

Nepal's Historical Cycle: Three Centuries of Disintegration, Integration, & Disintegration

Dr. Alok K. Bohara

contd...

Second, while the country had achieved formal political freedom, the deeper societal issues—particularly long-standing ethnic grievances rooted in economic, social, and political deprivation—remained largely unaddressed by the elite party leadership. The promise of an inclusive democracy was undermined by widespread corruption and the persistence of systemic exclusion and the failure to meaningfully engage marginalized communities.

The hardline communists (Maoists) capitalized on the growing disillusionment and unrest, launching an armed insurgency in 1996 by recruiting disenchanted youth from rural and marginalized segments of society. The Maoist uprising, driven by promises of radical change and social justice, quickly gained traction in regions long neglected by the state.

As the insurgency flared, the situation was further complicated by the royal massacre of 2001, which threw the monarchy into turmoil and created a power vacuum. In the midst of this chaos, King Gyanendra staged a royal coup, seizing direct control of the government under the pretense of restoring order.

The suspension of civil liberties, censorship of the press, and the imprisonment of political party leaders marked the return of authoritarianism. But instead of

restoring stability, these actions tipped the country into deeper crisis. What followed was a powerful alliance between the Maoists and mainstream political parties, leading to a mass movement that ultimately abolished the monarchy and declared Nepal a federal democratic republic, culminating in the drafting of a new constitution. The external intervention in this change, known as the South Block design, is well known. The chaos, crisis, and conflict in this disintegration phase and the proliferation of elite overproduction continued leaving many disillusioned and unheard.



A New Republic, Elite Multiplication, and Power Struggles
The introduction of a new federal system, rather than ushering in

stability and inclusion, further intensified political chaos. Frequent changes in government, fragile coalitions, and collusive alliances among parties became the norm. Instead of addressing the country's deep structural problems, the political elite continued to multiply in number and influence-expanding without meaningful reform.

Meanwhile, the nation began hemorrhaging its able-bodied workforce, as millions of youth sought employment abroad amid stagnant opportunities at home.

My previous article detailed how

elite overproduction and mass

disenchantment are rapidly push-

cerns: external pressures—namely, the alarming rate of outmigration and the deepening involvement of foreign powers in Nepal's internal affairs—and a highly malleable, weak state. Far from signaling the end of instability, the birth of the republic has accelerated the disintegration phase, with no clear path to recovery in sight—at least not before the close of Nepal's third century.

At the center of this deadlock appear four key figures—King Gyanendra, Deuba, Oli, and Prachanda—who, despite their divergent paths, seem to hold the levers that could either ease

the slide or exacerbate it.

What Next in the Third Hun-

dred-Year Disintegration Phase?

If Nepal's historical pattern of alternating cycles of disintegration and integration holds true, we are now at a perilous moment. As I argued in my earlier piece, the four dominant political actors—Gyanendra, Deuba, Oli, and Prachanda—are playing a dangerous game of political "chicken," recklessly nudging the country toward the edge of collapse. The solutions currently being floated offer no guarantee of reversing the nation's declining development trajectory—especially now that we've already achieved the two major milestones of political and social freedom.

What remains is institutional strength, which has been completely compromised amidst mercenary governance. The collusive practice of scratching each other's backs has become the default political culture, doing little to calm the rising tide of public disenchantment. As we approach the close of this third century—another hundred-year cycle of disintegration—the nation is running out of options. Without serious course correction, rupture—internal or external—may become inevitable, with no good outcomes in the horizon.

Slowing the Slide of the Disinteg-

ration Phase

Collapse is not destiny. It can be averted, but only if the governing elites muster the political will to adopt measured, practical reforms—not sweeping constitutional overhauls, which would likely open a dangerous Pandora's box. A few targeted steps could help reverse the forces now tearing at the nation's core:

Reform proportional representation: Ensure that PR candidates are selected through competitive elections within their respective communities as originally intended, rather than handed out based on nepotism or financial transactions.

Decouple provincial govern-

ments from central politics: Provin-

cial governments should re-

main intact when the central gov-

ernment changes hands, preserv-

ing administrative continuity and

upholding the true spirit of fed-

eralism.

Mandate internal party democ-

racy: Require political parties to

conduct primaries to select elec-

toral candidates, strengthening

transparency and legitimacy at

the grassroots level.

The way out in the future: Can we find a balance in the storm?

Historical experience shows that trade protectionism will eventually reap the consequences. The Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930 caused both U.S. and global trade to shrink by about two-thirds, which greatly aggravated the Great Depression. And today's tariff war is even more destructive. Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), warned that the uncertainty of protectionism is more destructive than tariffs itself, and called on all countries to "see the clouds as soon as possible". Steve Nolan, an economics lecturer at Johns Mures University in Liverpool, England, pointed out: "Economists disagree on many issues, but there is almost a consensus on the benefits of free trade. Now, Trump's behavior is destroying the operating rules of the global economy for decades."

In the smoke of the tariff war, a number of unanticipated winners are quietly rising, and their market share has also expanded in this tariff conflict. With China and the United States imposing high tariffs on each other, Indian, Vietnamese, Thai and other Southeast Asian countries are rapidly accepting orders for manufacturing industries transferred from China. Indian Minister of Industry and Commerce Piyush Gaillard said that the tariff war was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for India.

Foxconn, Apple's main contract manufacturer in Taiwan Province, has started to produce iPhone in India, and its production base in India has undertaken nearly 20% of the global iPhone production at present.

In the background of the US government's tightening trade policy towards China, in order to avoid high tariff costs, Apple is gradually implementing the strategy of supply chain diversification and accelerating the transfer of production links to India.

There is no denying that there is no winner in tariff war. In the future, in the wave of globalization reconstruction, whoever can take the lead in abandoning the old thinking of zero-sum game will be able to seize the initiative and gain a firm foothold in the new economic pattern.

Scholars at Southwest University of Political Science and Law, China.

Limit the number of terms a person can serve as Prime Minister to no more than two. Make the upper house competitive, with members elected rather than appointed based on party share. Limit the size and perks associated with the provincial governance structure.

These measures could have a positive ripple effect across other dimensions of governance. When a nation is in turmoil, a sweeping constitutional overhaul rarely ends well. As we approach the end of this century of disintegration, there is still hope that Nepal might finally embark on a trajectory of development and policy coherence—laying the groundwork for a fourth century of integration.

Otherwise, if these disintegrative forces are allowed to fester, there may no longer be a country called Nepal as we know it by the time it reaches the end of its third century (2038-2050)—a beautiful, proud nation with a three-hundred-year-old sovereign history and an astonishingly unparalleled cultural mosaic.

Appendix: The French Example of Cyclical Integration and Disintegration

In France, the integrative phase of the High Middle Ages began during the reign of the great unifier Philip II, also known as Philip Augustus (1180–1223), and continued until around 1350. This was followed by a disintegrative phase from 1350 to 1450, marked by the crises of the late medieval period. The next integrative phase—the Renaissance—lasted for over a century (1450–1560), bringing renewed centralization and cultural flourishing.

The subsequent disintegrative phase (1560–1660) began with the outbreak of the French Wars of Religion (1562–1598), and continued with further instability in the 1620s, including magnate rebellions, Huguenot insurrections, and widespread peasant uprisings, culminating in the Fronde (1648–1653). The final full integrative phase, associated with the Enlightenment, extended from around 1660 to the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789.

Barring other transitional periods and disruptions (such as the Napoleonic era), each phase lasted roughly a century, with full cycles of integration and disintegration spanning approximately 200 to 250 years. Source: Peter Turchin.

Smash And Grab

By Sunanda Datta Ray

CHAPTER 17 Thumb Impression
contd...

Sikkim thus voted for constitutional suicide in an atmosphere of mounting terror. Even so, the chief executive took pains to ensure that the outcome did not disappoint him. He was taking no chances with judges who might find it difficult to discard a lifetime's tradition of independence. And so the gazette extraordinary of 11 April ordained that "the special poll shall not be called in question in any civil court of law". It also stipulated that "an appeal shall lie in respect of any matter relating to the special poll from the orders of the additional election commissioner to the chief executive whose decision shall be final". As assembly president, Lal summoned the emergency session and pushed through resolutions that no member admitted to drafting. As head of the administration, he had appointed the polling officer, supervised the setting up of booths and ballot-boxes, and made all other arrangements for voting. Security and secrecy were in his hands. Lal would also be sole and final arbiter of the verdict. Prosecutor, counsel, judge, jury, and executioner were all rolled in one. Never before or since in the subcontinent's history could so much arbitrary authority have formally been vested in a single person. The morning of 14 April dawned crisp and clear. Two battalions of armed CRP troops, as well as Khorana's 450 policemen, manned 57 polling booths for an estimated 97,000 voters. All the walls in Gangtok were plastered with Sikkim Congress posters. Its tricolour flew over every roof and balustrade. Government jeeps laden with Youth Congress volunteers sped in all directions. The resolution was printed in English, Nepalese, and Sikkimese on slips of pink paper. In each polling booth stood a box in the identical shade of pink marked "For" and a white one labelled "Against".

Inevitably, people objected that the same colour had deliberately been chosen to mislead the simple into believing that since ballot papers were pink, they were meant for the pink boxes supporting the resolution. The Sikkimese were not allowed any opportunity to discuss the procedure, or digest what was being perpetrated in their name. The opposing point of view was not heard at all. contd...

Tariff Tsunami: How American Protectionism Ignited a Global Economic Storm

By Feng Liu, Xiulingjia Rui & Youyuan Zhang

On April 2, local time, U.S. President Donald Trump (hereafter referred to as Trump) announced a baseline tariff of 10% on imports, effective from April 5. He also announced additional tariffs on countries with significant trade deficits, including Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, China, and South Africa, effective from April 9, with rates ranging from 10% to 49%. On April 9, Trump declared a 90-day suspension of reciprocal tariffs on 75 countries that had not taken "retaliatory" actions, reducing the tax rate to 10%. However, tariffs on China will be raised to 145 percent. How does a tariff war orchestrated by the U.S. trigger a butterfly effect in the global economy? Who will emerge victorious in this conflict, and what will be the next steps? These questions have become the focal point of global attention.

Tariff Protectionism: Domino in the global supply chain.

The first domino was that the United States has successively imposed tariffs, which has led to constant turbulence in the global trading system. On January 20, 2023, Trump officially took office as the president of the United States, and announced "America First Trade Policy". Subsequently, an additional 10% tariff on China was imposed on February 4th, another 10% tariff on China on March 4, and a 25% tariff on Mexican and Canadian countries. As of April 16, the tariff on China had climbed to 245%. This policy of "emphasizing protection than cooperation" in the United States has increased the operating cost of the global economy and fueled the wave of economic nationalism. More seriously, according to the report "Global Trade Outlook and Statistics" released by the WTO Secretariat on April 16th, The volume of world merchandise trade will drop by 0.2% in 2025, and if the situation deteriorates further, it will drop to 1.5%.

The second domino is the risk of economic recession caused by the

interruption and transfer of global supply chains. As the United States imposes a 25% tariff on cars, Jaguar Land Rover, Audi, and other car companies announced the suspension of their export business to the United States. In addition, the shock wave in tariff war has spread to the capital market, with the Standard & Poor's 500 Index falling below 5,000 points for the first time in the past year, and its market value has evaporated by trillions of dollars. Gbenga Ibiikunle, professor and chairman of finance at the University of Edinburgh and director of Edinburgh Financial Innovation Center, said: "In view of the current situation, global economic growth will slow down or decline in the near future, depending on the severity of policy uncertainty, unless global trade policy becomes more stable soon."

The third domino played a "counter-combination boxing" for China, while Viet Nam, India and other countries held a "wait-and-see compromise" attitude, and the tariff war spiraled up. As of April 18th, on the one hand, the Chinese government continued to impose tariffs on the United States to 145%, and said that it would ignore the US tariff number game; On the other hand, it carried out rare earth export control and anti-dumping investigation, and filed a lawsuit with the WTO, accusing the United States of violating multilateral trade rules by imposing reciprocal tariffs. Faced with the "digital game" of the United States and unilateral tariff pressure, China needs to find a way to effectively counter trade bullying, promote its own sustained and healthy economic development, and maintain the global multilateral trade order.

Multi-party Game: Who Is Sinking? Who Is Wining effortlessly?

The shock wave in tariff war has given rise to a group of "sinkers" who are under great pressure in the global economic system, and enterprises that are highly dependent on exports are the first victims of the tariff war. Iron and steel smelting, automobile manufacturing, construction engineering and other related manufacturers are facing severe challenges, and

