

# “THE PEOPLE’S WAR” AND JOHAN GALTUNG’S CONFLICT MODELS

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## Abstract

*“The People's War” or The Civil War in Nepal is regarded as "one of the most successful Maoist interventions in history" occurred on a background of poverty and social exclusion in a constitutional traditional monarchy. Officially, the conflict ended after ten years of tension and armed encounters between insurgents and the Nepalese government, and many of its initial causes still remain unsolved today. In this paper, I will try to examine the nature and dynamics of the conflict based on Johan Galtung's three-triangle analysis without including the conflict's detailed history and its post-ceasefire developments.*

**Keywords: conflict resolution, asymmetric conflict, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), cultural violence, peacekeeping.**

## INTRODUCTION

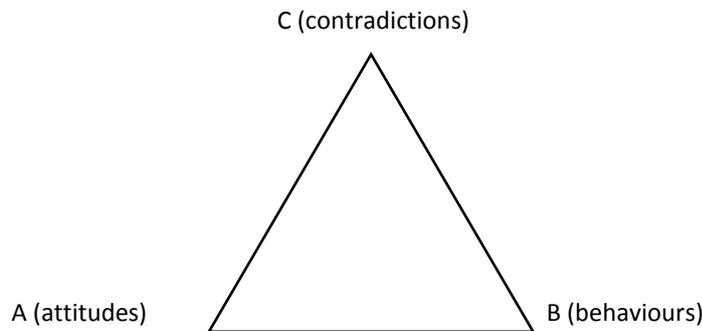
After the Second World War, many conflicts have demonstrated that victory cannot be guaranteed by the military and technological superiority of either of the two parties in conflict. The conflicts from Indonesia, Algeria, Tunisia and Vietnam have highlighted situations where nationalist forces have managed to accomplish their goals with warfare, even in the face of the great powers of the world. This new type of conflict has been called ‘asymmetric conflict’, and has been presented by theorists as Mark Andrew, Anthony J. Joe, Giorgio Gallo or Arturo Manzano. The Civil War in Nepal is not only an example of an asymmetric conflict, but also a case study on one of the most successful Maoist insurgency in history.

This article’s main objective is to identify and highlight the causes, the nature and the dynamics of the conflict within Johan Galtung’s framework of analyzing a conflict. A historical overview of The Civil War in Nepal is beyond the scope of this article. The article is structured in three main parts, and each part corresponds to one of the three triangles used by Johan Galtung to analyse a conflict. The first triangle follows the attitudes, contradictions and the conflict behaviors (Theoretical framework 1); the second triangle monitors aspects of cultural violence, structural violence and direct violence in the conflict (Theoretical Framework 2); the third theoretical triangle seeks to explain the conflict through peace: peacemaking, peacekeeping, peace-building (Theoretical framework 3). For all three parts, the analysis aims to present the basic elements of the theory;

application of the theory on The Civil War in Nepal and observations regarding any limits on the current research. The used research method is the analysis of documents, papers and press releases in order to provide fairness and preserve objectivity within the subject.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 1

The conflict analysis model proposed by Johan Galtung in 1969, includes both symmetric and asymmetric conflicts. In the author's opinion, a conflict can be viewed as a triangle whose sides are represented by A (attitude), B (behaviours) and C (contradictions), where C is the tip of the triangle.



**(C) Contradiction:** the main conflict includes real or perceived "<incompatibility of goals>" between the conflicting parties. In *symmetrical conflicts*, the contradiction is defined by the parties, their interests and conflicts of interests. In *asymmetrical conflicts*, the contradiction is defined by the parties, the relationship between them and the conflict within this relationship (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall, 2011, 9-11).

Before continuing with Galtung's model analysis, it is necessary to highlight the differences between symmetric and asymmetric conflicts. When **A and B**<sup>1</sup> have a relatively similar or equal position, and they enter into a conflict due to diverging interests; we are talking about a **symmetrical conflict**. When in the relationship between A and B one of the parties has a clearly superior standing compared to the other (i.e. a clear situation of inequality between the two sides) we are referring to **asymmetrical conflict**. According to Ramsbotham, this type of conflict occurs between the majority and a minority, between a government and a rebel group, between an employer and his employees, or between a master and his servants ("Transforming Civil Conflicts", The Network University. The University of Amsterdam, June 2000).

Nowadays, an increasing number of conflicts have strong asymmetrical characteristics. There are three types of asymmetry: power, strategic and structural asymmetry. The border between these three types of asymmetry is often blurred,

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<sup>1</sup> A = player 1, B = player 2;

and in a conflict more than one type of asymmetry may exist, each with variable degrees of intensity. According to Giorgio Gallo and Arturo Marzano the clear separation is only useful in order to theoretically understand and explain a conflict (Gallo, Marzano, 2009, 33).

- **Power asymmetry** exists when we are dealing with a disproportion in power, and the weak actor initiates the conflict. The First Gulf War between U.S. and Iraq is a clear example of this type of conflict. Both countries are recognized as having a regular army and a political body capable of taking decisions. The asymmetry of A (U.S.) and B (Iraq) consisted in huge differences in military force.
- **Strategic asymmetry** exists when A and B are asymmetric in terms of tactics and strategies in addressing the conflict. Examples of this type of asymmetry include guerrilla warfare or terrorism, where:

According to Anthony James Joe, guerrilla warfare "*are those who fight against ostensibly more powerful forces by unexpected attacks against vulnerable targets, and who are sustained by popular support, high morale, good intelligence, secure bases, and foreign assistance*". Also, called "*warfare of the weak*", its most common tactic is **ambush**, and its primary used weapon is an element of **surprise** (A. J. Joe, 2007, 3). Andrew Mark argues that in classic guerrilla war, "*the people sea forms a sanctuary of popular support for the guerrilla fish*" and in urban guerrilla warfare "*the anonymity of the city provides protection*" (Andrew, 1975, 177).

- **Structural asymmetry** exists when A and B are asymmetric in terms of their status, in this case the root of the conflict lies in the structure of the relationship between the two parties. The origin of the conflict is a change in the relations between adversaries. One wishes to amend; the other wants to avoid the change by any means. Most of the times, one is a government institution or state and the other is a non-governmental institution, non-state, political organization or liberation movement. An example of structural asymmetry is the conflict between Israel and Palestine (Andrew, 1975, 177).

A conflict in Galtung's view = **attitude + behaviour + contradiction**, where contradiction (C) is the root of the conflict, and attitude (A) and behaviour (B) are meta-conflicts after (C). CAB is a possible example of a conflict sequence starting objectively with an attitude of inner life that is expressed externally through violent or not verbal and / or physical behaviour. This definition helps us to talk about the CAB as a guiding conflict theory, as a dynamic phase of the conflict, or as an approach to solutions (Galtung, 2007, 22).

**(A) Attitude:** includes the perception and non-perception of the parties about themselves and each other. It can be positive or negative, strongly negative especially in violent conflicts when the parties can develop humiliating stereotypes about each other. Attitude consists of emotive and affective components (I like or I do not like X), cognitive components (favourable or unfavourable information

about X) and conative/ behavioural components (desire, will) were: (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall, 2011, 9-11).

According to J. Sutter (apud.) **will** is defined as "*any human activity in which desire plays a role and, by extension, any conduct in which planning is necessary and the engagement of knowledge and resources in order to fulfill it.*" (Sutter, 2006, 1300)

**(B) Behaviour:** involves cooperation or coercion / conciliation or hostility. Regarding the behaviour in case of violent conflict we talk about threats, coercion or destructive attacks.

## **THE CIVIL WAR IN NEPAL: CONTRADICTIONS, ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOURS**

The main actors of the macro-political conflict in Nepal are: **The Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist); the alliance of the seven political parties** and the **Government** controlled by the king.

Against the background of ethnic discrimination, suppression of women, lack of jobs for young people and insufficient satisfaction of the most basic human needs (poverty, socio-political instability in an underdeveloped country), the Maoists have been increasingly motivated to react with slogans of ethnic autonomy and self-determination. The King treated the Maoist insurgency as a matter of law, social disorder and ordered police actions in almost all lower casts. It was the starting point of serious violations of human rights by the monarchy and atrocities which led to the recruitment of the victims (especially young people) in the guerrilla forces led by the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (D. DeJ Raj, 2005, 5). The main objectives of the communists were: the abolition of the monarchy, drafting a new constitution and the election of a constituent republican assembly (Q-T. Do, 2007/2009, p.3).

According to Galtung's view, the civil war in Nepal is an asymmetric conflict presenting features of strategic and structural asymmetry.

- Firstly, it is an **asymmetric conflict** because there is an inequality of power between the two parts engaged in conflict. In this particular case, the Monarchy is the strong player (A), while The Unified Communist Party of Nepal is the weak player (B). In spite this disproportion of power, the weak player holds an advantageous position on the battlefield because of the strategies and tactics used – guerrilla warfare (**strategic and power asymmetry**).
- As seen, player B is trying to change the structure of the relationship between him and player A. (**structural asymmetry**). Naturally, player A is left with one option, to respond with a dramatic rebuff. By constantly violating the human rights, it loses the popular support it needs. So far in our analysis, we have a Communist Party that adopts features of a guerrilla war that has popular support and the advantages

of the terrain and climate of Nepal. This increased the inefficiency of the government leading in the end towards a prolonged conflict.

The Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal started a “people’s war” on 13 February 1996, by assaulting a police post in Rolpa, a district located in Western Nepal. Over the ten years of conflict, the state conducted counterinsurgency operations which led to serious abuses of human rights and the death of more than 15,000 people, mostly non-combatant civilians. The rest of the population has severely suffered the effects of such a conflict, starting with rape, psychological trauma, harassment, torture and arbitrary detention. In February 2005 King Gyanendra declared the state of national emergency for three months, suspended all civil liberties, putting political leaders under house arrest and gathering a council of ministers. These actions led to more political chaos. According to Rabindra Mishra, what happened in Nepal can be considered one of the “most successful Maoist insurgencies in history” (M. Rabindra, 2004, 627).

Each of the three actors involved in the civil war in Nepal has a unique perception of himself.

- The King declares himself to be a supporter of patriotism, a unifying element of an ethnically and culturally diverse society.
- The Alliance present themselves as the “apostle of democracy” (D. Dej Raj, 2005, 9). In 1990, the main leftist parties merged into a popular movement that started with daily protests for several weeks, in order to put pressure on King Birendra (Gyanendra reached to power in 2001) to establish a multiparty political system and a constitutional monarchy. It was accomplished towards the end of that year. However, Nepal has not been deprived of instability and political turmoil. That is, perhaps, the reason why in 14 years of multiparty political system 13 different governments have been elected. (“Nepal: Conflict Profile”, Insight of Conflict).
- The Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) declares themselves as the liberators of all the oppression caused by the establishment of the Republic (D. Dej Raj, 2005, 10-14).

#### *The king and the Government:*

With the first sign of a ceasefire in August 2003, the government improved its security system in order to counteract the insurgents. Thus military commando bands were created containing members of the Royal Nepalese Army, armed police forces, police forces and another 24,000 new members recruited among the young population. Alongside the arrest of Maoist leaders across India and the increase in security at the Southern border of Nepal, the government was falsely optimistic to predict that the insurgents were getting weaker day by day. King Gyanendra of Nepal attained a fortified political position after 2002 with the removal of Prime Minister Deuba.

In 2004 he undertook a national tour in order to restore the public's confidence in the monarchy, claiming he wants to play "the role of a constructive monarch, being visible to the public and aware of their concerns." While, for the political parties, the Maoist insurgency was classified as a political issue that should be addressed in terms of political methods, the government, through the voice of the king of Nepal treated the Maoist insurgency as terrorism. Inconsistencies between the political parties and the king were very common, the latter putting political leaders under house arrest. The political parties did not share the optimistic analysis of the government about the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). They believed that the population is under the risk of a strong threat both from the - Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and state authorities. Moreover, these parties gave no support to the security forces, which were still too weak to force a peace treaty in spite of the favourable developments.

*The alliance of the seven parties:*

This alliance represents a mixture of neo-liberal political groups, social-democratic, Marxist-Leninist and others. Being unable to address the king and to reach a political agreement, the group initiated popular unrest in some cities demanding the king to restate the dissolved parliament and reactivate the constitutional process. The Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) did not miss this opportunity and showed its support for this action while stating again their demands - the abolition of the constitutional monarchy and the formation of the first phase of an interim government to ensure the future of a republican state in Nepal. The Alliance rejected a coalition with the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) because some of its party leaders were supporters of a constitutional monarchy. Not only these leaders, but also countries like India, UK and USA were categorically in favour of a constitutional monarchy and a multi-party democracy. By the end of the Civil War in Nepal, these political parties were caught in the middle between the monarchy and the idea of a republic promoted by the Maoists.

*The Nepalese Maoist Communist Party:*

Four days after the outbreak of the "People's War", the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) submitted an ultimatum that included: 40 paragraphs concerning the wellbeing of the population, a request to start drafting a new constitution by the Constituent Assembly, the formation of a republican state and the cancelation of any foreign relations with India. The first attack initiated by the Maoist party took place in the city of Rolpa.

Rolpa became the center for regular guerrilla attacks while the regional political parties became isolated, and the state institutions were dismantled. In the first phase, the Maoists have mobilized about 21 sub-national bodies through forced recruitment by eliminating class enemies, the transformation of rural areas in strategic areas and by capturing weapons from local landowners and even from police units. In the second phase, after establishing a comfort zone in the

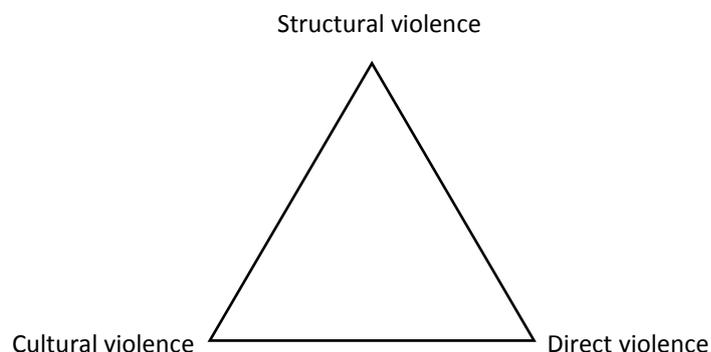
countryside, the Communist Party began to attack the Royal Nepalese Army. Unquestionably, they did not lack foreign aid received from Nepalese individuals living in India, which consisted in weapons and ammunition. The 1,800 km border with India became a sanctuary for the training of guerrillas. The political strategy of the Maoists was oriented towards cooperation with mainstream parties, even inviting the UN to have a creative role in the peaceful resolution of conflict, the election of a Constituent Assembly could be held in the UN Security Council after disbanding the Royal Nepalese Army (D. Dej Raj, 2005, 10-14).

International and regional factors:

- **U.S.A.** - labelled the Maoists as terrorists. Because of this conflict, Nepal entered the list of U.S. foreign political challenges and thus approx. 50 U.S. Pacific Commando soldiers were involved in joint operations with the Royal Nepalese Army. However, both the U.S. and India criticized King Gyanendra's actions in February 2005 when he arrested several political leaders and the confiscated their property (D. Dej Raj, 2005, 16).
- **Great Britain and India** - requested a review of the lethal assistance to Nepal, the nonlethal was accepted (bomb protection equipment, body armour, etc.)
- **India** - labelled the Maoists as terrorists. Nepal is geographically surrounded by India on three sides, which favours its dependency on India in terms of trade, free trade and access to the sea. According to Rabindra Mishra "this allows the Government of Delhi to play a manipulative role in Nepal in the interest of India." (M. Rabindra, 2004, 628)
- **Belgium** – The Nepalese government has purchased 5,500 guns from the Belgian government.
- **Switzerland and Norway** - willing to mediate the conflict in Nepal.
- **European Union** - neutral.
- **China** - labelled the Maoists as anti-government forces (D. Dej Raj, 2005, 16 -17).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 2

Galtung's second triangle distinguishes between three types of violence - cultural violence, direct violence and structural violence. This triangle is closely related to the first. Consequently, cultural violence can be ended by changing the cultural attitudes (A), direct violence by changing behaviour (B) and structural violence by changing contradictions (C), (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, Miall, 2011).



But, **how is violence defined?** Galtung defines violence as "avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs or to put it in more general terms, the impairment of human life, which lowers the actual degree to which someone is able to meet their needs below that which would otherwise be possible" (K. Ho, 2014, 3). The cultural and structural aspects of the conflict are invisible, while direct violence is visible as a behaviour. Its causes lie exactly in cultural and structural violence (in reverse; direct violence actually *strengthens* the others two types of violence), (Galtung, 2004, 6).

According to American Psychological Association (APA) "*violence is an extreme form of aggression, such as assault, rape or murder. Violence has many causes, including frustration, exposure to violent media, violence in the home or neighborhood and a tendency to see other people's actions as hostile even when they're not. Certain situations also increase the risk of aggression, such as drinking, insults and other provocations and environmental factors like heat and overcrowding.*" (Definition of Violence in APA)

In a simplified form, direct violence refers to the use of physical force (torture, rape, sexual assault) and verbal force (humiliation). In Galtung's opinion, even the threat to use force is acknowledged as an act of violence. Cultural violence refers to attitudes and beliefs inherited that surround the everyday live. Structural violence occurs when some groups / classes / ethnicities / other groups are considered inferior or discriminated against when compared to others and this inequality is a clear feature of the social or political system ("Structural/Cultural/Direct Violence", Turning the Tide)

A conflict can have as a starting point any of these three types of violence because "systemic conflict transformation envisions the triangle as a multi-directional circle where structures, attitudes and behaviours interact over time and reinforce each other". Regarding conflicts, the three types of violence are empirically measured as follows:

- **Structural violence** describes institutional violence created by the system and it is translated into political oppression, economic exploitation and cultural discrimination.
- **Direct violence** occurs on an axis that starts with war and follows with a dialogue between the parties.
- **Cultural violence** is explained by changing the perceptions and attitudes towards terms like reconciliation and respect. It can be used to justify or legitimize direct or indirect structural violence. The studies on cultural violence highlight how direct acts of violence and acts of structural violence are legitimized in this manner and accepted in society (D. Veronique, 2006, 39).

### **NEPALESE CIVIL WAR: CULTURAL AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE**

With more than over 10,000 deaths spanned over a period of nine-years, the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, consolidated by various ethnic separations and the socio-economic situation of the country, led to a high level of political violence and human rights abuses (A. K. Bohora, 2006, 108). An accurate analysis of violence during the Civil War in Nepal is provided by Anindita Dasgupta. According to him, during the period 1996 - 2003, 17 people have died on a daily average and during 2003-2006, the average was 6 people per day. Even during 2001 – 2003 when the crossfire between the two sides was stopped, there were sporadic incidents of violence. As a response to the guerrilla tactics undertaken by the Unified Communist Party of Nepal, the army has focused on three elements - **to search, arrest and punish**, which increased the number of missing or dead people (structural violence).

A very important aspect of this conflict is the situation of the people caught between the Maoists and the Royal Nepalese Army. In their relationship with ordinary people, the Maoist considered them enemies if they did not cooperate. On the other hand, the government used the same methods, extracting any information with the use of arms if they did not cooperate willingly. Hundreds of journalists, lawyers, teachers, doctors, etc. have disappeared because they were suspected to sympathize with the Maoist movement. A case in point is the village / settlement of Tharus, where the support of the community for the Maoist movement was known. Once the army reached this settlement, it went on to harass, arrest and even kill some of the inhabitants even without evidence of Maoist sympathy. 37 people were taken into custody by the army. From 709 missing persons, 200 were taken by the Maoists and the rest by government forces.

Another significant aspect is the violence against women and children, perhaps the most vulnerable groups in case of conflict. The Maoist movement has repeatedly denied, for example, the recruitment of children. The author Anindita Dasgupta provides evidence that refutes this claim, with a statistical overview of the impact of the conflict on children in the period from 1996 to 2006. The results of the statistics count - 161 dead, 100 injured (due to landmine and bomb explosions), 105 arrested, 518 abducted and 4 cases of sexual abuse. An additional significant concern is the fact that thousands of children have been denied their right to education because of school closures over the course of the conflict.

The Government’s Emergency Declaration on 26 November 2006 violated a number of citizens' fundamental rights like freedom of speech, freedom of the press or the rights of publishing and printing. This document enables the police to retain any suspect for 6 months without the right to a legal trial and imprisonment for a period of 20 years (also, without the right to defence). Immediately after the emergency declaration, several newspapers publications were searched, seven journalist were arrested as pro Maoist suspects and everything was confiscated. After that several journalists were arrested because they published pictures of the representatives of the Maoist movement. As if all this actions directed and

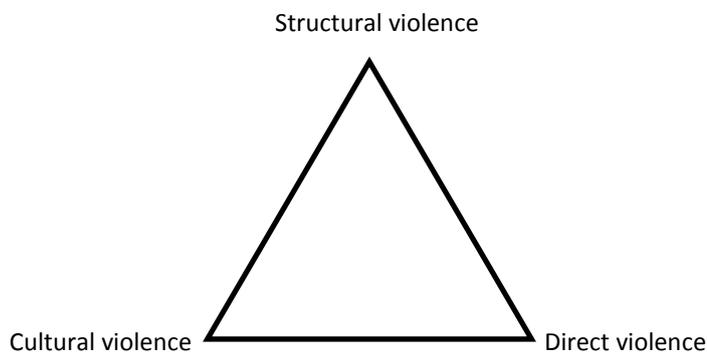
controlled by the government, were not enough, the Maoists decides to kill a journalist in September 2003 ( A. Dasgupta, 39-41)

The Unified Communist Party of Nepal was during this conflict outside the legal, political force but trying to change that with violence and force. Their violence, in general, is not directed towards the population / the crowd, but rather against state officials, the police, army or persons associated with the political establishment in Nepal. In other words, they align revolutionary movements with the use of terror to achieve their goals. (M. Lecomte-Tilouine, N. D. Gellner, 2004, 16). Also, a critical component of the Maoist training for "People's War" was the willingness to choose violence to ensure the fulfilment of a political purpose (A. Riaz, B. Subho, 2010, 132)

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 3

The third triangle of Galtung distinguishes between three types of peace - peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding. This triangle is closely related to the first two, where:

- Peacekeeping (corresponding to behaviours) = the end of direct violence
- Peacemaking (corresponding to attitudes) = the change of the contradictory attitude through dialogue and mediated negotiations.
- Peacebuilding (corresponding to contradictions) = the process towards a *positive peace*, after the war and includes - the ceasefire agreement, normalization and reconciliation. Peacebuilding can be seen both as a process resulting in a change, and as a tool for intervention in post-war societies. In Galtung's work, *negative peace* refers to the cessation of direct violence, while **positive peace** illustrates the cessation of structural and cultural violence.



## NEPALESE CIVIL WAR

### Peacemaking:

**A successful story of peacekeeping was to be written in Nepal in late 2006, after 10 long years of conflicts, when the local political forces along with international support created favourable conditions for peace negotiations.**

The King along with the Shah monarchy were removed from power, thus restoring the parliament and creating a new interim government formed by politicians from the seven party alliance. In order to sign a comprehensive peace agreement, the negotiations had to be held between the Maoists and the new government (the settlement concerned issues like - a ceasefire, an interim governance structure, Constituent Assembly elections in 2007 and the management of arms and armed personnel), (United Nations Peace Operations, "Year in Review 2007").

### United Nations Mission in Nepal:

Between 2006 and 2009 the mandate of UNMIN (United Nations Mission in Nepal) was extended four times, mainly because the almost unrealistic predictions of the UN on what was achievable in Nepal. One of the unsolved problems of UNMIN's mandate is the fact that Maoist training camps still continue to exist. In May 2009, a video appeared in the press in which the leader of the Maoist training camps specified that the money allocated to the camps will be used to create new riots. The main cause of such a modest progress is largely due to mistrust between the Unified Communist Party of Nepal and the Nepalese Army. Therefore, contradictory attitudes still remain specific to the relationship between the two parties. Even if UNMIN helped somehow to move the conflict below a critical level by separating military operations from the political arena, there has been little progress in terms of justice and human rights. Even so, the UN remains a peacekeeping force (and that due to the neutral international staff existing in the UN structure) and a peacebuilding agent (India's political agenda and a fragile mission prevented UN to make significant progress in this respect), (A. L. Strachan, 2009, 16-18).

## CONCLUSION

Galtung's three-triangle model showed how altered can the perceptions of the parties within a conflict be and the general causes of conflict. Over the 10 years of war, the Communist Party of Nepal has ideologically tried to reject and to structurally undermine the system. The model is sufficiently complex to fully explain the factors and the dynamics of the Civil War in Nepal. The contradictions, attitudes and behaviours existing in this conflict form an intricate system along with different types of violence, all of them present in the attempt to abolish monarchy. Galtung's theory along with the theory of asymmetric conflicts are an appropriate theoretical framework to approach and understand conflicts, especially as the one analysed above. Moreover, the fact that all the three types of asymmetry are present, their interactions and causal relationships are key particularities to distinguish the unique character and its complexity of the Nepalese Civil War.

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