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Ambika Adhikari

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## **The February 1 Royal Move: Comment**

Ambika Adhikari, Ph.D.\*

I agree with Dr. Rijal that the February 1 move has further complicated the political situation in Nepal. As delineated in the constitution, it is undoubtedly in the best interest of the crown to stay within the bounds of the constitutional monarchy, and not enter the field of politics. The erosion of the buffer between the crown and the day-to-day politics of Nepal can damage the reputation of, and the respect for, the constitutional monarchy.

Although the King might have taken the February 1 step as a sincere and well-intentioned effort to resolve the Maoist crisis, this arrangement will not be able to provide a long term and sustainable solution to the problem. The political parties, in spite of their present shortcomings, represent the people, and they should be the main negotiators on behalf of the people. The King should invite the parties to break the stalemate, fully side cooperate them, and move forward to defuse the crisis in Nepal. Further, the continuing curb on civil liberties is unacceptable, and will stifle any creative ideas to help the resolution of the crisis.

The violence of the Maoists is not acceptable. While the RNA may also be guilty of human rights violations – and those responsible should be punished – the Maoists are the principal instigators of political violence. The Maoists initially espoused egalitarian principles and the liberation of the downtrodden. Their violent path has not only alienated the masses, as can be seen by the refusal of villagers to join them, but also the Maoists are responsible for most of the 12,000 civilian deaths and are rapidly losing moral ground and public sympathy. However, since the Maoists are now recognized as a political force, they can negotiate democratic policies to help the masses and to create an equitable system of government in Nepal. Even a constituent assembly can incorporate their socialist and secular vision. But, with continuing violence the Maoists will lose all credibility and any respect that remains.

Dr. Rijal's roadmap for the restoration of the democratic process is reasonable. However, given the poor governance experience we had from many recent administrations, the political leaders must provide a more detailed blue print for their programs and of how peace and prosperity will be achieved. Replacing the Prime Minister is not enough. Although the 12 years of democracy

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\* Urban Planner with the City of Phoenix, Faculty Associate with Arizona State University.

accomplished much (education, media, liberties), the political leadership also failed on many fronts. The political parties should examine their mistakes and re-emerge with clear commitments, solemn promises, sincere humility, and some apologies to counter the public's poor perception of them. New faces with impeccable credentials and a clear vision can help by adding a new dynamism in the parties. The Nepali Diaspora's proposal on the middle ground (see article in this issue) also supports this approach.

As Mr. Kul Gautam of the UN has eloquently suggested in his contribution to this issue, each of the three political protagonists in Nepal has something good to offer. It is in the best interest of everyone that these protagonists join together to further democracy, a constitutional monarchy, and egalitarian policies. Nepalis will be thankful for such a compromise, everyone will win, and the Nepali people will be the chief victors.