Maoist sponsored candidate, Ram Raja Prasad Singh got 282 votes ("Timeline-Milestones in Political History of Nepal," 2008). Both men are Madhesi minorities, which is a group who has felt they are being discriminated and not
considered “Nepali”. So, when two of the highest posts were won by candidates belonging to this minority, it seemed like things were getting back on track for minorities in the newly formed republic of Nepal. In August 2008, Maoist leader Prachanda formed a coalition government and the Nepali Congress became the opposition (The Carter Center, 2014: 20). In May 2009, both PM Prachanda and President Yadav resigned, and Madhav Kumar Nepal was named the new PM (The Carter Center, 2014: 20). The Maoists went into the opposition and launched a series of protests. In December of 2009, four people were killed in clashes for land grabs in the western region of Nepal and the Maoist Party supported the protests (The Carter Center, 2014: 20). By May of 2010, the governing coalition and the Maoist opposition could not come up with a new constitution, so they agreed to extend the deadline to May 2011 (Parakh, 2015). In June of 2010, PM Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned under Maoist pressure, but he kept on serving as a caretaker PM for seven months because the parties involved could not come to an agreement on who to elect as a replacement (The Carter Center, 2014: 20). In February 2011, Jhala Nath Khanal was elected as the new PM. In May of the same year, the Constituent Assembly again failed to draft a new constitution and the deadline was further extended for three months, although the Supreme Court claimed that both extensions were unconstitutional (Parakh, 2015). In February of 2014, the Nepali Congress leader, Sushil Koirala was elected the new PM after he secured parliamentary support. The parliament passed a constitution in September 2015 after which protests were organized mostly by ethnic minorities and by people in Terai regions (“Nepal profile - Timeline,” BBC, 2017). They believed that the new constitution was discriminatory against them as they contended that it had been rushed by established parties, which were dominated by high-caste leaders (Haviland, 2015). In addition, according to the new constitution, the proportional representative system at the parliament would be reduced to 48% (from 58% under the previous post-war interim
constitution) and the minority groups believed that it was discriminatory against them (Haviland, 2015). According to the Human Rights Watch, at least forty-five people were killed (2015). In addition, Madhesi communities created a border blockade which led to fuel shortages in the country. The blockade was eventually removed in February 2016. In October of 2015, K. P. Prasad became the first PM to be elected after the new constitution was drafted (“Nepal profile - Timeline,” BBC, 2017). In August of 2016, the parliament elected the Maoist Party leader Prachanda as the PM for the second time. In June of 2017, Prachanda was replaced as PM by Sher Bahadur Deuba. In November 2017, dozens of attacks were reportedly carried out by Maoist militants, seriously injuring at least seventeen people (Bhandari & Schultz, 2017).

Nepal’s political transitions after 2008 have been marked with unstable leadership (where many leaders have come and gone) and protests, most of which ended in violence.

**Nationalism in Nepal:**

Nationalism, expressed in the form of ethnicity and caste, plays a very vital role in the politics of Nepal. Caste and ethnicity seem to be used interchangeably in Nepal (Sharma, 2007). According to the CIA World Factbook, 125 caste or ethnic groups were reported in the national census and 123 languages were also reported as mother tongue in 2011. It is “unimaginable” to not know the caste of people in Nepal (Gellner, 2007: 1823). The caste system of Nepal is inclusive as well as exclusive at the same time. It is inclusive because it encompasses all ethnic groups in Nepal with their varied languages, cultures, traditions and belief systems (GSEA, 2006: 11). It is exclusionary because it classifies all these ethnic groups as distinct castes within the broad framework of the four Varnas of the Hindu Caste system (GSEA, 2006: 11). The foundations of social exclusion based on somebody’s ethnicity and caste were laid after the Gorkhali invasion in the 19th Century (Jones & Langford, 2011: 371). Both Nepal’s unification under Prithvi Narayan
Shah and its consolidation under the Rana regime (1851 – 1951) were organized based on the Hindu caste system of the four Varnas which were further based on the concepts of ritual purity and pollution (Bennett, 2005: 5). The four Varnas are: a) Brahmans, who are considered to be the pure and priestly, b) Kshatriya, are considered to be warriors, c) Vaishya, who are merchants, and d) Sudra, the peasants and laborers (Bennett, 2005: 6). Beneath these four Varnas is an occupational group called Achut, who consist of leather workers, cleaners. This group is not only considered to be outside of the Hindu caste system but also considered to be “impure” and “untouchable” (Bennett, 2005: 6). Table 2.1 shows the social classification of the ethnic groups and caste groups during the Shah-Rana period which is still relevant.

At the top of the hierarchy is the “pure” caste, collectively called Pani Chalne or “those from whom water can be accepted.” This “pure” group is further classified into three sub-groups namely, wearers of the sacred thread (Tagadhari), liquor drinkers (Matwali) but non-enslavable and liquor drinkers (Matwali) but enslavable. Hill Hindus or the Parbatiya are at the top as well as at the bottom of the hierarchy. They speak a Sanskrit-based language called Khas from which the Nepali language has also evolved (GSEA, 2006: 11). Among the hill Hindus, the Bahuns (Brahmins), the Chhetris and the Thakuris (Kshatriya) are classified as “pure” whereas hill Hindus such as Sarke (cobbler) are classified as “impure.” Even the “impure” group which is collectively known as Pani Nachalne or “those from whom water cannot be accepted” is further classified into “touchable” and “untouchable” (Bennett, 2005: 6).

Since the 19th century, the creation of the Nepalese state was synonymous with the creation of a Hindu state and monarchy (Jones & Langford, 2011: 371). For instance, during this time, high-level positions in the state were awarded exclusively to those belonging to high castes such as Bahun, Chhetri, and Thakuri (Jones & Langford: 371). Caste is often revealed simply through
surnames, a “sure-fire indicator” of what one’s caste or ethnic group is as shown in Table 2.2 (Gellner, 2007: 1823)
Table 2.1: Nepal Social Hierarchy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hierarchy</th>
<th>Habitat</th>
<th>Belief/Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) Water Acceptable (Pure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Wearers of the scared thread (Tagadhari)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Upper caste” Brahmans and Chhetris (Parbatiya)</td>
<td>Hills</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Upper caste” (Madhesi)</td>
<td>Terai</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Upper caste” (Newar)</td>
<td>Kathmandu Valley</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Matwali Alcohol drinkers (non-enslavable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurung, Magar, Sunuwar, Thakali, Rai, Limbu</td>
<td>Hills</td>
<td>Tribal/Shamanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newar</td>
<td>Kathmandu Valley</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Matawali Alcohol drinkers (enslavable)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhote (including Tamang)</td>
<td>Mountains/Hills</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chepang, Gharti, Hayu</td>
<td>Hills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumal, Tharu</td>
<td>Inner Terai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Animism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Water un-acceptable/Pani Nachalne (Impure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Touchable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhobi, Kasai, Kusale, Kulu</td>
<td>Katmandu Valley</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musalman</td>
<td>Terai</td>
<td>Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mlechha (foreigner)</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Christianity, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Untouchable (achut)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badi, Damai, Gaine, Kadara, Kami, Sarki (Parbatiya)</td>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chyame, Pode (Newar)</td>
<td>Kathmandu Valley</td>
<td>Hinduism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Bennett, Dahal & Govindasamy (2008)*
Table 2.2. Common surnames in Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surnames:</th>
<th>Khas-Chhetri/Thakuri/Sanyasi</th>
<th>Magar</th>
<th>Khas-Brahmin</th>
<th>Tamang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| (Vajracharya/Gubhaju/ 
Khadgi/Shahi) |                               |       |              |        |
| (Sharma/Acharya/Subedi) |                               |       |              |        |

Source: Nepal Federalism Debate, 2014
With regard to Bhutanese names, a religious person gives names with prayer and blessings in Bhutan. Bhutanese names have spiritual significance and are mostly based on Buddhist principles and persons (“What is in a name?”, 2015). Generally, most Bhutanese have two names in which the first names are mostly gender neutral whereas the second name marks the sex and is gender restrictive (“What is in a name?”, 2015). For example, a man can be Sanjay Dorji (Adamantine Buddha) and a woman can be Tshultrim Lhamo (Goddess of Morality). Bhutanese names do not include family names or surnames except for royal family and some noble families (“What is in a name?”, 2015). That means in Bhutan both men and women do not take the family's name and, especially for women, they do not take their father's name before marriage, nor do they take their husband's name after marriage like in Nepal. The children's names are different from their parents and also different from their siblings.

In the 19th century and into the late 20th century, wealth was measured in terms of the size and amount of land one owned (Gellner, 2007: 1823). Those who held more land, such as Bahuns and Chhetris (high caste), were powerful, and those who never held land such as Dalits (low caste), were considered powerless and dependent on others (Gellner, 2007: 1823). Later during the autocratic Rana regime (1846 – 1951), more power was given to ones belonging to high caste when the society was classified based on orthodox Hindu nations (Gellner, 2007: 1823). As an illustration, the National Legal Code of 1854, known as the *Muluki Ain*, attempted to apply the “dharmasastras” (a collection of ancient Sanskrit texts, outlining the codes of conduct and moral principles for Hindus) to the laws of a heterogeneous country (Gellner, 2007: 1823). According to the Legal Code, all groups were called *Jat*, distinguished by wearing the sacred thread, the *Tagadhari*. Tagadhari wearers were viewed as elites and those who did not wear the sacred thread
were known as the *Matwali*, or alcohol-consuming classes. The detailed classification of caste in the *Muluki Ain*, is given in Table 2.3.
Table 2.3: Caste Categories of Muluki Ain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hierarchy</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Social Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Wearers of the holy cord</td>
<td>Parbate Bahun/Chhetri, Newar Brahman, Indian Brahman, Newar Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Non-enslavable alcohol drinkers</td>
<td>Magar &amp; Gurung (associated with Gorkhali army), Sunuwar (Hinduised), Newar (Buddhist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Enslavable alcohol drinkers</td>
<td>Bhote (Buddhist), Chepang/Kumal/Hayu (ethnic minorities), Tharu (Tarai ethnic), Gharti (progeny of freed slaves)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Impure but touchable</td>
<td>Low caste Newar, Muslim, Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Impure and untouchable</td>
<td>Parbate artisan castes, Newar scavenger castes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gurung, 2005
Ethnicity influences many events in the history of the politics of Nepal. For example, from 1960 until 1990, when Nepal was ruled by the Panchayat System, King Mahendra discouraged ethnic and caste affiliations in nation-building (Gellner, 2007: 1824). All political parties were banned, and all groups were designed to mobilize for the country's development. Even in this system, the people belonging to higher caste such as Bahuns, Chhetris, and some Newars were benefitting the most. One’s opportunity to play a role in nation building was determined by one’s education level. Individuals belonging to the higher caste were the ones’ who were highly educated. In addition, the People's War (1996-2006) was started by the Maoists on the ground that the ethnic and caste discrimination in Nepal had to stop. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN(M)] played the ethnic card for their own interest (Gellner, 2007: 1826). For example, they established their bases in tribal areas such as Rolpa and Rakum which made it easier for them to recruit people to their cause and to garner more support from minorities with their goal to abolish monarchy (Gellner, 2007: 1826). Due to this initiative, building their bases in minority settled places, the Maoists triumphantly won in 2008 with the largest percentage of seats in the parliament (38.2%) (The Carter Center, 2009: 22).

Similarly, the Constituent Assembly is structured to be the most inclusive and representative legislative body ever formed in Nepal (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016: 2010). According to Nepal’s interim constitution of 2007, the Constituent Assembly is composed of members elected on the basis of the equality of population, geographical congeniality and specificity, and on the basis of the percentage of the population in Madhes (The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2063, 2007). The members will be nominated on the basis of the following clauses:

(a) The members elected on the basis of first-past-the-post electoral system consisting of one member from each of the two hundred and forty election constituencies delimited by the Election
(b) Three hundred and thirty-five members to be elected on basis of the proportional electoral system where voters vote for parties while treating the whole country as a single election constituency; and

(c) Twenty-six members to be nominated by the Council of Ministers, on the basis of understanding, from amongst the prominent persons who have rendered outstanding contributions to national life, and the indigenous peoples which could not be represented through the elections as referred to in Clauses (a) and (b).

It further adds,

For the purpose of the election to the Constituent Assembly, every citizen of Nepal who has attained the age of eighteen years on or before the last day of the month of Mangsir of the year 2063, (15 December 2007) shall be entitled to vote, as provided in law (The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2063, 2007).

Still, minorities such as the Raute, who are only about 618 people, according to the 2011 census, remain unrepresented at the constituent assembly (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016: 2012). The first Constituent Assembly was dissolved in May of 2012 because it was unable to put a new constitution into effect. They also lacked consensus on the number, boundaries, or names of the new federal states (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016: 2012). In 2010, the Committee for State Restructuring and Distribution of State Power (CSRDSP) had proposed fourteen federal states in Nepal (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016: 2012). Seven out of fourteen were supposed to use ethnic names, five with geographic names and two were supposed to have combined ethnic-linguistic-geographic names (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016: 2012). This proposal was not positively received by smaller states whose leaders viewed such moves as impracticable.

Later in 2012, the High-Level State Restructuring Commission (HLSRC) was given the responsibility to develop an alternative plan. They proposed ten territorial states and one non-territorial state (for Dalits). Out of ten, six were given ethnic names, two with geographic names, and two with mixed names. In the same context, a minority of the HLSRC did not agree with the proposal and instead proposed for six non-ethnic geographic states (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016: 2012).
As a result, the Constituent Assembly was unable to vote on any form of a constitution. The Supreme Court refused the Constituent Assembly’s request for further extensions and the Constituent Assembly was dissolved in 2012 (Adhikari & Gellner, 2016: 2012). The first Constituent Assembly was dissolved because it could not decide Nepal’s federalism would be based in ethnicity *(Jatiya-Sanghhiyata)* or identity *(Pahican-Sahitko Sanghiyata)*. Ethnicity was so important for Nepal that both committees, (the CSRDSP and HLSRC), which were responsible to create states for Nepal, were not agreeing on the number and the boundaries of states but were in consensus for the distribution of states based on ethnicities.

Nepal is home to more than 100 “indigenous nationalities” but none of these nationalities can be considered as a majority group (Shresthra, 2008: 199), as shown in Table 2.4 and Figure 2.1. Even the predominant Khas population, which consists of Hill Brahmin (Bahun) and Chhetri castes who speak Nepali and practice Hinduism, are not in the majority (Shresthra, 2008: 199). Although Madhesis make up 30% of population, they are not included in the Table 2.4 or Figure 2.1. It is because Madhesi are the people who inhabit that flat southern region of Nepal (the Terai plains) (Shresthra, 2008: 199). Madheshi include caste groups such as Brahmin and Dalits, religions such as Hindu and Islam, and linguistic groups such as Maithili, Bhojpuri and Tharu (Shresthra, 2008: 199). There is a clear tension between the civic form of nationalism and ethnic nationalism. The ruling minority (Khas) has imposed its language, religion and culture upon all other nationalities under the name of civic nationalism (Sharma, 2007). Other nationalities have tried to rescue their culture, religion and language from this one-sided nationalism (so-called the caste-hill Hindu elite nationalism) through ethnic movements but internal hierarchies and competitions within these groups have led to disunity among themselves (Sharma, 2007).
Figure 2.1: Ethnic Groups in Nepal (2011)

Source: CIA World Factbook, 2011
Table 2.4: Some distinct ethnic/caste features reported in the 1991, 2001 and 2011 censuses, Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1991 census</th>
<th>2001 census</th>
<th>2011 census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total ethnic/caste groups reported</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terai</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition of ethnic/caste groups from previous census</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic/caste groups listed in the previous census were not reported in following census</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of ethnic/caste groups whose population size declined than the previous census</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regional influences

Since 1950, Nepal’s most significant regional relationship is with India. The people of India and Nepal share many family bonds, and the majority of them share the same religion. Indians and Nepalis can travel freely across borders. Yet the governments of Nepal and India have almost always shared a bittersweet relationship (Sharma, 2016). It is often said that India “midwifed” the birth of democracy in Nepal (Mishra, 2004: 630). In 1950, India provided refuge to Nepal’s King Tribhuvan and his family when they sensed some security threat against them in Nepal from the Ranas because King Tribhuvan was involved in a campaign which was aimed at removing the Rana oligarchy from power (Mishra, 2004: 630). In addition to providing refuge, India envisaged a deal for Nepal’s political future. India’s Prime Minister Nehru even called it a "middle way" that included a constituent assembly whose prime responsibility will be to draft a constitution, an interim government with popular representation but a Rana Prime Minister and recognition of King Tribhuvan (Mishra, 2004: 630). Although all three involved parties (New Delhi, Ranas and King Tribhuvan) agreed to the deal, they were neither consulted nor given an opportunity to sit together and discuss the deal with India (Mishra, 2004: 630). Every communication regarding the deal took place through PM Nehru and not among the parties involved (Ranas and King Tribhuvan).

After the death of King Tribhuvan in 1955, the honeymoon in the Nepal-India relationship ended (Mishra, 2004: 631). When King Tribhuvan’s son, Mahendra, was crowned, he transformed Nepal’s domestic and international politics. In order to reduce Nepal’s dependence on India, he established diplomatic ties with China and other countries, changed the medium of instruction in all school to Nepali (from Hindi), restricted all foreigners from purchasing properties in Nepal and requested India to withdraw its military mission from Kathmandu (Thapliyal, 1995: 94-95). Nehru
was shocked with these moves, describing them as a “reversal of the democratic process in Nepal” (Thapliyal, 1995: 94-95). Furthermore, King Mahendra fostered a new Nepali Nationalism which is also known as the “Mahendra Nationalism” (Kantha: 81). Mahendra nationalism was about providing the fear of Indian domination in Nepal while improving the King’s autocratic ambitions and keeping a more balanced relation with both India and China (Kantha: 81).

From 1955 to 1989, Indian-Nepali relations did not improve. They only worsened in 1989. In 1989, India imposed a fifteen-month long economic blockade on Nepal after Kathmandu bought anti-aircraft guns from China (Mishra, 2004: 631). 19 out of 21 trade routes were closed and 13 out of 15 transit routes were also shuttered (Mishra, 2004: 631). It led to chaos in the day-to-day life of Nepalese. India also denied Nepal’s access to port facilities in Calcutta, launching an economic crisis in Nepal. Its GDP growth rate dropped from 9.7% in 1988 to 1.5% in 1989 (Shah, 2016). Nepal also accused India of playing an important role in supporting the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. Their suspicion grew when Nepal and India engaged in a border dispute over the Kalapani region in 1998, and several political parties used this nationalist sentiment as political capital. The Maoists did not engage in any anti-India activity, though they were regarded as vocal critics of India in the past (Mishra, 2004: 635). By early 1999, news started surfacing regarding links and secret meetings between the Maoists and "like-minded groups" in India (Mishra, 2004: 635). The Nepalese government claims that Nepal’s anti-establishment groups relied heavily on covert and overt Indian support (Mishra, 2004: 636). Nepal further believes that the top Maoist leaders were living in India and New Delhi knew about it but did not do anything (Mishra, 2004: 636).

Kathmandu further accused New Delhi of supporting a group of ethnic Madhesi protestors (Shah, 2016). Madhesi are of Indian origin and make up 30% of Nepal’s population who are
responsible for imposing blockades against crucial imports such as medicine and food from India in 2015 (Shah, 2016). Nepal believes that India helped these groups in orchestrating the blockades and causing shortages in the country.

The economic relationship between India and Nepal has also fluctuated over the years, especially during Nepal’s political transition as shown in Table 2.5. Although Nepal's imports from India have increased from 2003 to 2010, their exports show fluctuations. They dropped from 2007-8 and again in 2009-10.
Table 2.5: Nepal’s annual trade with India (2003 – 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXPORT</td>
<td>3077.71</td>
<td>3891.69</td>
<td>4071.47</td>
<td>4172.88</td>
<td>3855.57</td>
<td>4100.59</td>
<td>3999.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPORT</td>
<td>7873.95</td>
<td>8867.55</td>
<td>10714.31</td>
<td>11587.23</td>
<td>14237.65</td>
<td>16243.76</td>
<td>21711.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALANCE</td>
<td>4796.24</td>
<td>4975.86</td>
<td>6642.84</td>
<td>7414.35</td>
<td>10382.08</td>
<td>12143.17</td>
<td>17712.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOLUME</td>
<td>10951.66</td>
<td>12759.24</td>
<td>14785.78</td>
<td>15760.11</td>
<td>18093.22</td>
<td>20344.35</td>
<td>25710.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHARE IN %</td>
<td>57.58</td>
<td>61.29</td>
<td>63.18</td>
<td>62.03</td>
<td>64.34</td>
<td>57.77</td>
<td>59.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Amount in Ten Million Nepalese Rupees

Source: Economic Survey 2011, Ministry of Finance, GoN.
As a result of such bittersweet relations with India, Nepal extended its friendship to China, which upset India even further. Nepal developed its diplomatic relations with China in 1956 and has since then accepted China’s claim over Tibet and has also reduced Nepal’s embassy in Lhasa to a consulate general office (Jha, 2016: 101). As a result, China constructed a road between Kathmandu and Lhasa in 1961 (Jha, 2016: 101). In 1962, during China’s war with India, Nepal adopted a neutral position, irrespective of the fact that Nepal had a security pact with India. Even when Nepal’s Prime Minister, Matrika Prasad Koirala was heard saying, “India’s defense was Nepal’s defense,” they did not take India’s side in 1962 (Jha, 2016: 102). Further, Nepal started importing arms from China without India’s knowledge in 1988-1989 and in 2005 (“Chinese deliver arms to Nepal”, 2005).

In 2005, when India, the US, and the UK suspended their military aid to Nepal after King Gyanendra assumed direct power, China dispatched ammunition for Nepal’s government to help them fight Maoist rebels (Shah, 2016). In 2015, when there were blockades by Madhesi protestors, China opened the border crossing point at Jilung, which links Tibet and Nepal (Shah, 2016). Through that, China transported petroleum products and other goods. Between 2015 and 2016, China’s aid increased from USD 24 Million to USD 128 Million (Shah, 2016). In 2016, Nepal allowed China to extend its railway link from the Nepal-China border in Kerung to Kathmandu and further to Pokhara and Lumbini, which are at "stone's throw distance" from the Nepal-India border (Jha, 2016: 102). In return, China allowed Nepal to use its seaport in Guangzhou for trade (Jha, 2016: 102).

Nepal is justifying its closeness to China by blaming India for actions in 2015-2016. The elites in Nepal believe that Indian leaders supported and backed Madhesis and Tharu groups for the economic blockade (Jha, 2016: 103). India denies involvement and is not comfortable with the
fact that China’s influence in Nepal is increasing with time (Jha, 2016: 102). India, though, made it clear that they are not happy with Nepal’s constitution as they believe it is exclusive and does not adequately protect minority groups. India claims that Madehsis, Tharus and hill Janajatis account for over two-thirds of Nepal's population and these groups of people have shown their dislike towards the constitution. If Dalits are included in the alliance (Madhesis, Tharus and Janajatis), almost 72% of the population is against the constitution and only 28% (who mostly consist of Bahun, Chhetri) supports the constitution (Majumder, 2015). So, India has openly asked Nepal to amend its constitution and make it more inclusive whereas Nepal does not appreciate India’s involvement.
Chapter Three:

Nationalism and Regional Influence in Bhutan’s Political Transitions

This chapter will look into a brief history of Bhutan and will highlight key events that occurred in Bhutan prior 2008 and also after 2008. In addition, it will look into the two factors: nationalism and regional influence and their connection to the political transition of Bhutan. Under nationalism, factors such as national policies (Driglam Namzha, Tsawasum and Gross National Happiness) are studied and India’s active role in Bhutan’s political transitions is studied too. The relatively peaceful context in which Bhutan’s transition has occurred has been noted by scholars Rizai (2015) and Sakhlani and Tortajada (2016).

Country profile:

Bhutan became an absolute monarchy in 1907, when Ugyen Wangchuck was chosen as the hereditary ruler of Bhutan. During his reign, he was credited with making Bhutan a peaceful country whose foundations were based on Buddhism, giving importance to education and improving Bhutan’s relations with its neighbors. For instance, he helped renovate Swayanbhunath Temple in Kathmandu, established schools such as Lame Goenpa and Wangduecholing in 1914, and he met King George V in 1906 and visited Delhi in 1911 (“Ugyen Wangchuck Biography”, 2017) Bhutan’s relations with its neighbor India improved when Bhutan signed a treaty with the newly independent India in 1949 according to which India will not interfere in Bhutan’s internal affairs, but India will guide Bhutan in foreign relations (“Bhutan profile - Timeline”, BBC, 2017).

Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, known as the “father of modern Bhutan,” took the throne in 1952. Because of the progressive changes he brought within the country during his reign, he became known as a reformist monarch. Some of his contributions included establishing the legislative body
of Bhutan, the National Assembly, in 1953, economic planning initiative (Five Year Plans) in 1961 and Royal Bhutan Army in 1961 (Savada, 1993). With the establishment of the legislative body, slavery was abolished and social reforms including land redistribution to former slaves were enacted. In addition, the first cabinet was also established in 1968. In 1971, Bhutan became a member of the United Nations.

King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck passed away in 1972 and his son, Jigme Singye Wangchuck took the throne and continued his father’s policy of cautious modernization (Savada, 1993). Foreign tourists were first allowed in the country in 1974 and in 1986, the government came up with a new law according to which citizenship was granted on the basis of length of residence in Bhutan. Following the new law in 1988, many ethnic Nepalese were branded as illegal immigrants in 1988 and were made to leave the country (Savada, 1993). They fled to Nepal. Bhutan and Nepal tried to resolve the refugee problem in 1993 and by 1996, Nepal demanded that Bhutan accept all the refugees back in the country who are currently in camps in Nepal (“Bhutan profile - Timeline”, BBC, 2017). The talk has gone nowhere since then. In 2002, Bhutan still had camps belonging to the rebel groups from Assam, India. Bhutan had given them a deadline to leave the country by the end of 2001, but they denied (“Bhutan profile – Timeline,” BBC, 2017). In December of 2003, Bhutanese soldiers fought these Indian separatist’s rebels and were driven out of the country (“Bhutan profile – Timeline,” BBC, 2017).

In 1998, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck adopted a policy of decentralization and ceded his role as the head of the government to the National Assembly. Six ministers were nominated and placed in front of the National Assembly to be elected by the remaining members. The minister with the highest number of “yes” votes was appointed as the Chairperson of the Council of Cabinet
Ministers (CCM) and the role of Chairman was to be rotated among the ministers after a one-year period.

In March 2005, the government presented the constitution according to which Bhutan might become a parliamentary democracy. It was presented to the population as a referendum. The fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, announced that he would abdicate in 2008, helping to move the country along as a parliamentary democracy. In September of 2006, preparations such as training officials for the polls began and in December of the same year, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck abdicated his throne and his son, Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck was crowned the new King.

In February of 2007, Bhutan signed an agreement with India which was a revision of the treaty signed in 1949. The treaty gave Bhutan more say over its foreign and defense policies, both regionally and internationally (Sherpa, 2013). In April of the same year, mock elections were held in order to familiarize voters and to prepare them for upcoming elections in 2008. In July Prime Minister Khandu Wangchuck resigned in order to compete in the upcoming elections. The office of prime minister released a statement stating that “the prime minister on behalf of his colleagues went to His Majesty the King and submitted their resignations as they have expressed their desire to join politics” (“Bhutan’s PM resigns ahead of first national poll, 2007).

The only recorded violence in the political transition of Bhutan took place in January and February of 2008, when a series of bomb blasts took place including one in the capital Thimphu which wounded at least one person (“Series of bomb blast rock Bhutan, one hurt”, 2008). The attacks were blamed on groups associated with exiled Nepalese. Apart from that, Bhutan has completed two elections since 2008. In March of 2008, the first parliamentary election took place, in which Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (Bhutan Peace and Prosperity Party) (DPT) won 45 out of 47
seats at the parliament, becoming authorized to form the government. The remaining two seats were won by the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). DPT’s leader, Jigme Y. Thinley, became the new PM of Bhutan. The first parliamentary election was completed smoothly and in November of 2008, Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck was crowned as the fifth King of Bhutan as the fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck abdicated as announced in 2003. Similarly, in 2013 (July), the second parliamentary elections took place in similar fashion, smooth and non-violent, in which People’s Democratic Party (PDP) won 32 seats and Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (Bhutan Peace and Prosperity Party) (DPT) won 15 seats (“Bhutan profile - Timeline”, BBC, 2017). PDP’s leader, Tshering Tobgay, became the new Prime Minister. The third parliamentary election is scheduled to take place in 2018 and by October 2017, five registered political parties were gearing up for the third parliamentary election (“Bhutan profile - Timeline”, BBC, 2017).

Elections are becoming increasingly more competitive. In 2008, there were only two parties competing but in 2013, there were four parties and the number has increased to five in 2018. In addition, incidences such as electoral violence and vote-buying were very rare and virtually unknown, respectively (Turner, 2015).

Even though the transition avoided violence, Bhutan’s transition has its challenges. One negative thing that has happened since Bhutan’s political transition is a decline in voter turnout. It has been noted that in the 2013 parliamentary election, especially for the Upper House (National Council) election, registered voters’ turnout fell from 53 percent in 2008 to 45 percent in 2013 (Turner, 2015). Similarly, the general election saw a drop of registered voters turnout from 79 percent in 2008 to 66 percent in 2013 (Turner, 2015). If these drops are to continue, it raises concerns regarding Bhutan’s citizens’ commitment and acceptance of democracy. Furthermore, women’s representation is decreasing, too. In 2013, no woman was elected for the Upper House
and only four were elected for the Lower House which consists of 47 members (Turner, 2015). Although freedom of expression is a right guaranteed by the constitution, the mass media practices self-censorship and does not publish stories which are very critical of government. The 2014 Reporters Without Borders ranked Bhutan 92 out of 180 countries in terms of media freedom (Turner, 2015).

**Nationalism:**

The basic principles of Bhutan's polity are based on factors including cultural identification, national independence and synthesis capacity (Mathou, 2009: 229). In regard to the cultural identification, building unity out of diversity has been one of the main threads of Bhutan’s political history (Mathou, 2009: 229). When Bhutan faced various external aggression from Tibet and internal strife in the 17th century, Bhutanese leaders thought that the creation of a nation-state was a must-do step for Bhutan's survival (Mathou, 2009: 229). Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1616–1651) is credited with unifying Bhutan and also for introducing the first codified laws, known as *Chathrim* (Mathou, 2009: 229). Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal is regarded for founding Bhutan as a new country which is both religiously and politically independent from Tibet (Dorji, 1990-1991). He also established common traditions such as the dress code and rituals including sangha community which made Bhutanese cultural identity stronger (Dorji, 1990-1991).

Even though it is located in a very strategic position, Bhutan has never been colonized. From Bhutan’s perspective, national independence was correlated to the autonomy of the local polity, a strong sense of national pride among Bhutanese, and a culture of isolationism that Bhutan has adopted until the 1960s (Mathou, 2009: 230). Bhutanese leaders accept that one way of strengthening nationalism is by not ignoring foreign influence (Mathou, 2009: 234). Rather, Bhutan adopts innovations and transforms them to align with local values, hereby becoming
distinctively Bhutanese (Mathou, 2009: 234). This process is often known as “Bhutanization” (Mathou, 2009: 234). As an illustration, Bhutan did not adopt democracy as it is in other countries. Instead, it adopted it and customized it in order to match Bhutanese taste and lifestyle. Democracy in Bhutan was not just about elections and political competitions, but all parties involved had to held up the idea of Gross National Happiness and try to install and promote it as much as they can. So, democracy, is given a Bhutanese touch, hereby strengthening the national identity. As Bhutan opened itself to development only in the 1960s, it was ready and eager to avoid mistakes which were committed elsewhere. Although it was heavily dependent on foreign aid and expertise, it followed its own set of values and priorities due to which development in Bhutan has caused minimal social, economic, political, and cultural disruptions (Mathou, 2009: 234). As an illustration, though the judicial system of Bhutan is based on laws from the 17th Century Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal’s Chathrim and its Buddhist values, the justice system is also evolving in order to face the challenges of the current time (Mathou, 2009: 234). The judiciary system of the country takes its role as the guardian of the constitution very seriously. For example, it did not go easy on the speaker and a cabinet minister when they were found guilty of illegal land dealings and in addition, the judiciary has also been adopting modernization by appointing younger judges who had modern legal trainings (Turner, 2015).

Nationalism in Bhutan is based on, among others, two very important concepts: Driglam Namzha and Tsawasum. Driglam Namzha is described as Bhutan’s code of etiquette where Drig means order, norm, and conformity, Lam meaning a way of having order, and Namzha meaning a concept or a system (Phuntsho, 2004: 575). The code is described as:

... a set of values and etiquette that teaches a person to conduct himself in a civilized and cultured manner. It imparts in people a sense of responsibility and respect for each other as human beings living together in a society... respect for the dignity of one’s fellow human
being and an awareness of one’s responsibilities and obligations as a member of a well-ordered society (Saul, 2000: 332).

Driglam Namzha is said to have started with Buddhist Vinaya or monastic discipline and was institutionalized in Bhutan in the 17th century by Zhandrung Ngawang Namgyal and his close circle (Phuntsho, 2004: 575). In modern times, Bhutan promoted *Driglam Namzha* not just as a code of conduct but also as a "marker of Bhutanese identity" (Phuntsho, 2004: 575). In a royal decree issued on 16 January 1989, it required all citizens to observe *Driglam Namzha* in terms of values, dress code (*gho* for men and *kira* for women) and etiquette in the following contexts:

- inside and outside Dzong premises [fortress-monasteries now used as centers of district administration];
- at all Government Offices;
- at the Schools;
- at the Monasteries;
- at the official functions and 'Public Congregations' (RGB 1992b: appendix. The appendix also stated that Pandits, Pujaris [Hindu priests] and non-nationals would be exempt from the requirement) (Hutt, 1996: 403).

Similar to *Driglam Namzha*, *Tsawasum* is another important aspect of Bhutan nationalism. *Tsawasum* means three roots or foundations and the country; King and government are mentioned as *Tsawasum*. It started as a concept in the 1950s and re-emerged in 1989 at the 65th session of the National Assembly where “anti-national” conspiracy was officially defined as an act of treason against the *Tsawasum* (Phuntsho, 2004: 576). All persons who went against the *Tsawasum* were branded as “ngolops” or “anti-nationals” (Phuntsho, 2004: 576). According to Karma Phuntsho,

"Tsawasum became an iconic political category which people cited so profusely as the cause to fight for loyalty and service to Tsawasum became the mantra to execute patriotism and nationalism in order to combat the threats posed by the crisis. It served as a buzzword which encapsulated everything that is Bhutanese and that Bhutan stood for" (Phuntsho, 2004: 576).

Under the umbrella of Tsawasum, slogans such as, “One Nation, One People” became the theme of the Sixth Five Year Plan (1987 –1992), which was introduced in order to instill a greater sense of unity and nationalism among the population as a whole (Phuntsho, 2004: 576).
Bhutan is most famously credited with introducing the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH), which is about measuring the development of the country in terms of its citizens' happiness. It is also about trying to balance economic development with the emotional and spiritual well-being of the people. It was a term that was coined by the fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck in 1971. One of the pillars of Gross National Happiness is Preservation and Promotion of Culture which contributes 10% to GNH index as shown in Figure 3.1.
Figure 3.1: Contribution of Domains to GNH Index

Source: Ura, Akire, Zangmo & Wangdi, 2011
Culture is viewed as a pillar because it “facilitates sovereignty of the country and provides identity to the people” (Ura, Akire, Zangmo & Wangdi, 2012: 20). When GNH is measured, culture is used as an important indicator to measure the happiness of the people and culture is a vital component of Bhutanese nationalism because Bhutan is neither economically nor militarily strong. One thing that is imperative for Bhutan’s survival as a nation is its unique culture. It gives Bhutanese people a sense of identity in a rapidly globalizing world by linking individuals to the society and teaching them values and beliefs (Ura, Akire, Zangmo & Wangdi, 2012: 20). Culture is categorized into forms such as language, artisan skills, socio-cultural participation and Driglam Namzha, and are then measured (Ura et al. 2012: 20). Artisan skills are measured in terms of people's interest and knowledge in 13 arts and crafts (collectively known as Zorigchusum) (Ura et al. 2012: 21). A sufficiency threshold is set at one, which implies that every person must know at least one skill in order to get a good score in this indicator (Ura et al. 2012: 21). Socio-cultural participation is calculated by averaging the number of days spent on participation in socio-cultural activities within the past 12 months (Ura et al. 2012: 22). The sufficiency threshold is set at 6-12 days in a year (Ura et al. 2012: 22). The indicator, Driglam Namzha is further divided into two sub-indices, perceived importance of Driglam Namzha and perceived change in practice and observation during the last few years (Ura et al. 2012: 23). Both sub-indices are measured on 3-point scales which ranges from ‘not important' to ‘very important' for the perceived importance and ‘getting weaker' to ‘getting stronger' for the perceived change (Ura et al. 2012: 23). The sufficiency threshold is set at ‘important' for perceived importance and at ‘getting stronger' for perceived change (Ura et al. 2012: 23).

Bhutan’s society consists of broad ethnic and linguistic groups namely: the Ngalop, the Sharchop, Nepalese, and several aboriginal peoples and as shown in Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1.
Figure 3.2. Ethnic groups in Bhutan

Source: The CIA World Factbook, 2018
Table 3.1. Languages in Bhutan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dzongkha (Official)</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharchopkha</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lhotshamkha</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (include foreign languages)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: The CIA World Factbook, 2018*
The Ngalop, which means “the earliest risen or the first converted,” are of Tibetan origin who migrated to Bhutan as early as the ninth century. They are often known as Bhoti (people of Bhotia or Tibet) (“Background Notes on Countries of the World: Bhutan” 2008). The Ngalops are mostly settled in the west and the northern side of the country. They are also the people who introduced Tibetan culture and Buddhism in Bhutan (“Background Notes on Countries of the World: Bhutan” 2008). The Sharchop, which means “easterner,” are Indo-Mongoloid people who migrated from Assam and even Burma (“Background Notes on Countries of the World: Bhutan” 2008). The Sharchops have been largely assimilated into the Tibetan-Ngalop culture, and it seems The CIA World Factbook incorporated Sharchop into Ngalop when they listed the ethnic groups of Bhutan as shown in Figure 3.1. Sharchops often practice slash-and-burn and tsheri agriculture which uses a piece of land for cultivation for the period of three or four years until the land is exhausted (Savada, 1993). Once the land is used, they move on to new land and repeat the same process. The aboriginal or indigenous tribal people are scattered over different villages in Bhutan. They include tribes such as Drokpa, Lepcha and Doyas (“Background Notes on Countries of the World: Bhutan” 2008). They are both culturally and linguistically similar to people of West Bengal, India (Savada, 1993). The fourth group are of Nepalese origin. The first groups of Nepalese migrated to Bhutan from eastern Nepal in the late 19th and early 20th century (Savada, 1993). They settled in the southern foothills of Bhutan and they too, like Sharchops, practice tsheri agriculture.

Bhutan also hosts a sizable number of Tibetan refugees. Almost 6000 Tibetan refugees came into Bhutan in the 1959 aftermath of the Chinese army’s occupation of Tibet (“Background Notes on Countries of the World: Bhutan” 2008). The number rose to 10,000 by 1987 (Savada, 1993). The Bhutanese government offered citizenship to those in the country, but most were
unwilling to accept it. The government of Bhutan saw it as a lack of allegiance on the part of the Tibetans and in 1979, Bhutan decided to expel those who refused citizenship to India (Savada, 1993). India, after initial reluctance, accepted more than 3100 Tibetans between 1980 and 1985 ("Background Notes on Countries of the World: Bhutan" 2008). Although Bhutan accepted some more Tibetan refugees in 1989 when they were fleeing the martial law in Tibet, the government of Bhutan in the late 1980s decided to refuse Tibetan refugees (Savada, 1993).

Similarly, language is another important aspect of Bhutanese nationalism. It is so important that it is a core factor of Bhutanese culture which, in turn, is a very important aspect of Bhutanese national identity. In terms of language, the national language of Bhutan is Dzongkha and all other nineteen languages are described as dialects (Ura et al. 2012: 20).

**Regional influence:**

Since 1949, Bhutan has considered India its closest friend. The two countries have had a friendly relation for more than 50 years (Sherpa, 2013). Bhutan’s Prime Minister, Tshering Tobgay states, “the relation between Bhutan and India have really stood the test of time; we have worked together. Our good relationship was founded and given shape by our King and former Kings and leaders of India” (Sherpa, 2013). The friendship was first established in August 1949, by the third King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck and India PM, Jawaharlal Nehru (Sherpa, 2013). Bhutan and India signed the Treaty of Friendship in 1949, focusing on free trade and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs (Sherpa, 2013). However, Bhutan agreed to let India guide it in terms of foreign policy and both countries consult each other on foreign and defense affairs (Sherpa, 2013). Article 2 of the Treaty states:
“The Government of India undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part the Government of Bhutan agrees to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations” (Stobdan, 2017).

In between all geopolitical pressure, Bhutan was loyal to India and it proved its loyalty time and again. Bhutan’s diplomatic ties with India were strengthened in 1968 with the appointment of a resident representative of India in Thimphu (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012). Since then, India has been extending financial assistance to Bhutan’s Five-Year Plans, the first of which was launched in 1961 (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012). For instance, for the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2002-2008), the government of India gave almost 483 Million USD to Bhutan and for the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2008-2013), India gave almost 630 Million USD to Bhutan which was used to construct democratic institutions such as the construction of the supreme court, offices such as Royal Audit Authority, Election Commission, anti-corruption Commission and the Office of Attorney General (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012).

Bhutan stood with India during India’s conflict with China in 1962; Bhutan supported India in its push for Bangladeshi independence in 1971; and King Jigme Singye Wangchuck personally led his troops to fight Indian insurgent groups who were functioning from Bhutan (Stobdan, 2017). In addition, Bhutan never played the China card with India and never refused India from using its hydro power assets (Stobdan, 2017). India, on the other hand, started taking Bhutan for granted and they “mistook Bhutanese fidelity for obeisance to Indian paternalism” (Stobdan, 2017). Bhutan started to doubt India’s ability to protect it from China and Bhutan’s insecurity was aggravated when India annexed Sikkim in 1975 (Stobdan, 2017). Following such insecurities Bhutan demanded amendments in the treaty and it was revised in 2007 and the clause regarding Bhutan needing India's guidance in its foreign policy was replaced (Sherpa, 2013). The new Article 2 now states that India and Bhutan “shall cooperate closely with each other on issues

54
relating to their national interests. Neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other” (Stobdan, 2017).

Similarly, in terms of trade, India is Bhutan’s leading trade partner. Currently, the major items of exports from Bhutan to India are electricity (from Tala, Chukha, and the Kurichhu Hydroelectric Project), base metals and articles, minerals, vegetable fat and oils, alcoholic beverages, chemicals, cement, timber and wood products, cardamom, fruit products, potatoes, oranges and apples, raw silk, plastic and rubber products (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012). Major exports from India to Bhutan are petroleum products, mineral products, base metals and articles, machinery, automobiles & spares, vegetable, nuts, spices, processed food and animal products, chemicals, wood, plastic, and rubber (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012). Table 3.3 shows the detailed sum of imports and exports that have taken place between Bhutan and India between 2001-2010.
Table 3.2: Imports and Exports between Bhutan and India (2001-2010) [Rupees in Billion]

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exports to Bhutan (Imports from India)</td>
<td>6.98</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>10.19</td>
<td>12.80</td>
<td>13.05</td>
<td>15.09</td>
<td>17.33</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>29.30</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>43.89</td>
<td>47.85</td>
<td>53.74</td>
<td>55.285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imports from Bhutan (Exports to India)</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>7.76</td>
<td>9.97</td>
<td>14.48</td>
<td>22.72</td>
<td>21.48</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>28.98</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>31.80</td>
<td>32.052</td>
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</table>
India plays a vital role when it comes to democracy in Bhutan (Rizai, 2015: 319). It has helped Bhutan in building democratic institutions, drafting its constitution, constructing judicial buildings, training members of parliament and providing voting machines (Rizai, 2015: 319). The Chief Election Commissioner of Bhutan visited India in February 2006, May 2009 and June 2011 (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012). Along with him, several teams of officials such as Dzongdas (District Collectors) and Dzongkhag (District Officers) visited India to observe various state and local elections (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012). In addition, India also offered full assistance to Bhutan in formulating its election laws (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012). India provided a grant of Rs. 47.506 Million to source electronic voting machines from India (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012). Furthermore, in Bhutan’s first election in March 2008, a four-member delegation from the Election Commission of India led by Chief Election Commissioner, Shri N. Gopalaswami visited Bhutan to observe the National Assembly Elections (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012). In addition, Shri Shyam Saran, Special Envoy of Prime Minister and former Foreign Secretary, and Shri Salman Haider former Foreign Secretary visited Bhutan as Election Observers from the government of India in March 2008 (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012). India also gives the highest aid to Bhutan, as shown in Figure 3.2.
Figure 3.3. India's Foreign aid

Source: Vivek, 2017
The India-Bhutan pact was tested in 2003 when Bhutan launched "Operation All Clear" to take out Indian militants who were operating from Bhutan (Stobdan, 2017). From the early 1990s forward, Indian insurgents started crossing the India-Bhutan border and started taking shelter in Bhutan’s southern plains (Stobdan, 2017). By 2013, there were about 30 camps and 3100 militants in Bhutan of which 13 belonged to the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA); 12 belonged to National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB); and 5 belonged to Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO) (Banerjee and Liashram, 2004). The Indian government showed its concerns regarding the presence of militants in Bhutan, and Bhutanese leaders understood the seriousness of the situation. The government of Bhutan agreed to solve the issue in their own way which was through dialogue and persuasion (Banerjee and Liashram, 2004). Bhutan organized several rounds of talk with the groups, but they did not take it seriously and kept on relocating and creating new camps. So, in 2013, Bhutan launched "Operation All Clear" to flush all the militants from Bhutanese soil.

Bhutan has no diplomatic ties with China. Sino-Bhutanese tensions date back to 1951 when CCP forces began to occupy Tibet, after which China also started claiming considerable territory in central and northwestern Bhutan (Sakhlin and Tortajada, 2016). Only one talk was organized between Bhutan and China in order to address unresolved border disputes, held in Beijing in 1984 (Nayak, 2018). Since then, Bhutan and China have signed an agreement to maintain peace and tranquility on their shared border (Nayak, 2018). Additionally, China and Bhutan have disputes over the Doklam Plateau in western Bhutan and the Jakarlung and Pasamlung valleys in northwestern Bhutan (Sakhlin and Tortajada, 2016).
Chapter Four:

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter will compare the violent and non-violent nature of political transitions in Nepal and Bhutan, respectively, and analyze how nationalism and regional influences impacted their democratic transitions. Some of the factors that explain this difference are: stability of leaders after 2008, surnames as an indicator of nationalism, ethnicity and caste systems, and the roles of India and China in Bhutan’s and Nepal’s democratic transitions.

Violence during the Nepali transitions

Nepal went through a civil war from 1996 to 2006, which killed approximately 13,000 people and displaced up to 200,000 people (Asia Foundation, 2017: 118). The war was launched by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) in February of 1996, with the aim of overthrowing the monarchy to establish a communist government (The Carter Center, 2014: 21). In 2006, the United Nations sent a mission to Nepal, the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), in order to help Nepal restore and maintain peace. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1939 (2010), UNMIN withdrew from Nepal on January 15, 2011 under growing resistance from the Nepali Army, the bureaucracy, the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist-Leninist (Chapagain & Yardley, 2012).

Although the insurgency-related violence ended in Nepal with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) in 2006, political landscapes remained volatile even after the civil war (The Carter Center, 2014: 21). Political protests and clashes occurred frequently and disrupted normal life. In 2012, the creation of ethnic-based federalism sparked protests and violence across the country (Chapagain & Yardley, 2012). Those in favor of ethnic states believed
that they would lead to the devolution of power and also to greater representation of marginalized
groups in both social and political fronts (Chapagain & Yardley, 2012). The view was that
minorities would be able to get greater political power by forming a majority in certain states. In
contrast, those not in favor believed that having ethnic-based federalism would prolong and deepen
ethnic divisions in the country (Chapagain & Yardley, 2012). It would also lead to ethnic tension
and undermine the tranquility of the nation (Chapagain & Yardley, 2012).

Between 2007 and 2015, several protests took place in Nepal which were related to
democratization. For instance, at least 40 people were killed in clashes at a protest over the draft
constitution in 2015 (Haviland, 2015). Violent incidents were recorded in at least six districts
between August and September 2015 alone. Some violent incidences included: Tikapur, Kailali
district on 24 August 2015; Birendranagar, Surkhet district on 10 April 2015; Bethari, Rupandehi
district on 15 September 2015; Jaleswar, Mahottari district on 11 September 2015; and Janakpur,
Dhanusa district on 11 September 2015 (Haviland, 2015).

From July to September 2015, almost all social groups, except hill “upper-caste” Bhauns and
Chhetris men, protested against various provisions of the constitution (“Nepal formally adopts new
constitution amid protests from minorities,” 2015). Ethnic minorities protested against the
reduction of the parliamentary proportional representative system, from 58% to 48%, and women’s
groups protested changes in citizenship law (“Nepal formally adopts new constitution amid
protests from minorities,” 2015). The amendment regarding the citizenship law in the constitution
restricted women’s right to pass on their citizenship to their children, irrespective of the father’s
nationality. The same law also gave Nepali fathers the right to pass on nationality to their children
irrespective of the mother’s nationality (“Nepal formally adopts new constitution amid protests
from minorities,” 2015).
After the constitution was passed in September 2015, the conflict between the Madhesi parties and the Nepal government in the Terai region escalated. The Madhesi parties created a three-month blockade on goods from India, demanding greater proportional representation of Madhesis, hereby intensifying the clashes ("Nepal profile – Timeline," BBC, 2017). The clashes resulted in 12 deaths between November 2015 and January 2016, and also led to economic losses of Nepalese Rupee (NPR) 2 billion (USD 19.4 Million) (Asia Foundation, 2017: 120).

The violence in the Terai region (where residents residing there believe that they have not been treated equally as other Nepalese by the governments for years) increased after the signing of the CPA in 2006. Various armed groups sought greater autonomy and political rights for the Madhesis and other ethnic minorities such as the Thakuris (Asia Foundation, 2017: 121). In 2011, there were estimated 26-armed groups in the Terai region in 2011 (Asia Foundation, 2017: 121). Nearly 400 violent election-related incidences were reported between February and June 2017 which resulted in 12 deaths (Asia Foundation, 2017: 120).

Nepal held its first local elections in 20 years from May-September, 2017 (Asia Foundation, 2017: 123). Tensions escalated, especially in the Terai region, due to the existence of unresolved disputes over amendments to the 2015 constitution. The Madhesis continued to stage protests, which often ended in violence. For example, violence erupted in Saptari district on March 6, 2017, when protestors disrupted a political rally and the police opened fire, killing five (Asia Foundation, 2017: 123).

**Tensions during the Bhutanese transitions**

Bhutan’s democratic transition was not violent, but it highlighted and created some tensions within the country. Bhutan has yet to come up with the permanent solution for the Nepali
Bhutanese or Lhotshampa refugees. Approximately 90,000 Nepali-speaking Bhutanese were tagged as illegal immigrants and were evicted from the country in the 1990s (Freedom House, 2011). Since 2008, countries including the US, Canada and others have agreed to accept and resettle them, but many still remain in the camps (Freedom House, 2011). The issue of Bhutanese refugees resurfaced when four bomb blasts took place on January 20, 2008, which wounded one person. The government claimed that the attack was launched by exiled-Nepali groups who were trying to sabotage the election process ("Bhutan profile – Timeline," BBC, 2017). Although 42 international and 52 domestic observers present during the 2008 elections reported no major issues in any of the 20 districts, they reported a lack of different ideological perspectives and choices (Freedom House, 2011). The observers claimed that both major parties, Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (Bhutan Peace and Prosperity Party) (DPT) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) shared similar manifestos and both party leaders publicly acknowledged their will to obey the King’s desire to work towards the pursuit of Gross National Happiness (GNH) (Freedom House, 2011).

Voter turnout is critical in any democracy. In Bhutan, fluctuations were seen in terms of voter turnout in 2008 and in 2013. In the 2008 National Assembly Election, the country attained an impressive voter turnout of 79.38% but the percentage dropped to 66.13% in the 2013 National Assembly election (Election Commission of Bhutan, 2006-2015). Some of the fall could be attributed to the socio-economic inequalities and relatively high unemployment rate among urban youth in Bhutan. Polarization between the rich and the poor in Bhutan is growing at a very rapid pace; 98% of poor people reside in rural areas whereas only 2% are in the urban areas (Wolf, 2016). Such disparities have led to grievances on the part of rural people which can be seen in their political participation in the 2013 general election. In addition, civil society organizations remain weak. Similarly, the unemployment rate of the country was recorded at 9.4% in 2014 (9.6% in
In the 2013 general election, it was observed that voter turnout was lesser in the age group of 18-30 (32.03%) compared to the age group of 31-50 (40.18%) (Election Commission of Bhutan, 2006-2015). This depressed level of voter turnout was connected to the high youth unemployment rate in the country. Most among the young unemployed generation of the country are less interested in political participation and are more concerned and dissatisfied with the government not being able to provide them with sufficient jobs.

Although Bhutan’s transitions lack large-scale violence, they are not free of challenges. One of them was the deprivation of religious figures from the political front. There were almost 70,000 monks, nuns and lay priests in Bhutan in 2008 who were restricted from running for office or voting following an Election Act which mandated that religion and religious figures remain “above politics” (Gyeltshen and Sripokangkul, 2017: 287). Due to this act, 10% of the potential voting body are kept away in Bhutan. This law has resulted in some monks renouncing their spiritual journey in order to exercise their political right and voice their concerns (Gyeltshen and Sripokangkul, 2017: 287). This move might also lead to younger generations of the country neglecting the spiritual tradition of the country in the future.

Another challenge that has evolved during the transitions was the relatively low levels of press freedom. The Constitution of Bhutan guarantees rights of free speech, opinion and expression. The press plays significant roles in democratic nations as watch dogs and this freedom is limited in Bhutan. In Bhutan, the government is often intolerant of criticisms and newspapers have been penalized by not giving them advertisements run by governments hereby directly affecting the revenue of concerned media (Gyeltshen and Sripokangkul, 2017: 291).
Analysis:

A political transition is deemed smooth when there is popular participation with a widespread sense of legitimacy in leaders. Multiple changes of leaders and the government within a short period of time could indicate that the political situation is unstable. Such incidences could be seen in the case of Nepal. One of the factors that shows that the political transition in Nepal have not been smooth is the number of governments and Prime Ministers that has changed since 2008. Table 4.1 and 4.2 show the Prime Ministers in the respective countries with their length of tenure.
Table 4.1. PMs of Nepal since 2008

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Prime Ministers</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Party affiliation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Baburam Bhattarai</td>
<td>29 August 2011 – 14 March 2013</td>
<td>Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)</td>
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<td>Khil Raj Regmi</td>
<td>14 March 2013 – 11 February 2014</td>
<td>Independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sushil Koirala</td>
<td>11 February 2014 – 10 October 2015</td>
<td>Nepali Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prachanda</td>
<td>4 August 2016 – 7 June 2017</td>
<td>Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sher Bahadur Deuba</td>
<td>7 June 2017 – 15 February 2018</td>
<td>Nepali Congress</td>
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Table 4.2. PMs of Bhutan since 2008

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<tr>
<th>Prime Ministers</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Party affiliation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sonam Tobgye (Chief Advisor to the Interim Government)</td>
<td>28 April 2013 – 27 July 2013</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tshering Tobgay</td>
<td>27 July 2013 – Incumbent</td>
<td>People’s Democratic Party</td>
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In both cases, Prime Ministers are constitutionally supposed to serve a five-year term. In Nepal, none of the Prime Ministers to date has been able to complete a full term. The average time period Nepali Prime Ministers have served is 11 months compared to 60 months by Bhutanese Prime Ministers. Within a decade of the transition, ten Prime Ministers have come and gone. The reasons behind resignations by the Prime Ministers vary, but Maoist pressure seems to be one of the prominent reasons. For instance, Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned after being in office for only twenty-one months because the Maoists threatened to obstruct the budget session if he did not resign and they did not provide their cooperation until he resigned on 6 February 2011 (The Carter Center, 2014: 20). Although he resigned, he still acted as the caretaker Prime Minister for seven months while debate on his replacement raged (The Carter Center, 2014: 20).

In contrast, Bhutan has had only three Prime Ministers since 2008. The first Prime Minister, Jigme Thinley, was elected in 2008 after winning the first parliamentary election, leaving office five years later. In between, Sonam Tobgye, the-then Chief Advisor to the interim government, acted as the Prime Minister until the second parliamentary election took place and the new Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay took office in 2013.

Having a sense of legitimacy in leaders and an organized system aligns with Paul Collier’s view that political violence can occur due to lack of accountability and low legitimacy (2009:18). A legitimate government seems to have a clear mandate and plans in place to execute those mandates. In Nepal’s transition, the mandates keep shifting with changes in leaders which leads to a disorganized system. This less organized system has not been able to fulfill the general public’s expectations hereby providing a reason for violence. On the contrary, Bhutan’s transitions seem to have been based more on a mandate which has been executed by leaders who are stable in their respective positions. This stability and legitimacy is able to face down opposition, making
transitions less violent. Leadership instability in these two cases align with Roberts’s pyramidal
structure of relationship according to which the elites at the top reward the people at the base for
their support and the violence occurs when this relationship is challenged (2002: 525). Uneven
leadership in Nepal was, in a way, fueled by the presence of a conglomeration of nationalisms in
the country where different nationalist interests wanted their ‘person’ to take the leadership role.
The Maoists wanted a Maoist to be the leader. Eventually when the relationship between the top
and the base was challenged, in this case due to nationalism, violence erupted in Nepali transitions.

Similar to the impact of elite turnover, nationalism can help us understand the nature of
political transitions, too. Nationalism is an important factor in both countries, but the difference
lies in the process elites adopted. For instance, Nepal adopted ways such as Muluki Ain (the
National Legal Code of 1854 of Nepal), which placed all caste groups into different categories,
distinguishing between the wearer and non-wearers of the sacred thread. Bhutan adopted the policy
of Driglam Namzha and Tsa Wa Sum, which were Bhutan’s code of etiquette and the three
foundations of the country, respectively. Nepal’s Mulukhi Ain is more of a categorization of
different nationalities in alignment with the Hindu caste system. It also places different castes and
nationalities in a hierarchy (Gellner, 2007: 1823). According to Mulukhi Ain, the ones who wear
the scared thread are the purest and at the top of the caste hierarchy. Other groups do not wear the
scared thread and they were alcohol consumers, but these groups were not salvable. Beneath them
were alcohol consumers and they could be used as slaves. The second lowest in the hierarchy are
deemed impure, but they can be touched. Finally, the lowest are also deemed impure and they
cannot be touched by people belonging to hierarchies.
In contrast, the policy of Driglam Namzha and Tsa Wa Sum of Bhutan focuses more on bringing different nationalities within the country under one single statist nationality, Bhutanese. The policy of Driglam Namzha requires all citizens in Bhutan to observe values (respect for each other, cultured manner and awareness of one’s responsibility), national dress code (gho for men and kira for women) and etiquette in all government offices, the monasteries, official functions and public congregations (Hutt, 1996:403). Driglam Namzha is not different for different groups in Bhutan alike the Muluki Ain in Nepal. Driglam Namzha is for all Bhutanese and similarly to Driglam Namzha, the policy of Tsawasum is about how all Bhutanese should show their loyalty and service towards the country, King and the government. Tsawasum, too is the same for all groups of people in Bhutan. The government attempted to instill a stronger national identity in people which would overpower other sub-national or regional or ethnic nationalities present in the country. Each policy mentioned above, both in Nepal and Bhutan, shows that for Nepal, they highlighted different smaller nationalities and their respective group identities whereas Bhutan tried focusing on a larger one, the national identity instead. These respective ideas are not just legislated but are executed and followed in both countries.

In Nepal, surnames act as the most accurate indicator of one’s caste or ethnic group, an important aspect of nationalism. This aspect of nationalism came to the forefront during the transitions. Groups such as Madhesis and Dalits, who belong to their respective caste as they share similar surnames, came together in respective groups demanding more representation. They organized protests which mostly ended in violence. Due to the fact that Bhutanese names do not clearly indicate an affinity toward a particular group or community, but rather indicated an affinity towards a larger national group which was Bhutanese, grievances from smaller groups are not as clearly defined.
Nepal and Bhutan are similar when it comes to wealth being measured in terms of the size and amount of land owned. Yet, in Nepal, the ones who had larger and more land were of high caste including Bhauns and Chhetris and in Bhutan, it was more related to class than to caste. Bhutan’s agrarian structure in the 1950s was based on two factors: land holding and the ability to cultivate land (Yetsho, 2010). Most of the lands were owned by elites and aristocratic families (such as Dung, Choeji, and Lamas), as well as the state and the monastic institutions (Yetsho, 2010). This shows how prominent ethnic and caste identities are in Nepal as compared to Bhutan.

Part of the explanation for violence is rooted in ideology, specifically, the presence (or absence) of Marxist-Communist parties. Although there is some evidence of the presence of a Communist Party of Bhutan, based in the UN-run Bhutanese refugee camps in eastern Nepal, Bhutan lacks any official communist parties. In contrast, Marxist-Communist parties in Nepal are among the major parties. Part of the appeal of communism in Nepal is fueled by its dehumanizing caste system. This prompted several protests which ended in violence during transitions. Dalits are regarded as people who are outside of the caste system. They are considered so "polluted" to be included in the four Vardas. People belonging to lower caste are not allowed to eat with or marry people from higher caste in Nepal (Bownas, 2015: 411). Due to such discrimination, many belonging to the lower caste joined the Marxist-Communist People's Liberation Army during the civil war. Maoists claimed to have 100,000 militias which included women, Dalits, students, peasants and Janajatis (ethnic groups) (GSEA, 2006). Most people belonging to the lower caste in Nepal do not even have citizenship as they were unaware of the importance of identity card (Bownas, 2015: 412). Widespread support for Maoists came from this section of people because Maoists claimed to break down age-old caste hierarchy as one of their major goals (Bownas, 2015: 416). Maoists' emphasis on equality resonates with people of a lower castes (Bownas, 2015: 412).
Two particular issues raised by Maoists resonated with Dalits: full proportional representation of the Dalits, and an end of caste-based discrimination (GSEA, 2006).

The hierarchy among different castes makes Nepalese nationalism contested. Internal hierarchy within a nationality makes it even more contested. For instance, although Dalits are considered to be the lowest within the hierarchy, within Dalits there is a hierarchy, with Musahars as the lowest category. Musahars do not own their own land so they work on the lands belonging to higher caste people (Joshua Project, 2018). After the harvest, they collect rice that got dropped off on the field. They are not allowed to use the same water well as higher caste people. Dalits, in general, are not allowed to use Hindu temples as they would be "polluting" it. (GSEA, 2006). Musahars are also called “rat eaters” as they hunt rats living underground for food (Joshua Project, 2018).

As both Nepal and Bhutan are sandwiched between two giants: India in the south and China in the north, their influences impact the nature of the political transitions. India’s constant support and presence in Bhutan during the transition played a major role as to why it turned out more peaceful whereas India's off and on role in Nepal's transition helps explain why Nepal's political transition was not as peaceful as it could be. On one hand, where India helped Bhutan strengthen its democracy, India was blamed for instigating violence in Nepal during its transition via supporting Madhesis groups to orchestrate blockades (Shah, 2016). Furthermore, where India guided Bhutan through elections and framing elections laws, Nepal accused India of supporting, both covertly and overtly, Nepal’s anti-establishment groups such as Maoist insurgencies (Mishra, 2004: 636).

Regional influences also play important roles in political transitions. In this study, it is clear that India has occupied a significant role in both Nepal and Bhutan. India’s role in Nepal’s
democracy has been uneven. India supported the monarchy ever since the 1950s, and started supporting democratic forces since 1990 (Jha, 2014: 44). New Delhi came up with the "twin pillar" policy towards Nepal in the 1950s. This concept highlighted safeguarding the monarch while at the same time, strengthening the parliamentary democratic structure of the country (Thapa, 2008). In return, India wanted Nepal's support when it comes to the security interest of India (Jha, 2014: 44). India expected Nepal to help India whenever its security is threatened, and it also wanted Nepal to not support any sort of anti-Indian sentiments or movements on the Nepali soil. The Nepal-India friendship started diluting when in 1975, King Birendra put forward the idea of Nepal being a "zone of peace," an idea which was first endorsed by China and almost 116 countries, excluding India supported it (Jha, 2014: 45). Nepal sought international recognition for this declaration and the Indian government saw the declaration as being aimed against New Delhi (Kantha: 82).

The Nepal-India relationship further worsened when, in 1989, Nepal imported weapons from China without India’s knowledge (Thapa, 2008). India took it as a breach of the security pact between Nepal and India and imposed an economic blockade on Nepal. The blockade was imposed specifically on the two transit points, which were Nepal’s only two transit points to trade with foreign countries at that time (Jha, 2014: 45).

Later, India supported Nepal’s democratic parties and even the first people’s movement in 1990 (Thapa, 2008). As a result, King Birendra was forced to lift the ban on political parties and Nepal shifted from an absolute monarchy state to a constitutional monarchy state (Jha, 2014: 45). In 2015, Indian leaders made it clear that they are not happy with Nepal's constitution as they believe it was exclusive and discriminatory towards minority groups such as Madhesis, Tharus, and hill Janajatis who account for two-thirds of Nepal’s population (Ojha, 2015). India's role in
Nepal’s democracy seemed promising in the beginning but eventually, it started wearing out partly due to resistance from Nepal and also due to Nepal’s closeness to China. Where Nepal blamed India for instigating violence during their transition by supporting Madhesis groups, India denied the role but also did not help reduce the violent nature of Nepal’s transition and played very little role in Nepal’s transition as compared to Bhutan’s transition.

In the case of Bhutan, India’s role was much more prominent. India is the highest supplier of aid to Bhutan (3,158.706 Million USD compared to Nepal’s 283.647 Million USD) (Vivek, 2017). Most of this aid money goes into building the democratic institutions such as the supreme court, offices such as Royal Audit Authority, Election Commission, Anti-corruption Commission and the office of Attorney General and strengthening democracy in the country as stated in chapter 3 (Ministry of External Affairs: India, 2012). India’s active role in Bhutan’s democracy in terms of building democratic institutions, drafting constitutions and framing election laws helped increase the legitimacy of the government of Bhutan and helped them strengthen their mandate.

The Sino-Nepalese relationship is considered to be "age-old" and "deep-rooted" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Nepal, 2017). Both countries adopted the five principles of peaceful coexistence known as Panchsheel which include: mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; equality and cooperation for mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence (Prasad, 2015: 26). Although Nepal is committed to China and says that it will never allow its soil to be used for any harmful activities against China, their relationship is mostly economic (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Nepal, 2017). Chinese assistance to Nepal can be categorized into three categories: a) grants, b) interest-free loans, and c) concessional loans (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Nepal, 2017). Nepal uses this assistance for infrastructure building, industrialization processes, and human
resource development among many other tasks (Prasad, 2015: 26). Over the past 50 years, with China's assistance, Nepal has completed over 30 projects which have further boosted Nepal's economy (Prasad, 2015: 28). Some of the completed projects were the Arniko Highway, the Ring Road, Prithvi Highway, Kathmandu-Bhaktapur road, Gorkha-Narayanghat road, Sunkoshi Hydro Project, the Birendra International Convention Centre, Hetauda Cotton Mill, Bansbari Leather and Shoe Factory, Bhaktpur Brick and Tile Factory, Bhrikuti Paper Mill, and Lumbini Sugar Mill, Gorakkali Rubber Udhyog (Prasad, 2015: 28). In contrast, Bhutan does not receive any aid from China. Even in terms of investment, China is the top investor in Nepal and India comes in the second place. As an illustration, by July 2013, 575 projects under Chinese investment were approved which created almost 31,594 jobs in Nepal (Prasad, 2015: 29). During the same fiscal year, 566 projects under Indian investment were also approved (Prasad, 2015: 29). Furthermore, China is Nepal's second largest trading partner, the largest source of Nepal's Foreign Direct Investment and first tourist destination for Chinese people in South Asia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Nepal, 2017). In 2016, China passed India as a top aid donor to Nepal. China’s aid to Nepal stood at $37.95 Million whereas India’s aid was $22 Million (“China Offers Aid to Nepal, Unsettling India’s Attempt to Woo Back Old Ally,” 2017). On one hand, where Nepal has such close economic relations with China, Bhutan has no diplomatic or economic relations with China, so their influence is almost nonexistent in Bhutan.

Although Nepal’s nationalism seems more contested internally, it is stronger than Bhutan’s nationalism, externally. Bhutanese nationalism is mostly seen externally as being guided and in the suzerainty of India whereas Nepal has a more unified nationalism. Nepal does not do things in order to please India like Bhutan does. It is evident in the fact that despite India’s dislike towards the growing Sino-Nepalese relationship, Nepal has actually never stopped its relationship with
China. India tried warning Nepal of its growing closeness with China via blockades in 1989 and again in 2015 but these actions by India further pushed Nepal towards China. Bhutan never had a formal relationship with China until 2012. Following a meeting between the then Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigme Thinley and then Chinese premier Wen Jiabao at the Rio+20 Conference in Brazil (2012), the leaders indicated a possibility of establishing diplomatic ties between the two countries (Sakhlani and Tortajada, 2016). The meeting took place without India's knowledge and when India came to know about it in time, India withdrew its petroleum subsidies to Bhutan on the eve of Bhutan's 2012 general election (Sakhlani and Tortajada, 2016). India considers Bhutan as a very important ally against the expansion and the influence of China in the region. India’s response was taken as a definitive message by the new government of Bhutan. Furthermore, Bhutan (at least partially) fulfilled its promise of protecting India’s security when it launched Operation All Clear in 2003 against Indian militants functioning on Bhutanese soil, but Nepal failed to fulfil the similar promise when it took a neutral stance on the India-China war in 1962. India, in a way, is fighting to keep and if possible expand its regional influence in comparison to China’s. When China’s influence reaches Nepal, India increases its involvement in Bhutan to make sure Bhutan does not fall into China’s hand too.

**Revisiting Proposed Hypotheses:**

I established two expected findings in this research. First, I proposed that a stronger sense of nationalism in Bhutan would explain its peaceful transition whereas contested conceptions of nationalism in Nepal explains its comparatively violent transition. This hypothesis mostly holds. Bhutan has a stronger sense of nationalism in the form of its national identity whereas in Nepal, there are so many nationalisms which are separate from each other and that they weaken national identity. Most nationalist groups in Nepal were formed on the basis of caste and ethnicity and
individual groups were demanding change for their groups and not for all. Many nationalism in Nepal led to many grievances which led to different processes adopted to get their voices heard which often resulted in violence.

Secondly, I expected to find that a strong and supportive regional influence would help Bhutan have a peaceful democratic transition, whereas a lack of positive regional influence in Nepal helps explain its violent democratic transition. This hypothesis holds, too. India was more positively supportive of Bhutan’s transitions than it was in Nepal. India made sure to help Bhutan’s government appear stronger and organized to general public, which shut down all sorts of opposition. In Nepal’s case, India not only allegedly helped certain groups, like Madhesis, which led to a lot of violence in the Nepali transition. India is competing with China to maintain and expand its influence in Bhutan. India tried to reduce China’s influence in Nepal but that does not seem to have worked. With Bhutan, India is being careful in making sure that it does not let its presence weaken like it did in Nepal’s case. That is why India is more active in Bhutan’s transitions than it ever was in Nepal’s transitions.

Conclusions:

There are many factors that influence political transitions. A variety of factors can at least partially explain why some democratic transitions are more peaceful than others. Some democratic transitions employ tactics due to factors such as lack of accountability and low legitimacy (Collier, 2009: 18). Similarly, Roberts believes that political leaders have a huge role to play in terms of determining the way political transitions are headed (2002: 525). Although all these factors can be applied to the cases of Nepal and Bhutan, it seems that nationalism and regional influence do a better job of explaining why Nepal’s political transition was not as peaceful as Bhutan’s.
Democracy in Bhutan did not develop because of popular demand. In fact, it was the former regime which adopted democracy and implemented it. There was no popular mobilization for democracy in the country. Some criticisms, however, claim that it was a strategy of the royal family of Bhutan to silence political dissent and also secure the monarchy’s future by providing people with democracy even before they asked for it (Phunstho, 2008). It has been further argued that the constitution, which was implemented in 2008, provides far too much significance to the royal family and also preserves their interest (Phunstho, 2008). In contrast, the majority of Bhutanese see a royal initiative to implement democracy as selfless, generous and a noble decision (Phunstho, 2008). In addition, when the fourth king of Bhutan decided to transform the country from a monarchy to democracy, people were unhappy about the decision and pleaded with the king not to go ahead with the plan (Phunstho, 2008).

The Nepalese transition, however, was led by the masses. Dissolution of its monarchy, restoration of parliament, adoption of a new constitution and even the establishment of a federal republic, all occurred due to the fact that the general public asked for it. The leaders including King Mahendra, King Birendra and even the Ranas tried centralizing the power and implementing direct rule, but the public would have nothing of it. Through movements such as Jan Andolan I and II, people demanded a multiparty system and democracy in Nepal.

Having a strong sense of nationalism can act in at least two ways. In the case of Bhutan, having a stronger national identity and lesser categories of nationalism helped influence its political transitions and made them much less violent. In Nepal, having multiple nationalisms coupled with various grievances made it difficult for a more singular national identity to stand out. Multiple nationalisms also led to a long, non-linear political transition which employed violent tactics. In contrast, in the case of Bhutan, an absence of multiple nationalisms allowed national
identity to take center stage, which made it much easier for the transition to take place in a more peaceful fashion.

The comparative strategy that I have adopted in this thesis is the Most Similar Systems Design. Although this comparative strategy works well for my cases, it has limitations. Even though Nepal and Bhutan seem very similar from the outside, if we look closer, they are very different cases. Other than the fact that they are both located in South Asia, other similar factors can be debated. The major difference lies in the fact that democracy in Nepal was a bottom-up approach whereas in Bhutan it was a top-down approach. Democracy in Bhutan was top-down: embraced reluctantly by the citizenry even as it was something led by the King. In Nepal, the transition was mostly bottom-up, even before 2008. In Bhutan, the constitution removed the King as the head of government and set a mandatory retirement age for the monarchs at 65, and also gave the parliament the power to dethrone the King altogether with the two-thirds majority vote (Sengupta, 2007). In contrast, in Nepal, Kings such as Birendra and Mahendra have tried to take all control in their hands and rule Nepal directly. Where the notion of self-government scared a lot of people in Bhutan, it was something the Nepalese were seeking since the 1990s. Considering just the way democracy came into Nepal and Bhutan might also explain why their transitions turned out the way they did. On the whole, the two cases were not as similar as they were thought to be.

With regard to scope limitations, my research has focused on only two primary factors that could explain the nature of political transitions in Nepal and Bhutan, but it should not be limited to these two factors (nationalism and regional influence). There can be more factors that could be examined by future researchers such as the conception of democracy in respective countries and cultural practices which could explain why Bhutanese behave the way they behave and Nepalese the way they behave. For example, both rule and cultural practices of Bhutan work against the
mode of expressing an opinion through political protest and the courageous actions of the people (Turner, Chuki & Tshering, 2014: 428).

This research highlights that there are significant difficulties generalizing about democratic transitions, even when countries appear to have significant similarities. We cannot have a singular model of democracy being practiced by all. Until and unless the core values of democracy are upheld, it could be tailored in a way to suit the society and people. This research reveals that two cases or countries that might seem very similar from the outside can be so different in their own ways. We could compare them but should not try merging them in a category or under a conclusion. Democracy and democratic transitions have long been, and will likely be, extremely diverse. Our theories must reflect as much.
Bibliography


