# THE IMPACTS OF ARMED CONFLICT ON CORRUPTION: A STUDY OF LONG TERM SUB-NATIONAL CHANGE IN NEPAL

Thomas Charles Jarvis

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International Development Department
School of Government and Society
College of Social Science
University of Birmingham
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## Abstract

Accounts of corruption in conflict-affected areas are often dominated by a focus on the fragility of public sector institutions. In the last decade, this focus has been challenged by an emergent literature which instead frames corruption as an informal means of order-making during conflict, and by the study of the ethnicisation of corruption through conflict. In this thesis, I contribute to this emergent literature by analysing the local dynamics of conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal, eleven years after the end of the 1996-2006 Maoist conflict. I do so through a constructivist grounded theory approach, one which has not previously been applied in the study of this relationship. Through this new case and approach, I expand the emergent body of theory on this relationship in three ways: First, I demonstrate long term change in corruption at the sub-national level under conditions of stability, and in a context not polarised by ethnic divisions. Second, I demonstrate the multiple concurrent dynamics of conflict-induced change in corruption in the long term, across the four theories of this relationship present in the literature. Finally, I explain the changing nature of this relationship over time, spanning the conflict, transition and expectations for future change.

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# Contents

## Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| APM | All-Party Mechanism |
| CGT | Constructivist Grounded Theory |
| CPA | Comprehensive Peace Accord |
| CPN-M | The Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist |
| DDC | District Development Committee |
| DDR | Demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration |
| NCP | Nepal Communist Party |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| PLA | People's Liberation Army |
| RNA | Royal Nepal Army |
| UML | The Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist |
| UNMIN | The United Nations Mission in Nepal |
| VDC | Village Development Committee |

# Chapter One: Introduction

The majority of states deemed most exposed to corruption by international indices have a recent history of armed conflict (Andvig, 2008; Kaufmann & Kraay, 2018; Transparency International, 2017). Explanations of this overlap most frequently centre on the fragility of conflict-affected states, with conflict argued to weaken oversight in public sector institutions and undermine the rule of law (Cheng & Zaum, 2011). Simultaneously, corruption is itself widely framed as a driver of fragility through its effects on democratic and liberal economic institutions and capacity to fuel inter-group grievances (LeBillon, 2003). Concern over this vicious cycle of corruption and conflict through fragility has led to anti-corruption becoming a central component of western-led peacebuilding (Johnsøn, 2016).

Whilst the focus on fragility still dominates, the last decade has seen the growth of alternative explanations of conflict-induced change in corruption. Contemporary accounts of this relationship include the use of corruption as a means by which populations adapt to the effects of conflict on livelihoods (Baaz & Verweijen, 2014; Looney, 2008), elites engaging patronage as a means of integrating their rivals (DeWaal, 2009; Day & Reno, 2014) and the stratification of corruption perceptions along communal divides (Orjuela et al, 2016; Smith, 2014a). These developments reflect the growing study of informal systems of order-making in conflict and the non-rationalist determinants of corruption (Cheng & Zaum, 2008; Lindberg & Orjuela, 2014). This has led to a diverse but increasingly fragmented theoretical landscape on conflict-induced change in corruption.

In this thesis, I present new empirical evidence on conflict-induced change in corruption from Ghorahi, a city in Nepal's western Terai,[1] and use this to refine the theoretical landscape on this relationship. The evidence I present is the outcome of a constructivist grounded theory study I conducted in 2017. Across two phases, I conducted extended interviews with political party representatives, members of the media, non-governmental organisation (NGO) and community representatives, and those working in a range of small businesses in the city bazaar. The dataset I developed through this consists of 4,748 coded statements from 89 respondents, detailing how the conflict and corruption are

[1] The Terai is the area of Nepal located between Himalayan foothills and the southern border with India. In general, the country is often described as divided between the mountain (*himal*), hill (*pahad*), and plains (*terai*)

experienced and perceived by those in Ghorahi. From this dataset, I show that the conflict has impacted the perception and experience of corruption in three ways:

First, the conflict led to the corrupt enrichment of a group of mid-level elite actors from the Maoists' Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) and promoted these elites to amongst the main beneficiaries of corruption in the city. This corruption dynamic is rooted in the Maoists' demands for donations and the capture of lands during the conflict, which together violate socially-contingent standards of legitimacy and fairness. These standards are informed by the comparisons those in Ghorahi draw to changes in everyday life during and after the conflict, the values they associated with the Maoists in initiating the conflict and the relative fortunes of the Maoist elites to the former rank and file of the PLA. This persists despite the transition of the Maoists into mainstream party politics, and is the most prominent component of conflict-induced change in corruption present in this case.

Second, the closure of political space and the pressure that the conflict exerted on everyday life supressed exposure to routine forms of corruption. However, the instability of local government and the re-opening of political space during the transition led to the development of what those in Ghorahi see as a corrupt elite network between bureaucrats, business and political parties – including the post-conflict Maoist party. This corruption dynamic has been exacerbated by instability in the central level governance system during the transition, which is seen by those in Ghorahi to have undermined the opportunity to challenge corruption as Nepal transitioned to a democratic republic. Owing to the depth of connections engendered in the conflict and transition, this corruption dynamic continues to be evident despite the holding of local and federal elections in 2017.

Finally, the conflict led to changes in the social and attitudinal determinants of corruption. Most directly, the conflict led to the short term legitimisation of black market activity amongst a subset of small business owners in the city. This effect is bound to the period of crisis, and has not created long term changes in the nature of corruption. Alongside this, the conflict changed how those in Ghorahi view the vulnerability of historically marginalised rural populations to corruption. The often violent actions of the Maoists against those who historically held power in rural areas and the changes to the governance system which occurred as a result of the conflict are seen by this urban population to have empowered rural peoples to challenge everyday forms of corruption. This impact of the conflict

underlies a sense of optimism about the future change in routine forms of corruption, accelerating historic changes in the empowerment of marginalised communities.

By exploring these elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, this thesis responds to the following four limitations of the literature on this relationship: First, the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption has primarily developed through analysis of cases of state collapse, western-led peacebuilding interventions and ethnic conflict. By contrast, Nepal's 1996-2006 conflict was resolved by a domestically-led peacebuilding process in which the central state was transformed but far from collapsed, and was not principally stratified along the ethnic divides analysed elsewhere (Von Einsiedel et al, 2012). Through analysing conflict-induced change in corruption in this distinct context, I add empirical nuances to the theories of change in the literature, and demonstrate the transferability of these theories beyond the types of cases in which they were developed.

Second, the literature has developed through studies of ongoing conflict and conflict to post-conflict transition in which violence and instability are ongoing. This reflects the influence of demands for information to inform international peacebuilding and conflict resolution in driving academic analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption. By contrast, I analyse this relationship eleven years after the end of widespread armed group violence in Nepal, and in an area of the country not affected by the isolated instances of violence seen since 2006. Through this distinct type of case, I show how effects borne out of conflict continue to influence corruption in periods of relative stability, and argue that a history of conflict should be more routinely included in the analysis of determinants of corruption.

Third, much of the literature focuses on the dynamics of conflict-induced change in corruption in central governments. This reflects the influence of the study of peacebuilding and statebuilding in driving academic analysis of this relationship (Cheng & Zaum, 2008), and the emphasis on international comparison in the corruption studies literature (Andersson & Heywood, 2009). Further, whilst the emergence of a literature which goes beyond the focus on the exploitation of fragility have led to some diversification, this has often been only to the level of armed groups and elite-led networks of corruption. By contrast, I analyse conflict-induced change in corruption at the sub-national level, with a focus on the experiences of a heavily conflict-affected population. Through this, I demonstrate population-level effects of armed conflict on the level and nature of corruption.

Finally, there are limits on how corruption has been conceptualised in the literature on conflict-induced change. Most commonly, scholars engage the narrow and prescriptive definitions of corruption which still dominate the broader study of this phenomenon – typically some variation on the 'misuse of public office for private gain'. Because of its reliance on a division between the public and private realms and the focus on self-regarding behaviours, definitions of this type lead analysis towards exploitative corruption in the public sector, to the exclusion of other forms. At the other extreme, works critical of these prescriptive definitions are often vague in defining the boundaries between corruption and legitimate forms of informal exchange. In contrast to both, I engage a constructivist conceptual approach, under which corruption is defined through the experiences of those interviewed, and develop this iteratively through the use of grounded theory.

In combination, these four limitations mean that far more is known about the short term effects of conflict on exploitative corruption in the public sector than about this relationship in other contexts. The last decade of academic research demonstrates that there is much to this relationship beyond this, but has also led to the fragmentation of the literature across diverse theories of interaction, which are typically examined in isolation. By examining the sub-national dynamics of conflict and corruption in Nepal during a period of stability, and through the application of a methodological and theoretical approach not previously applied to this relationship, I demonstrate that there are multiple concurrent dynamics of conflict-induced change in corruption, and that these effects persist in the long term. Further, I show that these effects differ over time, with some being confined to the conflict, and others emerging well into the transition. Given the limited attention to conflict-induced change in corruption in the long term at the sub-national level in the literature, and the fragmentated body of theory on this relationship, this represents a significant contribution to the growing body of work on this subject.

In addition to contributing to an emerging academic literature, this thesis is also relevant to policy and practitioner audiences, and to a broad range of audiences in and connected to Nepal. For anti-corruption policy and practitioner audiences, this thesis contributes to debates on the causes and dynamics of corruption at the micro-level. It does so by unpacking the everyday experience of corruption in a new sub-national context, and by highlighting the judgements and norms by which corruption is understood by affected populations. For Nepali audiences, this thesis demonstrates and explains the

connection between two issues of major political, media and public concern: the legacies of the 1996-2006 Maoist conflict and the causes and scope of corruption in the post-conflict period. It does so among a peripheral urban population outside of the Kathmandu Valley, the experiences of which have been comparatively neglected by academic research in this context.

### 1.1 Structure

The main body of this thesis is comprised of nine chapters: In Chapter Two, I argue that the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption expresses four main theories: [1] the exploitation of the fragility of the public sector; [2] the use of corruption as an informal means of imposing order; [3] conflict economies, comprising the set of informal economic activity which emerges through conflict; and [4] social change, the principal form of which is ethnicisation. In setting out this theoretical landscape, I show how the latter three of these theories emerged out of critiques of the first, and situate this thesis in this emergent segment of the literature focused on alternative theories of this relationship. Following this, I discuss the limitations and critiques of this literature introduced above, and link these to the focus of this thesis on long term conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi.

In Chapter Three, I set out the constructivist ontological approach and subjectivist epistemology I use to analyse conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi. I justify these positions by discussing the limits of the most widely engaged definition of corruption - the misuse of public office for private gain - and of the alternative 'universal' definitions which have been proposed in response to these critiques. Drawing on the growth of alternative approaches within the corruption studies literature, I argue that corruption is best approached as a social construction, determined by human agency. I couple this ontology with a subjectivist epistemology, which locates knowledge in the interaction between researcher and researched. This epistemology is particularly well suited to the sub-national level of analysis undertaken in this thesis and the contestation which exists around corruption.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the constructivist grounded theory approach which I engage to study conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi. I justify this approach by discussing the nature of the challenges inherent in conducting research around armed conflict and corruption, the focus of this thesis on developing and refining existing theories of conflict-induced change in corruption, and the

compatibility of constructivist grounded theory with the ontological and epistemological approach I set out in Chapter Three. Following this, I discuss the decisions underlying my focus on Ghorahi, the logic of the two stage approach to fieldwork which I implemented in this context, the adaptations I made to this approach whilst in the field, and the ethical considerations relevant to this thesis. Finally, in closing this chapter, I reflect on the positionality of those involved in my fieldwork.

Chapter Five is the first of four chapters in which I discuss the outcomes of my empirical analysis. In the first part of this chapter, I introduce how my respondents experienced the conflict and transition in general. This includes the impacts of conflict on everyday life, their relations with the Maoists and security forces, and the transformation of the Maoists into mainstream party politics following the conflict. Reflecting the theoretical approach to corruption set out in Chapter Three, I then discuss how my respondents understand and experience corruption. Here I discuss the Nepali terminology associated with corruption, the experiences common to the respondent group, and the dividing lines between corrupt and legitimate behaviour. This chapter forms the context for the discussion of conflict-induced change in corruption, which I set out over Chapters Six to Eight.

In Chapter Six, I discuss the first component of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, which centres on the corrupt transformation of the mid-level Maoist elite during and after in the conflict. Here, I discuss experiences of demands for donations from Maoist cadres during the conflict and the capture of lands by the Maoists, and the link that the respondents draw from this to the public displays of wealth of the mid-level Maoist elite since the conflict. Far from purely a reflection of financial abuses, I show that this corruption dynamic is rooted in socially-contingent standards of legitimacy and fairness. This includes the comparison that those in Ghorahi draw between their own lifestyles and those of the Maoist elite during the transition, the fragmentation of the Maoist movement after the conflict, and reflections on the motivations of the Maoists in initiating the conflict. Together, this constitutes the most prominent influence of the conflict on contemporary corruption in Ghorahi.

The second component of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, which I set out in Chapter Seven, concerns changes in the governance system as a result of the conflict and transition. Here, I show that the conflict led to the closure of political space and the scaling back of local government activity in Ghorahi. When combined with the pressures that the conflict inflicted on the

everyday life in the city, I show that the conflict suppressed routine experiences of corruption in local government services. However, I go on to show that the re-opening of political space during the transition, combined with the protracted reforms to local government, has led to the development of a corrupt elite network between political parties, bureaucrats and business. This has persisted despite the holding of local elections in 2017.

The final component of conflict-induced change in corruption, which I set out in Chapter Eight, focuses first on corruption as a form of coping. Here, I show how the impacts of the conflict on the respondents' livelihoods led some to engage in otherwise unacceptable clandestine trade. Whilst legitimate to some, this trade was widely seen by those not involved as a corrupt black market. I show that these competing constructions reflect differences in the directness with which different respondents were exposed to livelihood challenges, their level of connectedness to the Maoists and security forces, and reflections about the benefits obtained. I further show, however, that these dynamics are contained within the conflict, and have not resulted in the long term transformation of corruption.

In contrast to the short term effects of clandestine trade on corruption, in Chapter Eight I also set out the long term impacts of social change on corruption. To do so, I explore the link between the actions of the Maoists in the conflict and the perceived vulnerability of historically marginalised rural communities to corruption. Here, I show that the conflict accelerated the otherwise incremental gains in the empowerment of these communities and has resulted in a perception that the rural communities are increasingly resilient to corruption. Whilst outside of the direct experiences of those in Ghorahi, this has led to widespread optimism about the future change in routine forms of corruption. I therefore show that the conflict is linked to future expectations for change, as well as the contemporary nature of corruption.

In Chapter Nine, I draw together the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi into an integrated picture of this relationship. To do so, I consider the differing prominence of the elements of this relationship in the period in which I undertook fieldwork and over time. Here, I link the differing prominence of the elements of this relationship to the benefits associated with corruption of different forms, expectations over the beneficiaries of corruption, and the extent to which conflict-induced change in corruption fits with historic corruption trends. Following this, I compare conflict-

induced change in corruption to the general determinants of corruption in Ghorahi. To do so, I return to the contextual analysis provided in Chapter Five.

Based on the integrated picture of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, I then discuss the contribution of this case to the literature. I do so in two parts: First, I discuss how this case responds to the limitations of the literature set out in Chapter Two. This includes the evidence of long term change in corruption in a case of relative stability, the changing prominence of elements of conflict-induced change over time, the overlap between conflict-related causes and existing causes of corruption, and the dominance of local-level effects over central-level effects. Following this, I offer refinements for each of the four theories of change in the literature. These include the extent of contestation over corruption as a form of coping with conflict, the shifting legitimacy of corruption over time, and the possibility of social change beyond that focused on the salience of identity.

Finally, in Chapter Ten, I reflect on the process and outcomes of my research, provide recommendations for future research into conflict-induced change in corruption. These recommendations build on the theoretical implications I set out in Chapter Nine and the methodological reflections in Chapter Four, and relate to the need for further research on conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal and other contexts. Reflecting the implications and limitations of this study, I particularly focus on the need for longitudinal and comparative work within a single national context.

# Chapter Two: Literature review

## 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption. I do so in three parts: In Section 2.2, I argue that the literature expresses four main theories of conflict-induced change in corruption. The first of these theories - the exploitation of fragility - serves as the default account of this relationship, common in both academic and policy literatures. The remaining three theories - the illiberal coping strategies adopted by elites, informal economic activity, and identity-based transformation - reflect challenges to the assumptions underlying this default account. This thesis is aligned with the set of works which challenge the framing of conflict-induced change in corruption as the exploitation of fragility, and seeks to develop and broaden these alternative explanations.

In Section 2.3, I set out the four limitations of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption to which this thesis responds. Here, I argue that the literature is skewed towards cases of western-led international intervention and state collapse, gives insufficient attention to the long-term dynamics of this relationship, has not sufficiently considered the experiences of conflict-affected populations outside of cases of identity-based conflict, and has often been deficient in the way corruption is conceptualised. In Section 2.4, I then discuss how this thesis responds to these four limitations. This includes how the limitations of the literature influenced my decision to select Nepal as a context for analysis, my focus on corruption at the population level, and my conceptual approach.

As I introduced in Chapter One, my analysis engages a theoretical framework and research design based in grounded theory. Reflecting Glaser and Strauss' (1967) founding work on this approach, the use of grounded theory invokes expectations around the role of the literature review - namely that the theories and assumptions of the literature around the subject of investigation are put aside to the maximum extent possible (McGhee et al, 2007). This distance between empirical analysis and the literature is intended to maximise the potential for new theory to emerge from empirical analysis, which is amongst the central aims of grounded theory (Glaser, 1992). This leads many 'pure' grounded theorists to engage with the literature only after presenting empirical analysis (Urquhart, 2013: 16).

Whilst the grounded theory approach is central to my analysis, I do not follow the convention of 'pure' grounded theory regarding the literature review. Rather, as is common in the constructivist variant of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014: 31), I use this chapter to situate my analysis in the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption, and to highlight the areas in which the literature is deficient. However, consistent with the inductive underpinnings of grounded theory (Urquhart, 2013: 8), I do not do so with the aim of producing testable expectations around the effects of conflict on corruption, and nor do I focus this thesis on one or more of the theories in the literature. Rather, in Chapters Four to Eight, I focus purely on the relationship which emerged through my empirical analysis, and return to literature in Chapters Nine and Ten.

## 2.2 Four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption

The literature on conflict-induced change in corruption has grown significantly in the last decade. This growth is evident both in the volume of studies of this relationship (Cheng & Zaum, 2008; Lindberg & Orjuela, 2014) and the increasingly diverse manner in which it is theorised. However, with this growth, the literature has become increasingly fragmented across contexts and levels of inquiry, the dimensions of conflict considered significant to corruption and the way corruption is conceptualised. As such, in contrast to the literature on the determinants of corruption in general (De Graaf, 2007; Rothstein & Teorell, 2015), the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption does not immediately present a set of theories and debates in which to situate this thesis.

As a first step to defining the contribution of this thesis, in this section I argue that the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption is concentrated around the four theories of interaction summarised in Table 2.2A. Here, I discuss the approach to corruption underlying each theory, and the aspects of conflict with which they are linked. In doing so, I show how the literature has expanded from a narrow focus on the exploitation of fragility in conflict to a contextualised and less normative focus on the functions of corruption in conflict-affected environments. As I discuss in concluding this section, I situate this thesis amongst the emergent segment of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption which challenges the focus on exploitation of fragility and, as I discuss in Sections 2.3 and 2.4, respond to four specific limitations present in the literature on this relationship.

In this section and throughout this thesis, I use the term 'theory' to refer to the common underlying explanations of changes in corruption resulting from conflict which are evident in the fragmented literature on this topic. While useful in grouping these explanations of change, it should not be inferred from the use of the term 'theory' that these are fully abstracted theories of change. Indeed, as I discuss throughout this review, the empirical basis of the four ‘theories’ in the literature remains at an early stage of development, and evidence of the viability of these explanations across a diverse range of contexts is often lacking. The use of the term ‘theory’ in this review and in references to the literature throughout this thesis should be understood in the context of these limitations, and is more akin to mid-level theory based on a small group of cases than a fully abstracted 'grand' theory.

Table 2.2A – Four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption

| [2.2.1] Conflict-Induced Fragility | |
|---|---|
| Summary | Conflict leads to state breakdown, which is exploited for corrupt gain |
| Effects of Conflict | The increasing fragility of state institutions |
| Logic of Corruption | Rational exploitation, which is self-regarding and for financial gain |
| Forms of Corruption | Abuse of budgets and natural resources, cronyism, regulatory avoidance |
| Typical Level | Central state elites; armed groups |
| **[2.2.2] Illiberal Responses to Conflict** | |
| Summary | Corruption is used as an informal means of resource distribution with the aim of integrating potential rivals |
| Effects of Conflict | Conflict challenges the hegemony of an established order or set of elite interests |
| Logic of Corruption | Networked & socially contingent exchange; an alternative to violence |
| Forms of Corruption | Patronage and clientelism |
| Typical Level | Central state elites; armed groups |
| **[2.2.3] Conflict Economies** | |
| Summary | The breakdown of conventional economic relations in conflict leads to the rise of informal activity, including and supported by corruption |
| Effects of Conflict | The decline of the formal economy and the capacity of the state to regulate the economy |

| | |
|---|---|
| Logic of Corruption | Networked & socially contingent exchange; a means of coping with conflict |
| Forms of Corruption | Bribery, regulatory avoidance, informal taxation and other forms required to support informal activity |
| Typical Level | Central, regional, local |
| [2.2.4] Social Change & Identity | |
| Summary | Conflict changes how corruption is understood and performed by those affected, particularly along identity group lines |
| Effects of Conflict | Increased salience of identity group boundaries |
| Logic of Corruption | Value judgements in social context |
| Forms of Corruption | Routine forms, particularly bribery, and general levels of corruption in society |
| Typical Level | Identity groups |

2.2.1 Corruption & conflict-induced fragility

The first theory of conflict-induced change in corruption common in the literature is the exploitation of the fragility of conflict-affected environments. This theory posits that conflict undermines the formal institutional capacity of governments, including but not limited to those institutions charged with preventing corruption, and that this fragility leads to corrupt exploitation. Whilst often implicit, underlying this is an understanding of corruption in principally rationalist terms, focusing on the probability of detection and the payoffs available (Khan, 2006). These assumptions are rooted in the economic segment of the broader corruption studies literature, particularly the institutional economics of corruption in the public sector (De Graaf et al, 2010).

The argument that the fragility of states affected by conflict leads to corrupt exploitation frames conflict-induced change in corruption as an extreme case of the rational corruption dynamics widely associated with developing country contexts (Brinkerhoff, 2007). Some of the specific expressions of corruption may be new, with actors exploiting the declining levels of oversight in lucrative sectors such as natural resources (Le Billon, 2005; 2014; Rose-Ackerman, 2008), however conflict is seen as producing conditions in which the payoffs for corruption can be achieved with lower risk across the public sector. As such, in addition to the concentration of conflict-affected states in the lowest ranks of metrics such as the *Corruption Perceptions Index*, this form of conflict-induced change in corruption is

commonly evidenced by references to the financial scale of corruption scandals perpetrated across the public sector (Andvig, 2008; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016).

In addition to a rational approach of the determinants of corruption, the framing of conflict-induced change in corruption as the exploitation of fragility reflects a focus on the formal institutional capacity of states affected by conflict. Specifically, states affected by conflict are characterised principally with reference to the lack of well-functioning formal democratic and economic institutions, and contrasted against the ideal of 'good governance' (Kaplan, 2008; Zoellick, 2008). This understanding of the effects of conflict is rooted in liberal principles, and focuses on the deficits of conflict-affected states from the institutional capacity deemed necessary for stability (Boege et al, 2009; Smith, 2014). As I discuss in Section 2.2.2, alternatives to this focus on fragility in how conflict-affected states are imagined have been central to the broadening of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption, and with this the development of alternative theories of this relationship.

The specific dimensions of fragility that scholars link with corruption is diverse across the many works which theorise conflict-induced change in corruption in this way. A focus on corruption amongst government officials in conflict-affected fragile states is common, but corrupt exploitation is also a widespread component of studies of armed group behaviour. As was particularly prominent during the wave of scholarship on the 'new' wars (Kaldor, 2013), corruption is a common component of what is framed as greed-driven or 'loot-seeking' activity by non-state armed groups (Collier, 2000). This spans the levying of informal taxation to the international smuggling of natural resources (Le Billon, 2001; Mac Ginty, 2004; Williams, 2009). In contrast to how this has been framed by works on neo-patrimonial governance and conflict economies (De Waal, 2009; Goodhand, 2004; 2008), it is the weakness of the state in the chaos of conflict which is argued to be the principal driver of this behaviour.

Empirically, the framing of conflict-induced change in corruption as the exploitation of fragility has principally been driven by studies of state collapse during periods of violence. The many instances of post-Cold War civil conflict in 'fragile' African state contexts have been central to this as examples in which the state was deemed to be particularly chaotic and vulnerable to exploitation. Studies of such contexts commonly emphasise the corrupt exploitation of resource wealth and opportunities for illicit cross-border trade as the capacity of the state declines (O'Donnell, 2008; Rose-Ackerman, 2008; 2008a;

Smillie, 2010). This focus has often been the default approach in assessing conflict-era corruption dynamics, and has been particularly influential in policy-orientated works (The Sentry, 2015; Transparency International, 2014; UNDP, 2010).

In addition to studies of ongoing conflict, the corrupt exploitation of fragility is also widely referenced in the peacebuilding literature. As with corruption during conflict, corruption in peacebuilding settings is commonly explained through reference to a 'state of exception', in which the formal capacity of the state is argued to be particularly low (Galtung, 2004; Cheng & Zaum, 2011). This fragility is widely invoked to explain the rise of corruption in response to the influx of aid and rapid institutional reforms common to transitional contexts (Divjak & Pugh, 2008; Johnsøn, 2016; Von Billerbeck, 2011). This is prominent in explanations of the scope of corruption emerging through international peacebuilding interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia (Barma, 2012; Donais, 2003; Marquette & Cooley, 2015; Zürcher, 2012), the experiences of which explain much of the ongoing prominence of this theory of conflict-induced change in corruption.

As I discuss below, much of the recent scholarship on conflict-induced change in corruption has developed out of criticisms of the focus on exploitation and fragility. This has both supported and has been driven by debates over the concept of fragility (Boege et al, 2009; De Waal, 2009a) and the increasing diversity of theoretical perspectives in the corruption studies literature (Philp, 2015). However, in policy-orientated publications and the peacebuilding literature in particular, it remains common to see conflict-induced change in corruption framed in these terms. This reflects the ongoing influence of economic rationalism and the focus on the public sector in the corruption studies literature (Walton, 2015), and the concept of fragility in the study of conflict and peacebuilding (Grimm et al, 2014), despite well-established critiques of both.

### 2.2.2 Corruption & illiberal responses to conflict

The focus on fragility as the main determinant of corruption in conflict reflects a rationalist construction of corruption, and a focus on the institutional deficits of conflict-affected states. The frequency with which conflict-induced corruption is described in these terms reflects the past dominance of liberal assumptions in the study of conflict and peacebuilding, under which long-term stability is

achieved through democratisation and economic liberalisation (Soares De Oliveira, 2011). The theory of conflict-induced change in corruption which I discuss here, and the two which follow, reflect challenges to these assumptions. The first of these frames corruption as an 'illiberal'[2] response to conflict by elites attempting to create or sustain order.

At its core, the second theory of conflict-induced change in the literature frames corruption as a means of informal resource distribution. Most commonly associated with networked forms of corruption such as patronage and clientelism (Johnston, 1986), an illicit flow of resources is argued to rent the support of those who are or may otherwise challenge a given order. In addition to the integration of peripheral rivals by a central state (Day & Reno, 2014; De Waal, 2009), this is a commonly discussed aspect of warlord governance in conflict-affected sub-state areas (Jackson, 2003; Mac Ginty, 2010; Mukhopadhyay, 2014). The focus in describing change in corruption is therefore not on the exploitation of fragility, but rather on the means by which elites purposefully engage informal mechanisms of resource distribution as a response to conflict (Zaum, 2013: 17).

Rather than an isolated act in response to conflict, analysis of networked forms of corruption as an illiberal response to conflict is rooted in works on the routine function of states with limited formal institutional capacity. Central to this are notions 'neo-patrimonial' or 'rentier' forms of governance, in which "political life can be described as an auction of loyalties" (De Waal, 2009: 103) between the centre and rivals at the periphery (Basedau & Lay, 2009; Erdmann & Engel, 2007). Rather than purely financial, these dynamics are seen as the product of a wider social and economic order, which may grant elites differing capacities to integrate rivals across group lines (Day & Reno, 2014; Khan, 2005). Corruption is therefore theorised as a contextually-contingent, deliberate, and ongoing component of a prevailing order, which is influenced by but not necessarily the sole product of conflict.

The focus on the capacity of corruption to act as an alternative means of resource distribution, and therefore as a stabilising mechanism in response to conflict, is rooted in some of the earliest works of the modern study of corruption. Amongst the behavioural approach prominent in the 1950s and 60s (Navot, 2014), works by Huntington (1968), Nye (1967), and Scott (1969) in particular discussed

[2] Here, 'illiberal' signifies a departure from liberal norms, rather than authoritarian practices. See Smith, 2014

networked forms of corruption as potentially integrative elements of political systems. These works framed corruption as an alternative to unstable elite competition - including violence - with Huntington (1968) in particular arguing that corruption and violence are functionally similar. Recent scholarship on corruption as an illiberal response to conflict therefore represents a return to the emphasis on the integrative potential of corruption in the early corruption studies literature.

Whilst much of the study of neo-patrimonial governance and similar concepts focuses on the routine political economy of states with low formal institutional capacity (Charap & Harm, 1999; De Sardan, 1999; Staniland, 2012), a growing body of work explicitly explores these corruption dynamics as a response to conflict. In addition to demonstrating the recourse to patronage as a means of managing threats to an existing order, this literature links conflict to the degeneration and decentralisation of patronage networks where conflict displaces an established order (De Waal, 2009; Le Billon, 2005; Reno, 1995; 2008; Day & Reno, 2014). This links conflict to changes in the composition of elites benefitting from patronage, the level of competition between elites, and the nature and extent of benefits which are traded. As works by Reno (2008), Garrett et al (2009) and Raeymaekers (2013) exemplify, conflict is therefore argued to have the potential to result in patterns of patronage fundamentally distinct from the pre-conflict order, and which persist beyond the conflict itself.

In addition to the effects of ongoing conflict, the study of illiberal responses to conflict explicitly links the way in which conflict ends to changes in corruption. Most prominently, scholars link attempts at post-conflict power sharing to the ongoing structure of patronage networks. This is widely highlighted in cases of internationally-led peacebuilding (Belloni & Strazzari, 2014), as well as an extensive body of cases of state-led illiberal peacebuilding (Lindberg & Orjuela, 2011; Reno, 2008; Soares de Oliveria, 2011). Studies of post-2001 Afghanistan have (Bojicic-Dzelilovic et al, 2015; Giustozzi, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2010), for example, demonstrated the willingness of western peacebuilding actors to engage in efforts to integrate regional warlords which closely resemble patronage-based strategies of state actors in other cases (Cheng & Zaum, 2011; Jarstad & Belloni, 2012; Zaum, 2013). In both types of case, efforts to integrate armed groups during and in the immediate aftermath of conflict are linked with long term consequences for the composition of patronage by shaping who has access to the state.

The theory of conflict-induced change in corruption through illiberal responses to conflict is thus fundamentally apart from the focus on the exploitation of conflict-induced fragility. By focusing on how state elites and others respond to the threat posed by conflict rather than on the condition of fragility alone, this theory links conflict with the transformation of networked forms of corruption. This includes the expansion of patronage networks to include new groups in order to manage peripheral threats, the decentralisation of control over patronage where an existing order is displaced, and changes in the extent of competition within patronage networks. In contrast to much of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption, as I discuss in Section 2.3 below, this is linked with expectations of long term changes after the end of conflict.

### 2.2.3 Corruption & conflict economies

The theory of conflict-induced change I discussed in Section 2.2.2 is one of a growing set of alternatives to the framing of corruption principally as a means of exploitation, and to the characterisation of conflict-affected environments principally in terms of fragility. The third theory of conflict-induced change in corruption also stems from challenges to these framings, but does so with a focus on the alternative economic systems argued to emerge as a result of conflict. Whilst overlapping with aspects of the focus on illiberal governance, this reflects a distinct focus on systems of economic relations in conflict, which are not solely tied to attempts by elites to impose order.

Studies of informal economic systems typically do so with reference to three inter-connected concepts: the combat economy, consisting of armed groups financing their activities, the shadow economy, comprised of trade outside of the formal regulations and control of the state but not solely driven by combat, and the coping economy, denoting attempts by populations to adapt to the effects of conflict (Goodhand, 2004; Looney, 2005). Whilst commonly segmented into these three concepts, central to this literature is the inter-connectedness of these domains of activity. This can include the integration of low-level coping activity into international illicit trade - with actors with fundamentally distinct motives sharing a degree of inter-dependency in the economic structures emergent in conflict (Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Turkmani, 2018; Larmer et al, 2013; Pugh et al, 2004).

Whilst studies of conflict-induced change in corruption through conflict economies often include reference to exploitative activity (Jackson, 2002; Le Billon, 2001a; Looney, 2008), underpinning this link is a broader and less normative conceptualisation of corruption than those underlying the focus on exploitation. This framing of corruption is most evident in the focus on coping activity, in which engagement in otherwise illegal or morally unacceptable acts is argued to be legitimised by the collapse of the formal economy (Goodhand, 2004; Looney, 2005; 2006). Examples of this include bribery, black markets and trade in illicit goods, as conflict causes the decline of public services and the collapse of conventional livelihoods. This link draws on the characterisation of corruption as a coping mechanism in the broader literature (Bodruzic, 2016; Walton, 2013), with conflict forming an extreme example of the conditions which compel populations to engage in otherwise unacceptable acts.

In describing the effects of conflict, the focus on conflict-induced change in corruption through conflict economies draws on the fragility of formal institutions. Indeed, the decline of the formal economy and of the capacity of the state to regulate economic activity is argued to be central to the coping and informal economies (Looney, 2005; Mac Ginty, 2007). However, as with the focus on corruption as an illiberal response to conflict, the systems which develop in response to fragility are framed as a means of order-making, rather than primarily as exploitation (Bakonyi & Stuvøy, 2005; Strazzari, 2008). Within the coping economy in particular, corruption is instead argued to be shaped by the social and economic context, including changing trust, value judgements and inter-communal relations (Baaz & Verweijen, 2014; Looney, 2008). Fragility therefore forms the background to changes in corruption, but is not the main determinant of corruption emerging through conflict.

In addition to the period of ongoing violence, the conflict economies literature links the nature of economic relations emerging in conflict to the dynamics of corruption in transition and post-conflict. Transitional environments are seen as generating a partial stability, in which elements of conflict-era economic dynamics continue (Le Billon, 2003). Armed groups and other elites able to benefit from informal economic activity during conflict are seen as most able to engage with this emergent order, and with the influx of resources and institutional reforms common to transitional contexts. Consequently, the corruption dynamics which arise as a means of order-making in conflict are argued to influence the ongoing shape of corruption in the post-conflict period, particularly at the elite level. This is set out in

studies of both international (Andreas, 2009; Goodhand, 2008; Looney, 2008) and domestically-led transition (Aspinall & Van Klinken, 2011; Baaz & Verweijen, 2014; Raeymaekers, 2013).

Like the literature on illiberal responses to conflict, the conflict economies literature reflects a framing of corruption as an adaptation to conflict, rather than the exploitation of fragility, and connects conflict to corruption dynamics during and after the period of ongoing violence. This expands the discussion of illiberal responses to conflict by adding elements of the experiences of conflict-affected populations, and elements of the activities of armed groups. The focus on these alternative means of order making in conflict is now increasingly common in the study of this relationship, displacing the narrow focus on the exploitation of fragility. However, as I discuss in Section 2.3, with this has come increasing difficulties over the boundaries between informal and corrupt economic activity.

#### 2.2.4 Corruption, social change & identity

The majority of works on conflict-induced change in corruption focus on one of the three theories set out above. As I discuss in Section 2.3, the focus on these three theories of conflict-induced change in corruption in part reflects the types of conflict-affected context and the level at which this relationship is typically analysed, and the residual prevalence of narrow assumptions around the determinants of corruption and the impacts of conflict. However, as I now discuss, exceptions to this broader trend are evident from a small group of studies which focus on conflict-induced changes in the social determinants of corruption.

The small group of works which link conflict to the perceptive and social determinants of corruption focus on the impacts of conflict on identity group boundaries. These works argue that the increasing salience of identity group boundaries in ethnic conflict results in the increasing stratification of corruption perceptions along these lines (Orjuela et al, 2016). Rather than the perceptive domain alone, the rising salience of identity group boundaries is argued to influence the acceptability of corrupt behaviours, with the perceived actions of a corrupt other having the potential to legitimise engagement in corrupt activity within one's own group (Smith, 2014a). Conflict is thus argued to heighten awareness of corruption, but in a manner which is partial, and which can lead to further engagement in otherwise unacceptable corrupt behaviours.

Consistent with the focus on social and value factors in context, studies which describe conflict-induced change in corruption through the salience of identity typically do so with a focus on routine forms of corruption, particularly bribery in bureaucratic settings (Nystrand, 2014; Orjuela et al, 2016; Smith, 2014a). However, there is diversity amongst this small body of works over the extent of these effects; Nystrand (2014) argues that routine forms of corruption remained largely unaffected amongst conflict-affected populations in northern Uganda, Lindberg & Orjuela (2011) and Orjuela et al (2016) describes initially significant but diminishing effects of identity in post-conflict Sri Lanka, and Smith (2014a) finds that conflict-induced changes remain central to routine forms of corruption over 30 years after the Biafra conflict in Nigeria. The literature thus indicates a high degree of contextual contingency of identity-based effects on routine forms of corruption after conflict, and variability in these effects over time across different contexts.

In addition to the effects on individual perceptions of routine forms of corruption, the small body of works which theorise conflict-induced change in corruption through social factors also link conflict to perceptions of corruption regarding central governments. In contrast to effects at the micro level, there is a greater degree of consensus over perceptive shifts of this form. Works by Nystrand (2014), Lindberg & Orjuela (2011) and Smith (2014a) cited above, for example, all highlight the link between conflict-induced perceptions of exclusion from the state and perceptions of corruption in central government, even where effects at the local level vary. These shared perceptions of corruption in central government amongst a marginalised population are also argued to reinforce the salience of these boundaries, and form part of the means by which identity is asserted (Smith, 2001; 2014a).

The framing of conflict-induced change in corruption through identity reflects the growing influence of constructivist and anthropological approaches within the wider corruption studies literature as I discuss in Chapter Three (De Graaf et al, 2010a; Shore & Haller, 2005), and the particular focus on social trust as a determinant of corruption (Orjuela, 2014; Rothstein, 2013; Uslaner, 2013). As also discussed in relation to informal economies in Section 2.2.3, this reflects a framing of networked forms of corruption as a particularised form of exchange, in a context in which the salience of identity group boundaries through conflict has undermined generalised forms of exchange (Looney, 2008). However, the focus of works which assert this link is broader than those specific to informal structures of economic

activity (Day & Reno, 2014; Reno, 2008), linking conflict to judgements around corruption outside of direct experiences, as well as at the local level.

### 2.2.5 The theoretical landscape of conflict-induced change in corruption

In this section, I have set out the four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption expressed in the fragmented literature on this topic: the exploitation of fragility, illiberal responses to conflict, conflict economies, and identity-based transformation. Of these four theories, the framing of this relationship as a rational exploitation of fragility reflects assumptions on the nature of states in conflict and on the determinants of corruption which have previously dominated the literature. These assumptions stem from a liberal understanding of the factors necessary for stability (Mac Ginty, 2010; De Waal, 2009), and the influence of economic approaches in the wider study of corruption (Khan, 2006). Given the prevalence of these assumptions, this narrow theory of conflict-induced change in corruption is often the default approach, particularly policy settings.

Whilst exploitative forms of corruption in fragile institutional settings is an undeniable feature of many conflict-affected environments, the three other theories of conflict-induced change in corruption in the literature reflect challenges to the assumptions underlying this approach. This includes the characterisation of conflict-affected environments principally with reference to the fragility of the public sector, and the framing of corruption as principally motived by financial gain. These challenges have been driven by developments in the study of alternative orders under conflict and transition (Mac Ginty, 2010), and the growing emphasis on the functional dimensions of corruption (Walton, 2013).

As I discuss in Chapter Four, I engage a grounded theory approach to researching conflict-induced change in corruption. This approach requires theoretical development is driven by an inductive logic, rather than through deductive engagement with the literature. Given this, I do not set out with the intention of testing one or more of the four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption evident in the literature, but instead adopt a research design guided by the principal of emergence (Kelle, 2007). However, this thesis is aligned with the broad body of works which challenge prescriptive notions on the determinants of corruption in conflict-affected settings, and the aspects of conflict which are

significant to corruption. This includes, but is not limited to, the stabilising and supportive potential of corruption in settings with limited formal institutional capacity.

## 2.3 The four limitations of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption

In the discussion above, I set out the four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption in the literature and situated my analysis among the broad body of works which challenge prescriptive assumptions on the determinants of corruption and the impacts of conflict. Building on this, here I set out the limitations of the literature to which this thesis responds. These are first, the types of conflict-affected contexts on which the literature has tended to focus; second, limits on the time period in which this relationship has typically been analysed; third, comparative lack of attention to the experiences of conflict-affected populations and finally, limits on the level of conceptual depth applied to corruption.

### 2.3.1 The focus on collapsed states and international intervention

As a whole, the literature on conflict-induced changes in corruption is based on empirical material from diverse range of conflict-affected contexts. However, the works which have driven developments in the four theories of this relationship I discussed in Section 2.2 draw on a relatively narrow subset of examples of conflict globally. In particular, developments in the study of this relationship have been driven by the study of conflicts with one or both of the following characteristics:

First, much of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption analyses cases of western-led international peacebuilding. Analysis of conflict in Bosnia in the 1990s (Andreas, 2009; Donais, 2003; Divjak & Pugh, 2008) and in Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s (Goodhand, 2004; Looney, 2006; Mac Ginty 2010) has been particularly influential in how conflict-induced change in corruption is theorised. Second, theoretical development around this relationship has been driven by 'extreme' examples of conflict, in which the state has been displaced through western military intervention, or in which conflict caused an already fragile state to collapse. In addition to the prominence of post-intervention Iraq and Afghanistan, studies of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia are particularly prominent (Jackson, 2002; Raeymaekers, 2013; Reno, 2008).

The prominence of 'extreme' and internationalised conflicts in the study of conflict-induced change in corruption has meant that much of the emphasis in analysing these cases has been on

explaining the successes and failings of intervention, of which corruption is one element. The focus is therefore on those forms of corruption which are judged to be pertinent to stability, with analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption emerging as an element of this, but not the focus in itself. In addition to the prominence given to the exploitation of fragility, this is evident in the framing of debates around illiberal responses to conflict and conflict economies with reference to their impacts on stability, rather than on conflict-induced change in its own right (see, for example, Donais, 2003).

In addition to the focus on stability, the dominance of cases of internationalised and 'extreme' conflict has given particular prominence to exploitative forms of corruption. Exacerbated by the influx of aid and the speed of transition attempted, the Afghan, Iraqi and Bosnian interventions were characterised by large-scale corruption in the government institutions developed as part of intervention. Reflecting both the financial scale and the direct connection to elements of western-led peacebuilding intervention, these forms of corruption have been a particular point of emphasis in studies of conflict-induced change. This focus on exploitation has been challenged by studies of illiberal responses to conflict and conflict economies, however a focus on corruption of aid and the capture of political reforms has been central to how this relationship is analysed (see, for example, Divjak & Pugh, 2008).

The dominance of extreme and internationalised conflicts also means that much of the literature has developed through the study of cases where corruption was already part of the 'normal' way in which the state maintained order, and in which informal economic activity was a routine part of everyday life. The literature which frames conflict-induced change in corruption through illiberal responses to conflict and conflict economies is thus built principally on examples in which these structures degenerated through conflict and were restructured, but not in which these corruption dynamics emerged through conflict (see, for example, Reno, 2008). It also means that the study of these dynamics is driven by cases in which they have failed to maintain order and have been transformed, rather than cases in which they have endured and been reasserted.

The examination of cases of international intervention in conflict and cases of state collapse through conflict has defined much of the study of conflict-induced change in corruption, including innovative work on illiberal responses to conflict and conflict economies. However, the dominance of cases of this type has also skewed the understanding of this relationship towards those forms of

corruption relevant to western-led peacebuilding operations and to stability in general, rather than a focus on the dynamics of corruption alone. Comparatively less is known about this relationship in cases without intervention, and in which the state remained functional throughout the conflict. As I discuss in Section 2.4, my focus on conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal is in part a response to this limitation of the literature.

### 2.3.2 The focus on ongoing conflict and immediate transition

The second limitation of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption is the neglect of the long term dynamics of this relationship in favour of either the dynamics of corruption in cases of ongoing conflict or the immediate conflict to post-conflict transition. This concentration is evident in studies diverse in the assumptions around conflict and corruption discussed in Section 2.2 and in part reflects the concentration of the effects under examination during conflict and early transition. However, it is also driven by the underlying assumptions of the literature. In particular, it reflects the extent to which conflict-induced change in corruption has been examined as part of efforts to assess the impact of corruption on stability and, moreover, the focus on contexts in which interventions have taken place. This has led to a preponderance of studies of the periods in which interventions are concentrated.

The focus of studies of conflict-induced change in corruption on the period in which violence is ongoing means that comparatively less is known about the long term ramifications of conflict for corruption during periods of stability. This is significant because, with the exception of the relatively extreme cases of conflict I discussed in Section 2.3.1, large scale conflict is typically the exception rather than the rule (UCDP, 2019). Similarly, the intensity of aid influx and institutional reforms commonly associated with international intervention are convincingly linked to corruption in transition, but this form of transition is in itself exceptional (Kreutz, 2010). How the corruption emergent in an exceptional period in the history of a state and in the experience of a population continue to affect corruption long after the end to conflict is therefore a significant but under explored aspect of this relationship.

The concentration of studies of conflict-induced change in corruption on the period of ongoing conflict or immediate conflict to post-conflict transition is evident across the four theories discussed in Section 2.2, but is particularly evident in the case of perceptive shifts and conflict economies. As I

discussed in Section 2.2.4, the ethnicisation of corruption perceptions is linked to long term dynamics of ethnic identity (Nystrand, 2014; Orjuela et al, 2016; Smith, 2014a). However, with the exception of Smith's (2014a) study, studies of this relationship have focused on the period of ongoing conflict and the period of transition in which issues of identity were particularly salient. Similarly, in studies of conflict economies, the extent to which 'coping' activity and engagement in the informal economy continues to shape behaviours after a period of crisis remains largely unexplored, in favour of a focus on these effects during periods of violence (Goodhand, 2004; Larmer et al, 2013; Raemaekers, 2013).

The question of if and how conflict transforms corruption in the long term is thus a comparatively under-explored aspect of this relationship. The literature specific to this link and the broader literature on the determinants of corruption support a diverse set of expectations about the form such long term changes may take. However, given the diverse set of dynamics evident in the literature, how this may play out in any individual case is far from clear. As I discuss in Section 2.4, this thesis responds to the lack of attention to the long term dimensions of this relationship. This is reflected both in the selection of Nepal as a case of conflict-induced change in corruption, and in the use of grounded theory as a means of exploring the potential long term dynamics of this relationship.

### 2.3.3 The focus on states, groups and systems

The third limitation of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption is the extent to which development of this relationship has been driven by studies of the state and group levels, rather than in the direct experience of conflict-affected populations. Much of the analysis of exploitation of fragility and of illiberal responses to conflict in particular have focused on how these corruption dynamics impact the stability of the state, and have been driven principally by a focus on stability at this central level (Reno, 2008). Further, whilst elements of the conflict economies literature consider corruption as a form of coping for populations (Baaz & Verweijen, 2014; Goodhand, 2004; Looney, 2008), the experiences of those exposed to conflict is a relatively minor part of the broader study of alternative economic systems during and after conflict.

Studies of changes in the social determinants of corruption discussed in Section 2.2.4 are the exception to the broader focus in the literature on changes in corruption above the level of individual

experiences. However, in addition to the relatively small number of studies of this type, this segment of the literature is focused primarily on identity-based transformations on corruption. Indeed, the three prominent examples of studies of change in the perceptive and social determinants of corruption discussed above - Lindberg & Orjuela (2014), Orjuela et al (2016) and Smith (2014a) - focus on cases of ethnic conflict, and on ethnic minority populations in particular. The question of changes in these determinants of corruption amongst non-minority ethnic populations, and populations affected by non-ethnic conflict, thus remains open.

In addition to the number of conflicts which are not principally stratified along ethnic lines, the focus on ethnicity in studies of conflict-induced change in the social determinants of corruption is significant because of the number of other social determinants of corruption evident in the wider corruption studies literature. This includes, for example, variations in the engagement in and attitudes towards corruption based on levels of education, gendered social attitudes, and religious values (Marquette, 2012; Stensöta et al, 2015; Truex, 2011), many of which overlap with the effects of armed conflict highlighted in the wider literature. These factors have increasingly come to the fore with recent developments in the wider corruption studies literature which I discuss in Chapter Three. However, they are largely absent from the study of conflict-induced change in corruption.

This thesis builds on the outcomes of the small group of studies which focus on the social determinants of corruption at the population level, and reflects the gaps still evident in this segment of the literature. As I discuss further in Section 2.4, these influences are evident in the level at which I examine conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal and the constructivist approach I engage to study the nature and determinants of corruption.

### 2.3.4 The limits of conceptual development around corruption

The final limitation of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption to which this thesis responds is the manner in which corruption is defined. Across the literature, two sets of issues are common: First, there is a tendency to rely on narrow and prescriptive definitions of corruption, which focus on public office and private gain. This is particularly evident in the segment of the literature which frames conflict-induced change in corruption as the exploitation of fragility, which is overwhelmingly

focused on the public sector. However, it is widespread across the theories of this relationship (see, for example, Divjak & Pugh, 2008; Donais, 2003). Second, amongst those who have argued for alternatives to this theory of conflict-induced change in corruption, the boundary between corruption and concepts such as patronage and clientelism is often vaguely expressed. This leads to issues over the boundary between corruption and informal but legitimate modes of exchange.

Taking these issues in turn, the focus of much of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption on the public sector reflects broader trends in the corruption studies literature. As I discuss in Chapter Three, definitions of corruption based on the 'misuse of public office for private gain' have for decades been the principal manner in which this concept has been approached (Philp, 2008). Within the study of conflict-induced change in corruption, the prominence of this and similar definitions also reflects the influence of liberal principles in how this relationship is understood. Specifically, the focus on the quality of formal institutions of political and economic governance as a means of achieving peace and stability has led to the focus on corruption in or surrounding the public sector (Zaum, 2013).

In addition to meaning that comparatively less is known about conflict-induced change in corruption outside of the public sector, the imposition of narrow definitions of corruption based on public office and private gain supports the ongoing focus on exploitation of fragility in the literature. Indeed, even where 'abuse' is not specified in the definition employed, this definition intuitively lends itself to the exploitative forms of conflict-induced corruption, over those which highlight the supportive or stabilising dynamics of corruption (Walton, 2013a). This, along with the focus on the fragility of conflict-affected states, rather than on the alternative coping strategies adopted by elites during conflict, lends prominence to this model of conflict-induced change in corruption over the other three models.

As I discussed in Section 2.2, the three alternative models of conflict-induced change in corruption in part reflect critiques of the narrowness of the focus on the exploitation of fragility, as well as the wider focus of the peacebuilding literature on illiberal orders. As such, across the studies which propose these alternative theories of interaction, alternatives to narrow definitions of corruption based on the misuse of public office for private gain are widespread (see, for example, Baaz & Verweijen, 2014; Smith, 2014a). Reflecting the developments in the wider corruption studies literature discussed in Chapter Three, this has broadened the set of acts and determinants considered relevant to corruption.

However, whilst central to the development of the three alternative theories, this has led to complexities over how concepts such as patronage and clientelism relate to corruption.

In the literature on illiberal responses to conflict and conflict economies in particular, much of the emphasis is on networked forms of corruption, particularly patronage. As I discussed in Section 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, scholars focus on these forms of corruption because they offer an informal means of resource distribution which are capable of integrating otherwise competing elites and supporting the basic needs of conflict-affected populations. However, whilst central to the growth of the study of conflict-induced change in corruption, within these studies the relationship between corruption and concepts such as patronage and clientelism is often not directly discussed. Indeed, in some instances references to corruption are absent, with the discussion instead focusing purely on these related concepts (see, for example, De Waal, 2009; Day & Reno, 2014), whilst otherwise closely comparable studies directly engage the concept of corruption (see, for example, Goodhand, 2004).

The lack of conceptual clarity in studies of corruption as an illiberal response to conflict by elites and in the context of conflict economies means that integrating these effects with the other theories of change in the literature is complex. Indeed, it may be questioned whether these effects share anything in common with the more exploitative forms of conflict-induced corruption through fragility, which are based in a more conventional conceptualisation of corruption. In addition to the relatively recent growth of direct inquiry into this relationship, these conceptual issues explain the ongoing fragmentation of the literature across the four theories set out in Section 2.3.3. It also raises questions over the extent to which the concepts engaged in the literature resonate with those in the conflict-affected contexts studied.

### 2.3.5 The growth and limits of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption

The literature on conflict-induced change in corruption is increasingly diverse, and in the last decade in particular has moved beyond the narrow focus on fragility. With this has come advances in the study of this relationship, including increased attention to changes in corruption outside of central governments (Looney, 2008), evidence of the stabilising capacity of corruption (Day & Reno, 2014), and evidence of complex social dynamics (Orjuela et al, 2016). However, as I have argued here, four limitations are present in the increasingly fragmented body of inquiry into this relationship. These

limitations are not without exception but rather reflect the cases, levels and dynamics of this relationship which have been at the centre of inquiry as the literature has expanded, and which are reflected in the theories of conflict-induced change in corruption dominant in the literature. In the section to follow, I discuss how this thesis reflects and responds to these four limitations of the literature, and the wider need for theoretical development and consolidation in the study of this relationship.

## 2.4 The contribution of this thesis

The focus of this thesis on conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal, and elements of my approach to investigating this relationship, are a response to the limitations of the literature I set out above. Here, I compare the patterns of conflict and peacebuilding in Nepal to the cases which have shaped the literature on this relationship, highlighting areas in which this case is divergent. Following this, I discuss how the limitations of literature are reflected in the level of my analysis and conceptual approach. Throughout, I focus on the link from the literature to the broad approach taken in this thesis, the details of which are set out in Chapters Three and Four.

### 2.4.1 Nepal as a divergent case of conflict-induced change in corruption

Across the four limitations of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption, the types of cases which scholars have focused upon has a central role. As I set out in Section 2.3, cases of state collapse, western-led peacebuilding, and cases in which violence is ongoing have been central to the development of theory around this relationship. The consequences of this include the focus on exploitative forms of 'crisis' corruption, occurring through large scale intervention in extreme fragile state environments, still affected by armed group violence. My focus on Nepal reflects an intention to analyse this relationship in conditions divergent from those which dominate the literature.

The 1996-2006 Maoist insurgency in Nepal, and the period of peacebuilding and transition which has followed is distinct from the types of cases which dominate the study of conflict-induced change in corruption in three respects: First, whilst enduring two periods of direct rule by the then King Gyanendra (Ganguly & Shoup, 2005), the central state in Nepal largely continued to function throughout the decade of conflict. This resilience of the state reflects the fact that, whilst effective in disrupting local government across the majority of rural areas, the Maoists were not able to consolidate control

over urban centres, in which the presence of the state was concentrated (Gobyn, 2009). This is true both of the central government in Kathmandu and across the urban headquarters of the 75 Districts, none of which were subject to sustained Maoist control (Thapa, 2012). Nepal is thus apart from the examples of state collapse in Afghanistan, Iraq, the DRC and others which have driven the development of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption.

Second, in further contrast to cases which have dominated the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption, Nepal was not the subject of a large scale external intervention. Rather, Nepal's conflict ended by a negotiated settlement between the Maoist leadership and an alliance of political parties, in the context of military stalemate and the political pressure created by King Gyanendra's 2005 coup (Martin, 2012; Whitfield, 2012). This negotiated settlement resulted in an interim constitutional agreement, under which two elected Constituent Assemblies oversaw political transition from a constitutional monarchy to a federal democratic republic (Edrisinha, 2018), and the integration of elements of the PLA into a reformed Nepal Army (Wagle & Jackson, 2015; Subedi, 2018). The international community played a limited supporting role in this Nepali-led process through the United Nations Mission in Nepal and bilateral engagement from India (Jha, 2012),

Third, rather than being a case of ongoing armed group violence, Nepal has transitioned to a relatively stable democracy in which contestation over the control and nature of the state increasingly expressed through democratic means. Central to this has been the transition of the Maoists from an armed insurgency into mainstream party politics. Since 2008, the Maoist party has participated in largely transparent elections at the central and local levels and entered into coalitions with political parties which were previously amongst the primary targets of PLA violence (Ishiyama & Batta, 2011; Osterman, 2018). The Nepali state has also proven resilient to a number of localised outbreaks of violence since 2006, including violent objections to the proposed federal boundaries by some Terai communities and limited attempts by dissident Maoist groups to disrupt national level elections (Strasheim, 2018).

My focus on conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal thus contributes a further study of this relationship outside of conditions of western peacebuilding interventions, as is increasingly common in the literature. However, unlike the majority of studies of this relationship, Nepal is also a case in which the conflict did not cause the state to collapse, and in which conflict has been followed by

a domestically-led and largely successful process of democratisation and reform. Analysis of this case therefore offers the opportunity to examine and refine the theoretical propositions in the literature under a contrasting set of conditions, and with this the potential for theoretical development.

### 2.4.2 Theoretical development at the sub-national level

In addition to my focus on Nepal, the level and context of analysis in this thesis also reflects lesser explored areas of conflict-induced change in corruption. As I discussed in Section 2.3, the relatively small number of studies which focus on the sub-national level examine change amongst identity groups or informal economic systems. How conflict impacts corruption at the sub-national level outside of these dynamics has not been the subject of the depth of analysis seen in these circumstances. My focus in this thesis reflects this in two ways.

First, Nepal's conflict was not principally stratified along ethnic identity lines. Rather, whilst the Maoists tailored their appeals to historically marginalised communities, particularly those subject to caste discrimination, minority ethnolinguistic groups, and indigenous communities (Eck, 2009), their ideology focused on poverty, and what they described as the feudal structure of political power from which it stemmed (Bhushan, 2016). The conflict thus saw the mobilisation of diverse marginalised populations across the rural areas in which the Maoist presence was consolidated (Murshed & Gates, 2005). This contrasts to the comparatively binary identity conflicts in Sri Lanka and Nigeria which, as I discussed in Section 2.3, have been central to the development of elements of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption in the social domain.

In addition to the character of the conflict in Nepal, the specific sub-national context I consider also reflects my intention to study the sub-national dynamics of conflict-induced change in corruption, outside of conditions stratified by identity boundaries. Specifically, I analyse the experiences of a city population of diverse caste, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (NepalMap, 2018), and one which was not at the centre of disputes over federal boundaries. These disputes were in some areas stratified across identity boundaries relating to the Madhesi identity (Paudel, 2016), but did not affect the western Terai area in which Ghorahi is situated. I discuss the process by which I selected Ghorahi as an example of this and the specific features of the population with which I engaged in Chapter Four.

Second, I adopt a grounded theory approach to analysing the effects of conflict on corruption. Whilst compatible with analysis of identity-based effects, conflict economies and exploitation individually, this approach also facilitates analysis of the multiple potential dynamics of this relationship which may concurrently affect a given population. In addition to expanding the set of dynamics within each of the four theories in the literature, through this approach I am also able to consider the relative significance of each. By comparison, studies of this relationship have tended to only consider one of these four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption, and the literature as a whole has given little attention to the long term prominence of these effects at the sub-national level.

**2.5 Summary**

In this chapter, I set out the four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption which characterise the literature on this topic, discussed four limitations of this literature, and set out how these limitations influenced the design and focus of this thesis. As I argued in Section 2.2, much of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption is driven by a focus on the 'fragile' nature of conflict-affected states, and a narrow framing of the nature of and incentives for corruption. The increasingly widespread challenges to these assumptions has led to a broadening of how this relationship is understood; comprising of a focus on illiberal responses to conflict, conflict economies, and social change in conflict. This thesis is situated amongst the set of works which challenge narrow assumptions around this relationship, but does not seek to test or develop any specific theory.

Rather than examining any single or combination of the theories of conflict-induced change in corruption evident in the literature, this thesis responds to the four limitations of the literature set out in Section 2.3. Here, I argued that the literature has been shaped by the analysis of cases of international intervention and state collapse, and periods of immediate conflict to post-conflict transition or in which violence is ongoing. As discussed in Section 2.4, this thesis offers an alternative to this through the focus on Nepal; a case in which the state did not collapse, where the conflict was not defined by a clash of identity groups, in which conflict was resolved through a domestically-led peacebuilding process, and in a period in which the country has achieved relative stability. I use this divergent case to examine the four theories in the literature, and the potential for alternative links within and in addition to these.

The contribution of this thesis however goes beyond analysing and refining the current set of theories of conflict-induced change in corruption in isolation. Rather than the often fragmented character of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption, which has led the four theories of this relationship to largely be considered in isolation of each other, I explain the relative prominence of these effects over time. This comparative element of my analysis is facilitated by the use of constructivist grounded theory. In Chapter Three, I set out the ontological and epistemological features of this approach to corruption and, in Chapter Four, discuss the implementation of this approach through Constructivist Grounded Theory

# Chapter Three: Theoretical approach

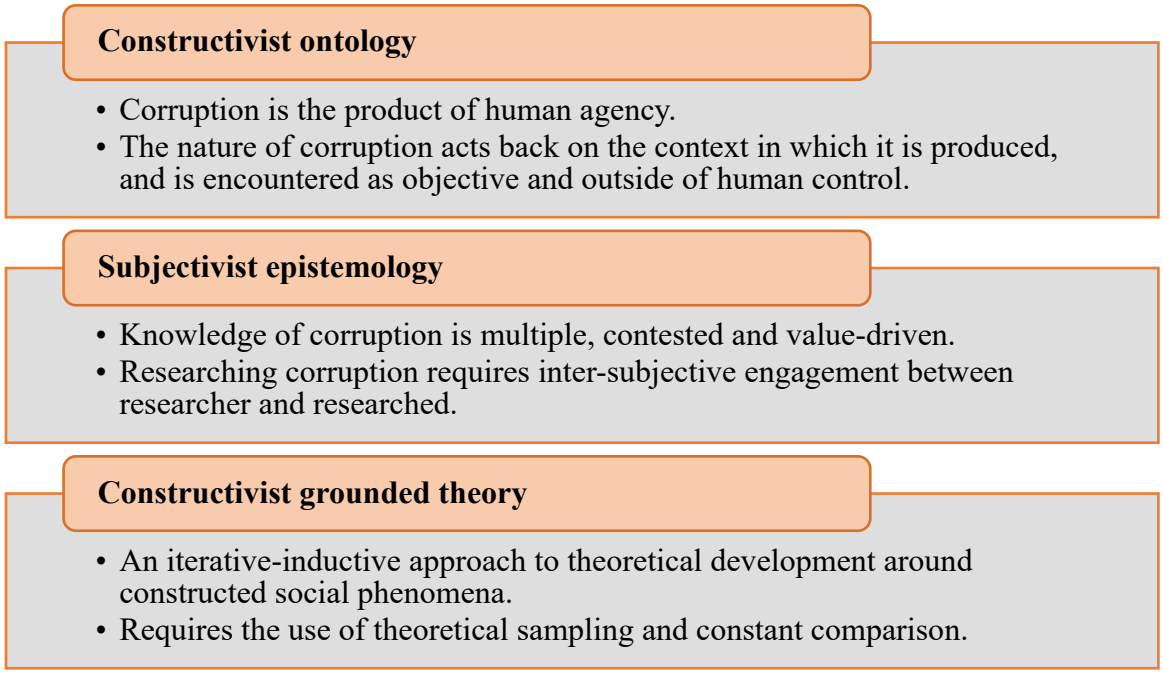
## 3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two, I referenced the diverse treatment of corruption in studies of conflict-induced change and the consequences of this for how this relationship is theorised. Across the literature, this spans the focus on exploitative corruption in the public sector (Rose-Ackerman, 2008a; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016a) to the use of patronage as an integrative means of informal resource distribution (Day & Reno, 2014; DeWaal, 2009), both of which are grouped under this single concept. In addition to the diverse forms of corruption linked to conflict, this points to a seemingly intractable complexity at the heart of the corruption studies literature – the debate over the nature of corruption itself. It is to this ontological question, and to epistemology, which I now turn.

Building on the conceptual discussion in Chapter Two, in this chapter I set out the constructivist ontological approach and subjectivist epistemology underlying my analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal. To do so, I first discuss the myriad challenges associated with conceptualising corruption and the seemingly intractable set of debates over definition which divide the literature. Second, I critique the trend in the academic and policy literatures which focuses on the establishment of universal and objective standards of corruption. Drawing on this critique, I then introduce the principles of constructivist ontology and subjectivist epistemology, and justify the application of these principles to the analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal.

As I discuss in Chapter Four, I implement the constructivist ontology and subjectivist epistemology set out in this chapter through a research design and methodology based in Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT). A summary of these three approaches is given in Diagram 3.1A overleaf. Whilst influenced in part by the context upon which this thesis is focused, in this chapter I justify the constructivist position primarily by engaging with a long-running set of debates in the corruption studies literature. I address the practical implications of the theoretical positions discussed in this chapter as part of the discussion of constructivist grounded theory in Chapter Four.

Diagram 3.1A – Ontology, epistemology and research design




### 3.2 Conceptual debates in the study of corruption

The complexity inherent in defining corruption and the array of analytical issues which result from this is a well-trodden theme of the corruption studies literature (Brown, 2006; Philp, 2015; Rothstein & Varraich, 2017). However, despite the depth and intractability of debates over definition, scholars have tended to engage a small number of approaches – most commonly 'the misuse of public office for private gain'. Given the prevalence and influence of this definition in the broad corruption studies literature, I devote this section to justifying why I have not engaged this approach or the other purportedly universal definitions common in the literature. This discussion informs the justifications for the constructivist ontological position which I set out in Section 3.3.

#### 3.2.1 Public office, private gain

Whilst the contemporary study of corruption owes much to the behavioural literature of the 1950s and 60s (Kurer, 2005; Navot, 2014; Warren, 2015), the decades of conceptual development which have followed have been primarily influenced by economic and positivist approaches. This influence reflects the demand from business and western governments for internationally comparative corruption data to inform investment and policy decisions (Brown, 2016), alongside broader trends within the social

sciences. Whilst the last decade has seen the growth of alternative approaches to the study of corruption (De Graaf et al, 2010a), including the constructivist approach which I adopt, the conceptual landscape of the corruption studies literature still reflects much of the influence of the positivist social sciences.

The influence of economic positivism on the corruption studies literature has driven a long-running focus on establishing a universally applicable standard of this concept. In addition to reflecting the foundationalist ontology common within economics, universality is a common demand of internationally comparative analysis (Charron, 2016; Olken, 2009). By far the most common definition of corruption which emerged from this trend in the literature is the 'misuse of public office for private gain' (Bardhan, 2015: 473), a variant of the definition originally proposed by Nye (1967) and popularised by Transparency International.[3] Whilst semantic variations around this definition are common, the focus on the public-private divide as the standard which is violated by a corrupt act has been and remains dominant in the study of corruption (Beeri & Navot, 2013; Sequeira, 2012).

The appeal of definitions of corruption based on the public-private divide is that they appear to provide a clear standard of what precisely is violated by a corrupt act. Whilst intuitively linked to bribery, this definition is also not explicitly tied to specific manifestations of corruption, and thus is advocated as a suitable means of classifying the diverse range of acts to which the term is routinely applied across contexts (Rothstein & Varraich, 2017: 17). The simplicity and definitiveness of this standard is also linked to its widespread adoption, particularly when compared to the conceptual approaches offered by critical, constructivist and anthropological scholars. The combination of these factors is central to the ongoing engagement of this definition, particularly within quantitative analysis (See, for example, Liu et al, 2017; Saha & Ali, 2017; Sumaila et al, 2017).

While remaining the modal approach in the contemporary corruption studies literature, definitions of corruption based in the public-private divide are subject to an increasingly influential body of criticism. Elements of this critique are driven by fundamental differences over the nature of corruption, which I discuss in introducing the constructivist ontological position I engage in Section 3.3.

[3] Nye (1967: 419) defined corruption as 'Corruption is behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private- regarding influence'.

However, critiques specific to definitions based on the public-private divide are more widely evident, and form a useful precursor to the ontological discussions in Section 3.3.

The first critique commonly applied to definitions of corruption based in the public-private divide is that, whilst advocated as a universal standard, the distinction between the public and private spheres is contextually contingent. Scholars of a range of disciplinary backgrounds have highlighted the root of the distinction between the private and the public spheres in Weberian bureaucratic norms (Harrison, 2007; Torsello, 2011; Walton, 2015) and western liberal philosophy (Rothstein & Varraich, 2017: 35). These Weberian norms are far from universally replicated among publics in non-western settings (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Gupta, 1995; Ruud, 2000), and are also variable across the western contexts in which they are rooted (Rothstein & Varraich, 2017). These theoretical and empirical works represents a fundamental challenge to the claim that this standard is universal.

The second common critique of definitions of corruption based in the public-private divide is that, even within those western contexts in which Weberian bureaucratic norms are rooted, these principles are subject to contestation and revision over time. In addition to evidence of the historical contingency of these norms (Harrison, 2007; Shore, 2005), this is evident in the emergence of management strategies which emphasise the blurring of the public and the private spheres, resulting in a 'revolving door' between the political, bureaucratic, media and corporate worlds (Heywood, 2015). Far from corrupt, this blurring of the public and the private is advocated as a means of enhancing public sector efficiency and reducing corruption (Andersson & Erlingsson, 2012). Developments in the literature thus show that the public-private divide exhibits temporal as well as geographical relativity.

The body of evidence against the universality of the public-private divide in those western contexts in which Weberian bureaucratic norms were formed is increasingly consolidated. However, the partiality of this standard is most clearly expressed in studies of developing country contexts, where Weberian norms have little historical foundation. Anthropological works on the function of local government in cases of low institutional development have, for example, demonstrated the legitimacy of forms of exchange commonly likened to patronage and clientelism, under which elites transcend the public-private divide (Anjaria, 2011; Bosco, 1992; Gupta, 1995). Evidence of these distinct normative landscapes are increasingly engaged to explain the failures of western-led anti-corruption interventions

in the developing world, precisely because they have often proceeded on the basis that the public-private divide is universal (Brown & Cloke, 2004; Bukovansky, 2002; De Maria, 2008; 2010).

Evidence from a range of disciplinary perspectives thus demonstrates the partiality of the public-private divide as a standard for corruption. Whilst the 'misuse of public office for private gain' remains the modal approach, the partiality is increasingly acknowledged across the corruption studies literature (Friedrich, 2002; Rothstein & Varraich, 2017: 31) and in policy applications (Szarek-Mason, 2010). Reflecting this, a number of alternative approaches have been proposed, which are not explicitly dependent on the public-private divide. Whilst improving on the classic definition of corruption discussed here, as I argue next these alternatives do not establish the universal standard widely sought in the corruption studies literature.

### 3.2.2 Alternative universal definitions

Whilst criticisms of definitions of corruption based on the public-private divide increasingly influence mainstream scholarship, the demand for universal definitions continues to shape the conceptual landscape of the literature. As such, the critique of approaches based on public-private divide has led to the proliferation of alternative standards which, like the public-private divide, are advocated on the basis that they provide a universal standard which is violated by a corrupt act. Here, I discuss the two most prominent of these. Following this, in Section 3.3 I make a general case against universal definitions of corruption, and set out the constructivist ontology which I adopt in this thesis.

The specific critiques raised against defining corruption as the misuse of public office for private gain has led to the rise of similar but distinct alternatives. Notably, it is now common in academic and policy works to see corruption defined as the abuse of 'entrusted authority' for private gain, rather than the abuse of 'public office' specifically (see, for example, Benito et al, 2015; DFID, 2013; Graycar & Sidebottom, 2012). In addition to removing the most problematic reference of the classic definition, this alternative is inclusive of corruption in the private sector, something which has long been side-lined (Navot, 2014). The prominence of this substitution in policy settings in particular has been driven by its adoption by Transparency International (2018).

Whilst the shift away from explicit references to public office in universal definitions of corruption has expanded scholarly attention towards corruption in the private sector, it is even more conceptually problematic than the definition it seeks to replace. The limits of this common alternative first reflects the continued reference to 'private gain' within this definition (Transparency International, 2018). This means that the definition retains the character of a distinct private sphere which, as discussed above, is far from universal. Second, the substitution of 'entrusted authority' in this definition introduces even more ambiguity than is present in the original formulation, particularly with regard to authority in informal settings. In seeking to clarify this, scholars have either returned to references to public office, or have invoked legal standards (Gardiner, 2002), both of which are variable across time and context.

The inclusion of legal standards in the definition of corruption has significant precedent in the literature, and was amongst the first to be implemented in the study of corruption (Navot, 2015: 1). However, the addition of legal standards into the definition of corruption as means of clarifying the vague concept of 'entrusted authority' is problematic in seeking to establish a *universal* definition. As well as the self-evident variability in corruption-related laws over time and country boundaries (Bratu et al, 2017; Schultz & Harutyunan, 2015), inclusion of legal standards opens this approach to distortion in contexts where the law acts as a means of protection of elite abuses (Kaufmann & Vicente, 2011; Pardo, 2011). This, along with the continuing reliance on the concept of *private* gain, makes this alternative approach equally partial as those explicitly based in the public-private divide.

Alongside largely semantic variations of the public-private divide, there have been more concerted attempts to establish an alternative universal standard of corruption. Of these, the most prominent has come from Rothstein's (2011; 2014; & Teorell, 2008; & Torsello, 2013; & Varraich, 2017) work, which defined corruption as the violation of "the norm of impartiality in the exercise of public policies and laws" (2014: 735). Critically, this definition does not require impartial treatment of all before the state, but rather that, once standards are established through the political process, the *exercise* of these standards is impartial. Like the public-private divide, the logic underlying this approach rests on the demands of positivist social science, and concerns over the growing cultural relativism of the corruption studies literature (Rothstein, 2014).

The focus on impartiality as the norm which is violated by corruption appears to avoid the pitfalls of purportedly universal definitions based on the public-private divide or entrusted authority. Notably, whilst compatible with the principles of rational bureaucracy, impartiality is not directly reliant on Weberian bureaucratic norms and points more precisely to what is violated by corruption than the vague notion of 'abuse' in the classic definition. This approach therefore represents a significant step forward over definitions based on the public-private divide, which is increasingly adopted only as the least-worst universal definition of corruption available to those undertaking ontologically positivist analysis (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016: 7; Sparling, 2018).

Despite the step forward represented by defining corruption through impartiality, central to the validity of this definition in its own terms is the argument that the norm of impartiality is universally accepted. Rothstein also goes further than this, arguing that corruption is understood with a high degree of consistency across societies, and that this largely aligns with that of leading anti-corruption organisations (Rothstein, 2014: 746; Rothstein & Torsello, 2013). The evidence underlying this claim consists of a number of predominantly survey-based cross-national studies, which test the tolerance of surveyed populations to corruption in various forms. However, these empirical claims are questionable.

Citing an array of survey evidence drawn from India and Sub-Saharan Africa, Rothstein & Torsello (2013: 3) claim that those in the developing world "take a very clear stand against corruption and [understand] the problem in the same manner as it is understood by for example organizations such as the World Bank and Transparency International". Drawing on this same evidence, they also claim that the simultaneous condemnation and practice of bribery and other 'routine' forms of corruption reflects a collective action problem, rather than one of differing values or understandings of corruption itself. These empirical claims are central to the otherwise largely theoretical argument that the norm of impartiality provides a universally accepted standard for corruption.

In addition to the questions over the narrowness of cross-national surveys and the potential influence of social desirability bias on the responses (Friesenbichler et al, 2018), evidence of attitudinal variation arising through similar methodologies to those cited by Rothstein places the universality of the norm of impartiality in doubt. Studies by Truex (2011) and Walton (2013a), for example, highlight the perceived legitimacy of 'partial' behaviours by those implementing policy in local government settings,

even where similar behaviours by those in central government are considered corrupt. As with the public-private divide, this hints at the contextual contingency of the norm of impartiality, and questions the 'clear stand' against routine forms of corruption suggested by its advocates.

Compounding the implications of competing sets of survey evidence, further doubt over the universality of a definition of corruption based on impartiality is evident from anthropological analysis. In addition to the potential for acts which may be externally labelled corrupt to nonetheless be widely legitimate (Anjaria, 2011; Gupta, 1995; Larmour, 2012: 1), anthropological studies have consistently demonstrated the positive value judgements which may be associated with the violation of impartiality (Ruud, 2000; Smith, 2007). Smith's (2007) work on the expectations surrounding public officials in Nigeria provides a particularly clear demonstration of this, highlighting the negative social implications which result from the failure of bureaucrats to favour kin. This is not to say that the impartiality norm is not present amongst a majority of those within the diverse set of contexts studied by anthropologists, but does provide clear evidence of the legitimacy of partiality in a number of settings.

Whilst improving on the classic definition of corruption in theoretical terms, the substitution of the public-private divide for 'impartiality in the exercise of public power' does not provide a universal standard for corruption. Indeed, there is compelling evidence of the contextual contingency of the norm of impartiality when applied to all but the most exploitative manifestations of corruption. As I discuss when introducing the constructivist position below, this is not to say that impartiality cannot form one potential standard by which corruption may be judged, and nor that this or any other definition is false. Rather, the critique set out here questions the imposition of this definition for the study of corruption in any specific context, based on the expectation that it is universally applicable.

### 3.2.3 Summary

The prospect of a universal conceptual grounding for corruption is one which has innate appeal, beyond the demands of the positivistic elements of social science. Indeed, as I discuss in Section 3.4, concerns over relativism are one of the key complexities entailed when adopting any approach divergent from this, including the constructivist approach which I engage. However, as I have demonstrated in this section, the definitions of corruption commonly treated as universal in the literature do not fit this

criteria. Given that there has been no rigorous assessment of the extent to which the public-private divide, the abuse of entrusted authority or the norm of impartiality is universally accepted by the population I study in this thesis, imposing any of these standards would inevitably shape the forms of corruption studied. As is often the case in the corruption studies literature, the fact that I am from a distinct cultural and social background to those I study magnifies the scope for error likely to result from the imposition of any of the approaches discussed here.

## 3.3 The constructivist approach to corruption

In Section 3.2, I discussed why I have not adopted the number of purportedly universal definitions of corruption common in the literature. I did so not by rejecting the applicability of these definitions in all circumstances, but by critiquing the claim that such definitions are universally accepted. Building from this, here I discuss the constructivist approach which I adopt in my analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal. In contrast to the approaches I discussed above, this ontology views corruption as produced by human agency. I discuss this position in three parts:

First, I introduce the principles of constructivism and discuss the forms of this broad ontological approach. Second, drawing on developments in the corruption studies literature, I set out the case for theorising corruption as a social construct. Here, I move from the case against the specific universal definition which I discussed above to the case against universal definitions of corruption in general. Finally, I discuss the subjectivist epistemology which I engage alongside constructivist ontology. As I discuss, this epistemology is not a necessary result of adopting constructivist ontology. Rather, it is rooted in the theoretical debates which stratify the corruption studies literature, and the specific demands of researching the sub-national dynamics of corruption in Nepal.

### 3.3.1 The principles and forms of constructivism

Constructivist ontology relates the existence of social phenomena to human action, behaviour and ideas (Kukla, 2000: 24; Wendt, 1999; 68). Unlike natural phenomena, social phenomena exhibit this contingency because they are specific to context, time and "the interlocking beliefs, concepts or theories held by actors" (Wendt, 1999: 70). This is expressed through the relations and interactions of humans,

to which the existence of the phenomena is tied. Any given form of a social phenomenon is therefore not seen as inevitable, but is instead dependent on context, ideas, and interactions (Hacking, 1999: 6).

The dependency of social phenomena on human agency is the central ontological claim of constructivism. This claim does not, however, imply that individuals or groups have dominion over social phenomena, nor that these categorisations are neutral representations of the context. Rather, from the perspective of individual agents or groups, social phenomena have the appearance of inevitability and objectivity – shaping attitudes, behaviours and the social order. As Berger & Luckmann (1966: 78) summarised in amongst the first works on the constructivist position, whilst social phenomena are the product of human action, "[t]he product acts back on the producer". Constructivism thus entails an intersubjective view of structure and agency, under which social phenomena emerge from and change through human factors, but also come to shape these factors (Burr, 2003)

The ontological dependence of social phenomena on human agency, and the reciprocal effects of social phenomena back on human agents, are both necessarily assumed in adopting the constructivist position. As I discuss below, these conditions are clearly evident in the nature of corruption – a factor which is increasingly acknowledged in the corruption studies literature. However, within the constructivist position in general, there exists a diverse range of perspectives, from the post-modern or 'radical' constructivism to the 'moderate' social variant (Phillips, 1995). The approaches which exist along the constructivist continuum are differentiated by two factors:

First, constructivist approaches are differentiated by the extent to which constructivism is adopted as an epistemological as well as an ontological position. This continuum spans those who, like Wendt (1999), engage a purely ontological constructivism alongside epistemic realism and positivism, to the epistemological constructivism advocated by Von Glaserfeld (1995; 1998), amongst others. For those in the latter category, often termed 'constructionists', knowledge "is exclusively an ordering and organization of a world constituted by our experience" (Von Glaserfeld, 1984: 24), central to which is the study of discourse. However, whilst often tied to interpretivism, the constructivist position does not dictate these epistemological decisions (Wendt, 1999: 77).

Second, the constructivist position is differentiated by the extent to which material factors are seen to determine social phenomena. Whilst consistent with the fundamental nature of social phenomena

set out above, social constructivist ontology grants a significant role for material forces. These material forces "are not constituted solely by social meanings", and are seen to define the limits of feasible limits and costs of activity (Wendt, 1999: 112). The radical constructivist position rejects this underlying determinacy of material forces on social phenomena, and indeed the existence of such forces outside of discourse. As I discuss below, I engage the moderate form of constructivism with regard to the role of material factors in determining corruption.

The distinction between constructivism as an epistemological as well as an ontological position and the nature and role ascribed to material forces is fundamental to the nature of constructivist research into social phenomena. However, rather than stemming purely from theoretical debates unrelated to the phenomena at hand, the variant of constructivism which I adopt in this thesis is rooted in observations specific to corruption. To develop this, in Section 3.3.2 I discuss how empirical and theoretical discussions within the corruption studies literature indicate the constructed nature of this phenomenon. Following this, in Section 3.3.3, I discuss the subjectivist epistemology which I engage alongside this.

### 3.3.2 Ontology: corruption as a social construct

Here I demonstrate that corruption fits the two ontological conditions of constructivism – first, that the existence of corruption is dependent on human agency, rather than having an external reality. Second, that this construct acts back on the context in which it is produced, and thus has the appearance of objective and external reality for individuals. To do so, I draw on the theoretical and empirical findings of the diverse range of approaches within the corruption studies literature, including the recent growth of explicitly constructivist scholarship (De Graaf et al, 2010).

The critique of the common universal definitions of corruption I set out in Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 goes some way to satisfying the first ontological condition of constructivism. However, these critiques do not in themselves demonstrate that corruption lacks objective reality beyond human agency, but rather that attempts to establish a universal standard of corruption have failed to do so. Moving from this specific critique to the general case is an inherently more complex task, which I cannot place beyond all doubt. Here, I address this by highlighting the diverse acts and judgements with which corruption is associated across contexts, which indicate the contingency of this concept on human agency.

The popularity of definitions of corruption based on public office and private gain has led studies of public sector bureaucracy to dominate the corruption studies literature. However, despite this often narrow focus, the literature shows the great diversity of acts to which this term is routinely applied. A typology of acts to which the label of corruption is routinely applied in the literature would at a minimum include bribery, patronage, clientelism, nepotism, and embezzlement, alongside some manifestations of fraud, theft, favouritism, and abuses of power. As shown in Table 3.4A, even under the relatively technical definitions of these corruption-related concepts offered by Transparency International (2018a), there is little which intuitively unites these phenomena.

Table 3.4A – Common forms of corruption

| **Concept** | **Example Definition** (Transparency International, 2018a) |
|---|---|
| Bribery | "The offering, promising, giving, accepting or soliciting of an advantage as an inducement for an action which is illegal, unethical or a breach of trust. Inducements can take the form of gifts, loans, fees, rewards or other advantages (taxes, services, donations, favours etc.)." |
| Patronage | "Form of favouritism in which a person is selected, regardless of qualifications or entitlement, for a job or government benefit because of affiliations or connections." |
| Clientelism | "An unequal system of exchanging resources and favours based on an exploitative relationship between a wealthier and/or more powerful 'patron' and a less wealthy and weaker 'client'." |
| Nepotism | "Form of favouritism based on acquaintances and familiar relationships whereby someone in an official position exploits his or her power and authority to provide a job or favour to a family member or friend, even though he or she may not be qualified or deserving." |
| Embezzlement | "When a person holding office in an institution, organisation or company dishonestly and illegally appropriates, uses or traffics the funds and goods they have been entrusted with for personal enrichment or other activities." |

In addition to the diversity between the acts commonly grouped as corruption, the literature demonstrates the diversity present *within* these sub-categories. The anthropological segment of the corruption studies literature in particular shows how acts routinely described as patronage incorporate diverse modes, patterns and languages of exchange. Far from idle, these variations are central to legitimacy of these acts in context (Bjorkman, 2014; De Sardan, 1999; Hasty, 2005). Whilst often seen

as the most quintessential manifestation of corruption, this diversity is also present in bribery; spanning what is exchanged, between whom, the context, and the legality (Ruud, 2000; Walton, 2013a; Werner, 2000). Despite decades of scholarly effort, this diversity has proven an insurmountable barrier to the establishment of a universal character of corruption.

In itself, the failure of decades of scholarly effort to establish a universal standard of corruption, and the roots of this in the range of acts commonly grouped under this term challenges claims of a single underlying reality to this phenomenon. The fact that this has emerged despite the dominance of narrow definitions of corruption across much of the literature strengthens this case, as this has necessarily limited the range of phenomena which scholars have sought to incorporate when establishing this underlying nature (Walton, 2014). This failure has resulted in the growth of constructivist, critical and anthropological analysis (De Graaf et al, 2010), the outcomes of which have led to further diversification in the range of phenomena linked to this term, and which have challenged the inevitability of this term being applied to what are otherwise regarded as quintessentially corrupt acts.

The growing body of non-positivist scholarship within the corruption studies literature also challenges the inevitably of specific attributes commonly ascribed to corruption. This includes the nature of corruption as a transaction or exchange (Walton, 2015), the nature of corruption as necessarily motived by individual or material gain (Larmour, 2012; Goodhand, 2008) and the extent to which corruption is necessarily exceptional or clandestine (Anjaria, 2011; Bjorkman, 2014; Charap & Harm, 1999). These challenges have emerged through a rebalancing of the focus in the corruption studies literature away from external expert assessments and towards affected populations, particularly in developing country contexts. Evidence of variation around the commonly held attributes of corruption place claims of a universal underlying essence of this concept in further doubt.

In addition to challenging the inevitability with which specific acts are deemed corrupt and the diverse attributes of corruption across contexts, what has emerged from these alternative approaches is evidence of the role of social norms in determining the nature of corruption. This is evident firstly in the roots of the term in English and other linguistic contexts, the study of which demonstrates the link between this concept and ideas of moral and religious degeneration, which are deeply normative (Walton, 2015; Genaux, 2004). As is evident in the frequency with which the language of corruption is

engaged as a means of condemnation, even without reference to specific 'corrupt' acts (Lambropoulou, 2016), corruption retains this moral rather than solely technical character.

The contingency of the nature of corruption on social norms and judgements in context is further demonstrated by evidence of changes in the nature of corruption over time. This variability has received particular attention in the context of post-Soviet transition, in which changes to the political and social context have been shown to drive changes in the usage of corruption-related terminology (Kajsiu, 2013; Smilov & Dorosiev, 2012). Such changes may be rapid – triggered by elite scandals – or be the result of incremental changes in the political and social context, such as changing attitudes towards public and private ownership (Andersson & Erlingsson, 2012). Rather than variation around a fixed reality, these changes are linked to fundamental change in the nature of corruption in these contexts.

In light of the failure of a protracted effort amongst scholars of corruption to establish a universal standard of corruption, evidence of the dependency of this phenomenon on changing social norms and judgements in context justify framing it in constructivist terms. This framing does not require that knowledge around corruption is located amongst those who possess and enact such norms, an epistemological question which I address in Section 3.3.3, but that the nature of corruption is dependent "on the interlocking beliefs, concepts or theories held by actors" (Wendt, 1999: 70). As I now discuss, works across a range of disciplinary approaches also establish the reciprocal effects of corruption back on those actors – the second necessary feature of constructivist ontology.

As I described in Section 3.4.1, the second component of constructivist ontology requires that social phenomena are encountered as objective, and outside of the domain of individual control, despite their roots in human agency. Because of this apparent objectivity, socially-constructed phenomena act back on those in the context in which they are produced. This reciprocal effect is bound in the power structures of the conflict (Hacking, 1999). The contemporary corruption studies literature demonstrates the applicability of this element of constructivist ontology to corruption in two respects; first in the value judgements applied to behaviours which fall under this concept across relatively empowered and disempowered populations, and second in solutions prescribed for corruption, particularly by international actors external to the context in question.

As with the contingency of corruption on norms and value judgements, the capacity of a given construction of corruption to act back on the society which produces it is most evident from studies of routine instances of corruption at the micro level. Studies of routine forms of corruption in local government from anthropologists, for example, demonstrate the contingency of the performance of bribery on the prevailing notion of corruption within a given context. This includes the extent to which offering a bribe is an acceptable or an insulting behaviour, given the past encounters between those involved, and the manner in which a bribe is exchanged (Granovetter, 2004; Gupta, 1995; Ruud, 2000). Whilst determined by social forces, from the perspective of individuals this is encountered as a fixed and external set of constraints on behaviour, outside of the realm of individual influence.

The effect of a constructed corruption concept back on the society in which it is produced is particularly evident in routine forms of corruption because of the role of power in social phenomena. Rather than a neutral aggregation of the values within a society, the construction of corruption can serve to legitimise the actions of the relatively empowered. The relative acceptability of bribes to those in public office versus the acceptability of using a relationship with a bureaucrat to achieve the same end is a common manifestation of this - with the network of contacts available to an elite commonly constructed as more legitimate than a payment (De Sousa, 2016; Ruud, 2000). This both further demonstrates the general effect of corruption back on the society in which it is produced, and the contingency of such effects of power on social forces.

The effect of corruption back on those who produce it, and the extent to which this reflects the relative power of those involved, is also evident from studies of the solutions prescribed for corruption. As has particularly been the focus of critical scholars, this is evident in the extent to which the prevailing understandings of corruption amongst international actors have influenced policy at the national level (Batory, 2010; De Maria, 2008; Gephart, 2012). This has been shown to occur regardless of the extent to which such understandings resonate with the national context in question, with corruption being principally constructed in the international system. As with the effects of the performance and acceptability of bribery at the micro level, corruption in this case is also encountered outside of the realm of individual agency, despite its constructed nature.

Despite the focus of much of the corruption studies literature on the development and implementation of universal standards of corruption, works across the array of disciplinary approaches in this literature align this concept with the two main ontological claims of constructivism – that this concept lies within the domain of human agency, and that despite this it has reciprocal effects back on the contexts in which it is produced. Because of this, I engage this constructivist notion of corruption across my analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal. In the section to follow, I move from ontological to epistemological questions, and through this the variant of the constructivism which I adopt throughout the analysis.

### 3.3.3 Epistemology: subjectivism and corruption

As I discussed in Section 3.4.1, the constructivist ontological position is not epistemologically prescriptive, and has been coupled with positions ranging from scientific realism to post-structuralism (Gergen, 1999; Hacking, 1999; Wendt, 1999). Building from this, in this section I discuss the subjectivist epistemological position which I adopt in my analysis. Here, I focus on the justifications for adopting this position in general, and discuss the practical implementation of these principles through constructivist grounded theory in Chapter Four. As with the ontological discussion above, I do so with reference to the theoretical and empirical developments in the corruption studies literature, but here also consider the requirements of research into conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal.

The subjectivist epistemological position locates knowledge in the interaction between the researcher and researched; influenced not only by the beliefs, actions, conditions and contexts facing the researched, but also those of the researcher (Schwandt, 2003). The product of research under this epistemology is interpretive theory, which "assumes emergent, multiple realities; indeterminacy; facts and values as inextricably linked; truth as provisional; and social life as processual" (Charmaz, 2014: 231). The validity of explanations and theory developed under this epistemology is dependent on the extent to which knowledge is grounded in the context and its reflexivity, as well as the transparency with which it is produced (Charmaz, 2016; Manning, 1997).

The application of subjectivist principles to the study of a socially constructed notion of corruption has four main implications: First, it focuses the effort to define the nature, causes and

dynamics of corruption to the set of contextually contingent, fluid and contested understandings of those subject to analysis (Tanzler et al, 2012). The aspects of context which are significant is inherently variable; spanning social marginalisation, poverty, gender, conflict-affectedness and political affiliations, which have a varying capacity to influence how corruption is understood, expressed and performed (De Graaf, 2007; De Graaf & Huberts, 2008; Smilov & Dorosiev, 2012). Subjectivism therefore requires an approach to context beyond that common under positivistic epistemology, including the extent to which experiences and understandings differ across and within social groups.

Second, the study of corruption under subjectivist epistemology requires a focus on the precise language in which corruption is described by those studied (Granovetter, 2004; De Graaf et al, 2010). In contrast to the homogenising tendency within much of the literature (Puppo, 2013: 110), this includes particular attention to variation in the terminologies applied to acts typically grouped as corruption by those involved. Such variations are significant in revealing the judgements associated with specific acts in context, and through this indicate a central element of how corruption is constructed. As I discuss in Chapter Four, the need to focus on the language with which corruption is described is amongst the core justifications for my engagement of constructivist grounded theory.

Third, researching corruption through subjectivist epistemology requires attention to the judgements associated with corrupt acts in context. As I argued in Section 3.3.2, ostensibly corrupt acts are far from necessarily associated with negative social judgements, and such judgements are central to the nature of corruption. Given that elements of the academic literature and much of the research emanating from NGOs has approached corruption inherently as a deficiency or departure from the ideal function of a system or society (Walton, 2013a), here subjectivist corruption research is particularly apart from the mainstream. As I discuss in Section 3.5, deviation from the mainstream is linked to largely misplaced critique of this position on the grounds of moral relativism.

Finally, the emphasis on reflexivity and attention to positionality under a subjectivist epistemology is particularly significant in the case of corruption. Even where it is widely practiced, corruption is often a topic of significant contestation between elements of a population, and one which is widely condemned in public. Rather than as a barrier to establishing an objective picture of corruption, this means that the outcomes of research must be seen in part as a product of the level of trust and the

nature of the relationship between researcher and participants. As I further discuss in Chapter Four, my status as a westerner and an outsider to the context studied in this thesis is a particularly significant aspect of this – both in the general level of trust required to discuss corruption, and in its influence on the judgements articulated by respondents.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, my analysis of the impacts of conflict on corruption in Nepal responds to several underexplored aspects of this relationship. This includes the lack of attention to corruption at the sub-national level, the dynamics of this relationship beyond the immediate conflict to post-conflict transition, and the potential for multiple concurrent dynamics of conflict-induced change. As a response to this, my focus is on experiences of corruption and conflict amongst the population of one conflict-affected city in Nepal, over a decade after the end to violence. A subjectivist epistemology complements this focus and level of analysis in a number of respects.

Most significantly, subjectivist epistemology limits the potentially substantial source of error which can result from the disconnect between the understanding of corruption by a researcher and its understanding by those involved in the research. As well as the lack of externally imposed conceptualisations of corruption, this reflects the emphasis subjectivism places on the language and judgements of the participants, and the production of knowledge through the interaction of researcher and participants. As I further discuss in Chapter Four, these considerations are particularly significant for this thesis because my background is far removed from the cultural and social context of my analysis.

The focus on contestation over the nature and effects of corruption under subjectivism is also specifically beneficial to analysis of the interaction between corruption and armed conflict. Rather than limiting analysis to the extent to which conflict may affect the prevalence of a specific manifestation of corruption, such as public sector bribery, research under this epistemological position facilitates a focus on changes in the nature of corruption itself. Given the limits to the theoretical landscape on this conflict-induced change in corruption which I set out in Chapter Two, this aspect of the subjectivist position is particularly advantageous to the objectives of this thesis. I discuss the specifics of my approach to theoretical development around this relationship through grounded theory in Chapter Four.

Whilst it is not the purpose of this thesis to produce specific recommendations for anti-corruption actors, examining corruption in its social and contextual complexity also responds to some

of the critiques raised against NGO and governmental anti-corruption policy in developing countries. In seeking to explain why western-led action against corruption has largely failed in its stated aims, critics have highlighted the pivotal role of failures to understand the functions that corruption can serve, and the diversity of this concept across and within country contexts (Ivanov, 2007; Persson et al, 2010). The focus under subjectivism on the contested understandings and judgements surrounding corruption avoids many of the pitfalls commonly associated with policy-based analysis and prescriptions for the 'problem' of corruption in contexts such as Nepal.

Engaging a constructivist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology to examine conflict-induced change in corruption is therefore a significant departure from much of the mainstream treatment of this concept. However, it is one which is borne out of reflections on the broad nature of this concept, and the specific demands of research into conflict-induced change in corruption at the sub-national level in Nepal. In Chapter Four, I discuss the practical implementation of this theoretical position through the use of constructivist grounded theory. Prior to this, however, I close this chapter by responding to the critiques often associated with these theoretical positions.

### 3.4 Relativism, and Other Critiques

The focus of constructivist ontology and subjectivist epistemology on the complex and competing understandings of an affected population is central to the justifications for this approach which I set out above. However, relating the existence and knowledge of corruption purely to the population studied exposes this approach to claims of relativism. This critique is commonly expressed through concerns that abandoning appeals to objectivity over corruption diminishes the ability to challenge its harms in the 'real world' and to establish solutions (Kurer, 2005; Rothstein & Torsello, 2013: 3). Here, I argue that this theoretical position neither requires that the harms of corruption are discarded and nor that it requires the rationales of those involved to be uncritically accepted.

Considering these two points in turn, whilst the rejection of any objective character of corruption is necessary under constructivism, it does not follow from this that the conclusions of the mass of analysis which claim universal definition be rejected. Rather, it is necessary only that such definitions are viewed as one of many potential manifestations of corruption (Tanzler et al, 2012). It follows from

this that the conclusions reached are viewed through the lens of the approach to corruption imposed, not that they be discarded. Constructivist scholars have, for example, linked the imposition of definitions of corruption based on the public-private divide to the focus of anti-corruption policy on the public sector, but far from frame public sector corruption as benign (Di Puppo, 2014; Makowski, 2016),

The lack of appeals to objectivity also does not require uncritical dependence on the justifications for corruption provided by those studied. As with critiques of anthropological analysis of corruption, it is argued that constructivism leads scholars to romanticise corruption as a traditional and 'cultural' form of exchange, whilst ignoring the harms caused (Larmour, 2012: 119; Ivanov, 2007: 41). This critique is particularly applicable to the analysis patronage, rooted in culture and traditional practice, but which are argued in much of the corruption studies literature to undermine the political independence of already disempowered populations. These harms, it is argued, are lost in the focus of the internal legitimacy of these networks (De Graaf et al, 2010; Dion, 2010).

Concern over moral relativism in analysis of corruption in context is less easily dismissed than those based on the approach to the harms of corruption in the literature above. Indeed, there are clear risks in a naïve acceptance of the rationale for engagement in what might conventionally be regarded as corrupt acts under the definitions common in the literature. The lack of an 'objective' standard to counter this with places the theoretical approach set out in this chapter at comparatively more risk of this than more prescriptive approaches. Alongside simple convention, this critique in part explains the ongoing dominance of objective standards in informing anti-corruption policy (Gephart, 2012).

The mitigation of the risk of relativism when examining the justifications provided by those involved in corruption is a focus on the power dynamics and flow of benefits which surround it. Rather than an inherent flaw of this approach, research under constructivist epistemology and subjectivist ontology is well suited to unpacking how dominant notions of corruption may favour the acts perpetrated by an elite, whilst delegitimising those practiced by marginalised populations. Indeed, as I discussed in Section 3.3.1, central to constructivist ontology is the extent to which social concepts are seen to act back on the context in which they are produced. Implemented properly, the constructivist approach thus far from entails naïve acceptance of rationalisations of corruption.

Whilst dependent on implementation through a rigorous research design, the critique that researching corruption under a constructivist ontology and subjectivist epistemology is flawed due to relativism is not well founded. Indeed, rather than undermining efforts to combat the harms of corruption, this approach is well suited to the identification of harmful and problematic forms of corruption, based on the experiences of those in contexts such as Nepal. Whilst this thesis does not seek to establish specific policy recommendations for anti-corruption in this context, this is nonetheless significant for the rigor of findings produced under this approach.

### 3.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have set out the theoretical approach to the nature of corruption and the nature of knowledge around corruption implemented throughout this thesis. This approach is based first on a constructivist ontology, under which corruption is produced by and acts back upon human actors, and second on subjectivist epistemology, in which knowledge is contested, multiple, and based on the interaction of researcher and participant. As I discuss in Chapter Four, I implement these theoretical principles through a research design and methodology based in constructivist grounded theory.

The theoretical approach presented in this chapter is a substantial departure from how corruption has conventionally been approached by academics. However, as I have argued, it is one which is rooted in the theoretical and empirical debates around this concept, and in particular the seemingly intractable challenges faced by those who propose universal standards of corruption. The constructivist-subjectivist alternative does not require that these common standards are discarded, but rather that they are treated as one of a potential array of understandings which may exist in a given context. This position, along with critical and anthropological approaches, is increasingly influential in the literature.

In addition to a grounding in the theoretical debates on corruption in general, the justifications which I have presented for this approach have also drawn on the specific demands of researching corruption at the sub-national level. This included the management of the scope for difference between the understanding of the researcher and that of participants, embracing the possibility of contestation, and through this the possibility of developing analytical links between corruption and conflict. Crucially,

this facilitates the examination of how conflict has influenced the nature of corruption amongst, as well as the prevalence of specific manifestations of corruption, as is more common in the literature.

In closing this chapter, I discussed the critique of relativism often levied at research which departs from objective standards of social phenomena. Whilst unlikely to satisfy critiques emanating from economic positivism, I did so by returning to the second ontological condition of constructivism, the effects of social concepts back on the society in which they are produced. Rather than the naïve acceptance of the rationalisations of corruption for those involved, the focus is on the impacts of dominant notions of this concept, including the capacity to legitimise abuses by elites. Indeed, a number of works by constructivist scholars have demonstrated the link between dominant notions of corruption and the forms of corruption targeted in international and national anti-corruption policy. This approach is thus sensitive to questions of power and harm emanating from corruption.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the implementation of constructivist ontology and subjectivist epistemology through constructivist grounded theory. In addition to the compatibility of this approach with the theoretical position I have set out in this chapter, in doing so I focus on the practicalities of researching conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal. In addition to the effects of these theoretical positions on the research design and analysis to follow, I also return to the debates raised in this chapter in the discussion in Chapter Nine. This focuses on the merits of the constructivist approach in assessing the sub-national dynamics of corruption, and its interaction with conflict.

# Chapter Four: Methodology

## 4.1 Introduction

In Chapter Three, I set out the constructivist approach to corruption. This approach invokes a relativist ontology, in which corruption is a contested, multiple, and socially determined phenomena, variable across time and context. I combine this with a subjectivist epistemology, under which knowledge of corruption is expressed in the inter-subjective engagement of a researcher and the experiences and perceptions of those studied. Drawing on these theoretical positions, in this chapter I set out the research design and analytical approach underlying the analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal. I do so in the following four parts.

In Section 4.2, I link the discussions from Chapter Three with the principles of constructivist grounded theory, which provides the overarching empirical approach in this thesis. In Section 4.3, I then describe how I implemented this approach through the research design, including the factors which influenced case selection, the logic underlying the two-stage fieldwork process, and the methods I employed. In Section 4.4, I then discuss the coding processes by which I analysed the responses gathered, and how I developed a picture of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi from this. Finally, in Section 4.5 I link these elements to structure of the empirical chapters which follow.

## 4.2 The Constructivist Grounded Theory approach

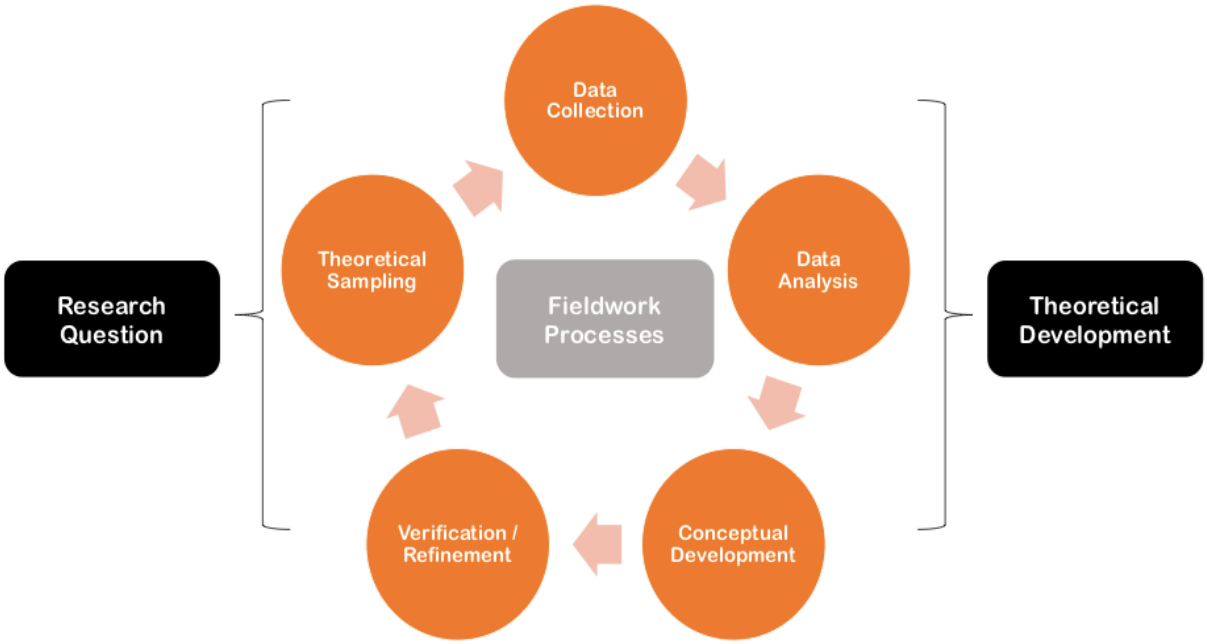
The subjectivist epistemological position which I discussed in Chapter Three entails an inductive logic of research. More than the absence of hypotheses, inductive research is defined by the privileging of findings from the field, and moving from these findings to conceptual and theoretical development (Creswell, 2013: 25; Ormston et al, 2014: 6). Whilst far from the sole realisation of these principles, they are embodied by, and often synonymous with, grounded theory (Bryman, 2016: 572).

First proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967: 10), grounded theory developed as a reaction to what these sociologists saw as the confinement of their field to the verification of grand theory. This did not entail a rejection of these theories, but rather a rejection of their finality, replaced with an emphasis on theory building through empirical analysis (Bryant, 2017: 66; Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 28). This movement also reflected a desire to introduce systematic procedures for theory generation into

qualitative research (Urquhart, 2013: 6), in an attempt "to forestall the opportunistic use of theories that have dubious fit and working capacity" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 4). Subsequent methodological works (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; 1992; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) have seen these imperatives evolve into the following four defining principles:

First, the object of grounded theory is theory building, in which relationships between phenomena are abstracted from the context in which they are developed. Second, grounded theory is inductive, in that it seeks to minimise the influence of theoretical constructs external to the data, engaging these only when the emergent theory has developed. Third, grounded theory entails the simultaneous collection and analysis of data, with the analytical process guiding the extent and nature of further data collection, known as theoretical sampling. Finally, the analytical process is one of constant comparison, in which "every slice of data is compared with all existing concepts and constructs" (Urquhart, 2013: 16), and continually refined through this process. The structure of research defined by these principles is summarised in Diagram 4.2A.

Diagram 4.2A – Grounded theory research process



While sharing these principles in common, contemporary grounded theory spans a diverse range of approaches. In accounting for this diversity, methodological works commonly devote much attention to the division between Glaser and Strauss which emerged following Strauss and Corbin's (1990) work. Here, Glaser (1992) saw Strauss as channelling analysis into rigid coding paradigms which, in his perspective, violated the principle of emergence (Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Kelle, 2007). However, over time this division has blurred, with the analytical paradigms at the heart of their divergence reduced to one of many options in Corbin and Strauss' (2008) later work.[4] This division thus far from defines contemporary grounded theory to the extent that the initial gulf between its founders implies.

Where debate remains, however, is over the extent to which grounded theory contains an inherent philosophy. Corbin and Strauss' (1990; 1998) works in particular have fuelled this debate by invoking elements of both positivism and constructivism as standards of the quality of emergent theory (Mills et al, 2006). This, along with the contrasting backgrounds of Glaser and Strauss prior to their 1967 work (Annells, 1996), has led to the proliferation of philosophically diverse strands of grounded theory, and competing claims over the philosophical origins of the approach (Apramian et al, 2017; Bryant, 2002; Charmaz, 2014a; 2017; Ralph et al, 2015). Reflecting the approach to corruption I set out in Chapter Three, of these I engage the constructivist branch of grounded theory.

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) is distinct from the mainstream associated with Glaser[5] and Strauss in three key respects. First, CGT treats meaning within interview data as co-constructed between participant and respondents and methods in general as non-neutral (Charmaz, 2017: 6; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). Second, CGT considers the coding and theory development process as a further process of meaning construction, rather than in the neutral terms of emergence (Charmaz, 2014: 239). Finally, drawing on symbolic interactionism (Charmaz, 2014: 262), CGT treats language itself as a route to understanding values and subjectivities (Charmaz, 2006: 46; 2014a: 1078). CGT is thus the product of the four general principles of grounded theory I outlined above, but adds to these the imperatives to be reflexive, aware of positionality, and sensitive to linguistics (Charmaz, 2000; 2017).

[4] See Urquhart, 2013: 177 on the changing emphasis in works by Corbin & Strauss, and Bruscaglioni (2016) on the common logical underpinnings between these approaches.
[5] Glaser (2002) published a rejection of Charmaz's (2000) first work on CGT.

In addition to its foundation in the constructivist principles I discussed in Chapter Three, I use CGT as the basis of my research design for three reasons: First, the emphasis on theory building in grounded theory in general is well suited to the contribution I intend in this thesis, given the limits of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption I set out in Chapter Two. Methodological works on grounded theory have devoted significant attention to theoretical development, and offer well-defined procedures for doing so (Linden, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 2015: 187). CGT is particularly well suited to theory building in a manner which is sensitive to the linguistic dimensions of corruption analysis at the sub-national level, including developing a contextualised definition of corruption itself.

Second, the nature of sampling under CGT is well suited to my focus on corruption and conflict, both of which are potentially contested and controversial, even within a single city context. CGT allows sampling to be continually adapted based on emerging aspects of the phenomenon in question, by the availability of data in the field, and by the developing relationship between researcher and population (Callery & Whittemore, 2001; Charmaz, 2014: 70). Given the challenges inherent in researching corruption and conflict and broader considerations of research in Nepal which I discuss in Section 4.3, the ability to adapt around limits to access are particularly advantageous.

Finally, the analytical transparency of grounded theory enhances the rigour of the research process and strengthens the resultant theoretical contributions. This transparency reflects the well-developed theoretical sampling and coding processes within CGT, which have been refined across methodological works (Charmaz, 2006: 42; 2014: 109; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). As I discuss in Section 4.4, the use of memos in theoretical development and the nature of theoretical sampling generate a written record of decisions throughout the research process, allowing outcomes to be justified with reference to specific elements of these processes. This analytical transparency mitigates a common criticism of inductive and of constructivist research in general that findings reflect a partial representation of the information collected (Tucker, 2016; Wasserman et al, 2009).

CGT is thus compatible with the nature of corruption which I discussed in Chapter Three, with the need for theoretical development on conflict-induced change in corruption which I set out in Chapter Two, and is appropriate for the sensitivity of these subject matters. In the section to follow, I discuss the practical implementation of this approach and the nature of my research design.

## 4.3 Research design

Here I set out my research question, and then discuss case selection, research design, ethics and the methodological decisions which guided my fieldwork. In closing this section, I discuss the modifications I made to this design because of the challenges which emerged whilst I was in the field, and reflect on the implications of these modifications. I return to these limits and provide recommendations as to how they can be addressed through further research in Chapter Ten.

### 4.3.1 Research question

The research design I set out in this section addresses the questions below. Consistent with the treatment of prior knowledge in CGT (Charmaz, 2014: 31; Hernandez, 2010: 155), this question is intentionally broad, with the many potential aspects of conflict-induced change in corruption and the theories in the literature treated as subjects for research, rather than specified in the research question.

*Research question*

"How has armed conflict in Nepal affected corruption at the sub-national level and in the long term?"

As I set out in Chapter Three, I approach corruption through a constructivist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology. This approach means that this research question does not relate to the impacts of conflict on specific empirically observable manifestations of corruption such as bribery or budgetary abuses. Rather, it explores how corruption is perceived by an affected population. The impacts of conflict on corruption to which this question relates are therefore those which are evident in the perceptions, experiences and discourse of those studied. Consistent with the discussions of 'objective' definitions of corruption in Section 3.2, I do not attempt to define an objective reality of corruption to which these perceptions may be compared, and instead define corruption purely as a social construction. The implications and critiques of this approach and my responses to these are discussed in Section 3.4.

4.3.2 Case selection

As I discussed in Chapter Two, the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption has principally developed through studies of contexts of ongoing instability, of international intervention, and of identity-based conflict. My focus on Nepal reflects a desire to study this relationship in conditions different from those dominant in the literature. However, given that the contribution I intend for this thesis is also rooted in my focus on the local level, this is only one guiding element of case selection. To guide case selection within Nepal, I engaged a revelatory logic - a common feature of grounded theory studies (Urquhart, 2013: 61). This logic maximises the prospect for theory building by focusing on a case in which the phenomena in question are concentrated. Based on this logic, I selected Ghorahi, a city in Dang District which, as I set out below, I determined was heavily exposed to the impacts of the conflict and corruption. A map and population summary statistics for Ghorahi are given overleaf.

Map 4.3A – Map of Dang District highlighting Ghorahi (Adapted from UNOCHA, 2008)

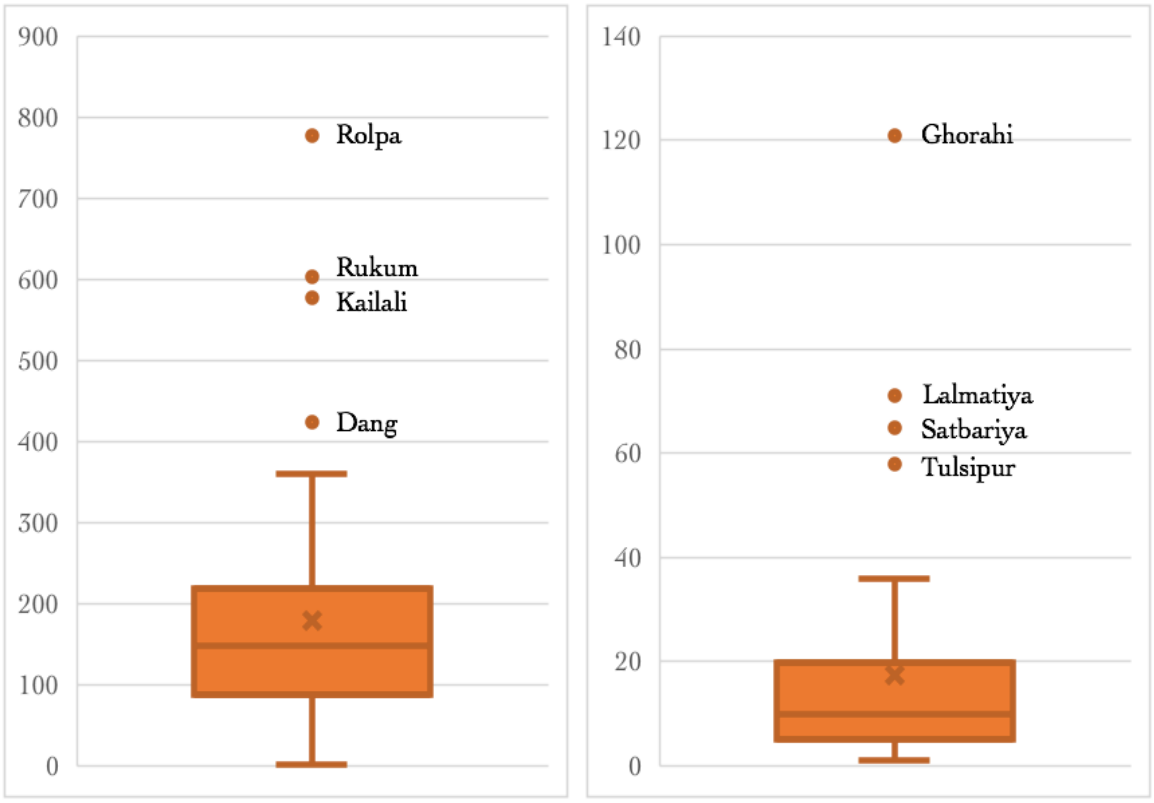
Table 4.3A – Population and development statistics for Ghorahi (Adapted from Nepal Map, 2017)[6]

| | Ghorahi | Dang District | Nepal |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total population | 62,928 | 552,583 | 26,494,504 |
| Average household size | 4.06 | 4.75 | 4.89 |
| Literacy rate[7] | 81% | 70% | 66% |
| Proportion with education at SLC[8] level or above | 36% | 20% | 30% |
| Proportion living in cement constructed housing | 49% | 19% | 29% |
| Proportion with a piped drinking water source | 61% | 41% | 48% |

Prior to entering the field, I identified Ghorahi as a revelatory case for a study of conflict-induced change in corruption based on the following four factors: First, my analysis of the Transitional Justice Reference Archive (TJRA) of civilian and combatant deaths during the 1996-2006 conflict highlighted Dang District in general and Ghorahi specifically as amongst the most heavily conflict-affected areas of Nepal (OHCHR, 2015).[9] As shown in Graphs 4.3A below, Dang District suffered the fourth highest level of killings during the conflict recorded by the TJRA, with Ghorahi the single most affected area within this District. Along with a number of areas in Rolpa, Rukum and Kailali, I highlighted Ghorahi as an area in which the impacts of the conflict were acute.

[6] Based on census and development data gathered in 2011
[7] Proportion of those aged 5 and above who can read and write
[8] School Leaving Certificate – completed at the end of secondary education
[9] The TJRA also includes reported disappearances. However, the significant gaps in these data preclude the possibility of reliable comparisons.

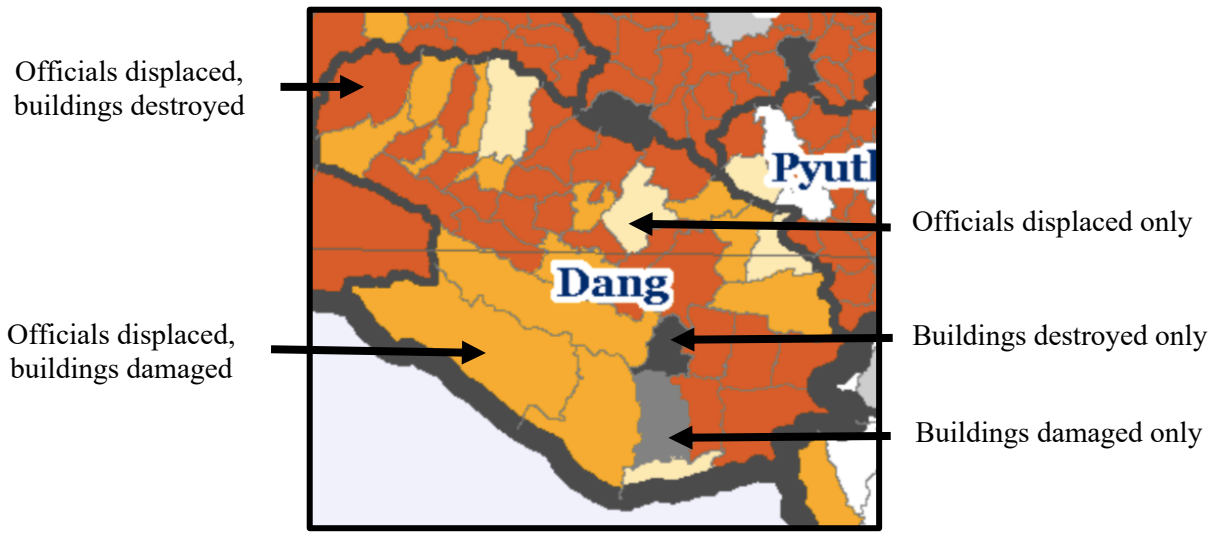
Graph 4.3A – Distribution of conflict-era killings recorded in the TJRA by District (left) and VDC within Dang District (right) (Adapted from OHCHR, 2015)




Second, amongst the number of heavily conflict-affected areas highlighted through analysis of the TJRA, I selected Ghorahi because it was the site of the November 2001 PLA offensive. This was the first major offensive by the PLA against fortified Royal Nepal Army (RNA) positions (Pasang, 2008: 113), the relative success of which led to the transformation of attitudes in Kathmandu towards the Maoist threat[10] (Mehta & Lawoti, 2010). Far from isolated to urban Ghorahi, secondary data shown in Map 4.3B also indicated that the PLA destroyed the majority of local government infrastructure in the rural areas surrounding the city during the conflict. Together, this shows that Ghorahi was exposed to a sustained presence of the RNA, a major PLA attack, and close proximity to areas under Maoist control.

[10] Further detail of this attack and its impact on the conflict as a whole is given in Chapter Five.

Map 4.3B - Impact of the 1996-2006 conflict on local government services in Dang District (Adapted from UNOCHA, 2007)




Third, I selected Ghorahi because it has seen an influx of former PLA combatants in the post-conflict period (Robins & Bhandari, 2016). This is relevant not only because of the significance of PLA demobilisation within Nepal's transition from conflict (Adhikari, 2012; Wagle & Jackson, 2015; Subedi, 2014a), but also because of the connection that the Nepali media have drawn between PLA demobilisation and corruption.[11] Specifically, during the period of 2016 in which I was making this case selection decision, the Nepali media widely alleged that funds which had been intended to support PLA combatants in cantonment had been abused by the Maoist leadership. This combination indicated that Ghorahi was directly exposed to a key element of the post-2006 transition, and through this to a corruption scandal of national significance.

Finally, I selected Ghorahi because of the urban nature of its population, and the proximity to institutions of local government that this implied. Based on a review of the limited literature on corruption in Nepal from academic (Kondos, 1987; Sharma, 2012; Sharma & Bhattarai, 2013; Subedi, 2006; 2014 Truex, 2011), NGO (ADB, 2013; Dix, 2011; Bhattarai, 2010; Koirala et al, 2015; Transparency International Nepal, 2013; 2013a; Wills, 2014) and government sources (CIAA, 2014; DFID, 2014; ICAI, 2014), the results of which are summarised in Appendix 4.1, I determined that an

[11] See, for example, Himalayan Times (2016), Manandhar (2012); Pradhan (2016); Sharma (2016). For further background to this issue see Subedi (2014) and Timalsina (2016).

urban population would be more exposed to local government, locally-led development projects, political parties, and other sites linked to manifestations of corruption. Whilst the level of local insight which can be taken from this under a social constructivist approach is limited, this acted as a further proxy for the general level corruption to which the population might be exposed.

Through the combination of these secondary data sources and published works, I identified Ghorahi as an area in which the effects of both conflict and corruption were likely to be acute, to the limited extent that this could be assessed externally. As I now discuss, the research design which followed from this was influenced by the need to verify the factors which had driven these decisions, something which could only be achieved through primary research.

#### 4.3.3 Two phase research design

I conducted my fieldwork through a two-stage research design: First, over five weeks in February and March 2017, I sought to verify and expand upon the four factors above which influenced my selection of Ghorahi. The interviews I conducted in this phase focused on the extent to which the impacts of the conflict and the level of exposure to corruption indicated by the literature and TJRA resonated with the local experience. I also used Stage One to assess the practicalities researching corruption and conflict in Ghorahi, including through extensive discussions with my translator and facilitator LD.[12] Following this, in Stage Two I used interviews to explore the depth and interaction of experiences of corruption and conflict. In this section, I detail my research design under the headings of positionality, access and entry, theoretical sampling, methods, and ethics and risk management. Following this, I also set out the adaptions which I made to my research design whilst in the field.

##### *Positionality*

Attention to positionality within CGT links aspects of identity including "social class, gender, race, age, health, and professional statuses" (Charmaz, 2017: 6) to the process and outcomes of fieldwork. This is not with the intention of removing biases, but rather to acknowledge the role of these

[12] I have decided to keep my translators anonymous throughout this thesis. I discuss this further under 'Ethics and Risk Management' below.

factors in the construction of responses and development of theory (Cousin, 2010; Srivastava, 2006). Here I introduce aspects of positionality for myself and LD[13] which were pertinent to my fieldwork, and discuss the influence of time on the responses. I use the elements of this in discussing each subsequent element of my research design.

First and foremost, my positionality in Ghorahi was influenced by being a white westerner, and therefore a visible 'outsider'.[14] Across my experiences in Nepal during and prior to that described here, this came with two associations: first that of a tourist, often with an assumption of naivety, and second that of an international NGO worker. Given that Ghorahi receives almost no western tourists,[15] this second assumption was more significant to my positionality than the first, and was typically expressed through questions about the 'project' or organisation I was assumed to be representing. The negative connotations associated with this assumption somewhat balanced my experience of the privilege given to 'guests'.[16] As I discuss below, this was an aspect of positionality I sought to manage in introducing myself to respondents.

In addition to my ethnic and national identity, being male and unmarried was also a significant aspect of my positionality for my fieldwork. Despite improvements in access to education and employment amongst women since the 1990s (ADB, 2010), Nepal remains a deeply patriarchal society in which traditional family structures are seen as fundamental to social order. As I discuss under Access & Entry below, my positionality in such a context influenced the extent and depth of engagement with women possible, but was also significant to my everyday encounters during fieldwork in Ghorahi. My marital status was frequently questioned in discussions with respondents, the contrast of which to the norms for men of my age in Nepal reinforced my status as an outsider.

In contrast to myself, LD is a long-term resident of Ghorahi and comes from a family with roots in Dang District over several generations. The combination of this background and LD's work in the

[13] The identity of those supporting fieldwork is a significant by often unacknowledged dimension of positionality - see Caretta, 2015

[14] The insider / outsider dichotomy has rightly been critiqued, and is used here in acknowledgement of the multiple aspects of positionality amongst different groups. See Merriam et al (2001) and Wiederhold (2015).

[15] This reflects my conversations with LD and my observations

[16] Deference to guests in general relates to principles in Hinduism, but given the extent to which Nepal's economy is dependent on tourism, is particularly applied to those from western countries.

media means he is a highly recognisable figure amongst much of the media, political, and local government elite in the city, many of whom I sought to interview. Whilst not wealthy in comparison to many of those within this elite, the combination of LD's senior position within the media, personal connections with elites and his 'high' caste identity grants him an elite social status in Ghorahi. This is only qualified by LD's visible youth, in a context broadly deferential to elders.

In addition to its contribution to an elite positionality, LD's work as a journalist is significant to his political positionality. In Ghorahi, as elsewhere in Nepal, political affiliation is widespread for both organisations and individuals, however LD is a relatively neutral figure. This was expressed through LD's close and open social connections with representatives from a number of political parties, and in the frequency with which respondents and the wider population described LD as politically unaffiliated. LD's relatively elite positionality is thus not qualified by the political insider status which commonly follows in Ghorahi. How this and other dimensions of our positionalities influenced the conduct and outcomes of the fieldwork is considered throughout the elements of the design discussed below.

Finally, the role of time must also be considered as an aspect of positionality. Most directly, the interviews I conducted in Ghorahi took place over two periods in 2017, and must be seen in the context in which they were produced. However, the interviews relate not only to the respondents' perceptions of corruption in 2017, but also to their perceptions over time. Indeed, central to the purpose of this thesis is linking experiences of the conflict - over a decade previous to the interviews - with the contemporary construction of corruption. I acknowledged in doing so that, as with perceptions of contemporary events, the respondents' memories of the past are incomplete, influenced by identity, and subject to biases in recall. They are also the product of the level of trust between researcher and respondent, linked to the factors set out in this section. The contents of the interviews I conducted, and the explanations I draw from them, should therefore be seen as reflecting socially constructed perceptions of past and present conditions.

*Access and entry*

I approached access and entry in Ghorahi in relational and dynamic terms. Considering these issues in this manner acknowledges the agency of the populations subject to research and the role of

positionality in the level and depth of engagement that emerges (Srivastava, 2006). Here I discuss these considerations with reference to overlapping processes of negotiating primary and secondary access. Primary access relates to Ghorahi in general, and secondary to the building of relations to facilitate interviews within this city context (Cuncliffe & Alcadipani, 2016).

With regard to primary access, being a visible outsider with a focus on conflict and corruption necessitated that I consider a number of gatekeeper groups. My assessments before entering the field and discussions with LD once in Ghorahi during Stage One led us to identify the groups listed in Table 4.2. As is commonly the case (Reeves, 2010), these gatekeepers consisted of those with formal authority to limit the fieldwork, and those with the informal capacity to aid or hinder its progress.

Table 4.3A – Gatekeepers in Ghorahi

| Gatekeeper Group | Nature of potential influence on my research |
|---|---|
| District police leaders | Legal authority across the city, control over access to police personnel at all levels and a high degree of informal influence over former police personnel active during the conflict. |
| District political party leaders | Control over access to political party cadres, and a significant informal influence on the media, NGOs, civil society organisations and much of the business community. |
| District government officials | Legal and political authority across the city, control over access to serving local government bureaucrats and informal influence on political party representatives. |
| NGOs & civil society leaders | Knowledge of marginalised populations such as landless people, conflict victims and indigenous communities, and commonly linked to current political party representatives. |
| Nepal Army officers | Legal authority and control over access to current and former security force personnel. |
| Ex-PLA network leaders | Knowledge of former PLA combatants now resident in Ghorahi, internal knowledge on the PLA during the conflict, and links to the Maoist party. |

My approach to these gatekeeper groups centred on informing and, if possible, involving those I identified in my fieldwork. To do so, in Stage One LD contacted those in the roles listed in Table 4.2 to request interviews. This initial contact was used as way of acknowledging the status of these elites and to counter any negative assumptions or rumour which may have been present. Channelling these

requests through LD was also used as means of legitimising my presence. This was largely successful, with none of the groups identified proving obstructive, and several aiding the process by providing contacts to others in their networks, and by agreeing to be involved in interviews in Stage Two.

In addition to managing gatekeepers, I also negotiated primary access by familiarising myself with the city and its population. Being resident in the central bazaar area of the city throughout the fieldwork, and regular informal conversations in Nepali with those encountered aided in the normalisation of my presence. Indeed, many of those I interviewed across both stages of fieldwork were aware of my presence in the city prior to being asked to participate. This regular and public presence, along with my association with LD, diminished the 'extractive' or self-regarding character often applied to those working for international NGO amongst many of those in Ghorahi.

For secondary access, LD's positionality was central. As a journalist, LD had a professional relationship with many of those I interviewed, including some of the gatekeepers discussed previously. These relations helped to mitigate the significant trust threshold for interviews around corruption and conflict which would otherwise have proven obstructive. LD's role as a journalist also served to normalise the request for interviews and diminished the sense of political motive which may have otherwise been associated with such a request. As I discuss throughout the empirical analysis in Chapters Five to Eight these aspects of LD's positionality did have some unforeseen impacts on the respondents, however from the perspective of access this was a vital and positive influence.

In addition to LD's role in secondary access, my positionality was also significant. Given the association of visible outsiders to international NGOs, my introduction to respondents focused first on the academic nature of my research, second on the provision for anonymity, and third on my status as a research student. Emphasising these aspects of my identity, along with my presence in the city discussed above, mitigated concerns over the motivation for the research and the negative connotations often associated with international organisations. My decision to emphasise 'student' and 'researcher' identities reflects the particular status attached to university education amongst the respondents and wider population, which alongside LD's positionality was central to secondary access.

*Theoretical sampling*

Across both stages of fieldwork, I selected participants via theoretical sampling – the process of directing sampling decisions with reference to emergent themes (Urquhart, 2013: 63). This required the simultaneous collection and analysis of responses throughout my fieldwork, and was also informed by a review of sampling decisions after Stage One. As well as being central to the emergence of theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:45), I engaged theoretical sampling to respond to the practical challenge linked to the social constructivist approach I set out in Chapter Three; namely that, under this approach, knowledge of corruption is diffuse and variable across social groups and is therefore abundant compared with the limited resources available to engage with it. Theoretical sampling aids with this by allowing sampling decisions to develop as themes are constructed from this abundance, rather than requiring a prior researcher-driven decision (Butler et al, 2018).

In addition to its practicality, theoretical sampling is also advantageous because of the transparency it introduces to an iterative-inductive research. In particular, the requirement that sampling decisions be directed by the emergent themes of ongoing analysis creates an imperative to record these themes throughout fieldwork. Following the conventions of CGT, I recorded these decisions using theoretical memos (Charmaz, 2006: 112), an example of which is given in Appendix 4.2. Together, these memos provide a record of the sampling decisions I took throughout my fieldwork. The outcomes of theoretical sampling decisions in Stage One are summarised in Table 4.3B, in which I detail the areas of knowledge of conflict and corruption which motivated my engagement with each of the groups listed.

Table 4.3B – Theoretical sampling in Stage One

| Group | # | Logic (Experience of Conflict) | Logic (Experience of Corruption) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Journalists | 10 | Able to provide an analytical overview of the conflict and recovery across Dang District and nationally. | Able to provide an analytical view of current corruption issues, and the patterns of corruption over time. |
| Former PLA | 5 | Experience of PLA activities in Dang District, of the resettlement process and of Maoist political transformation. | Knowledge of attitudes in the Maoist party towards corruption during the conflict and subsequently. |
| Civil Society & NGOs | 3 | Involved in peace advocacy, with a direct connection to victims, including marginalised groups. | Often cast in a preventative role, holding local government and political parties to account for corruption. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Landlord | 1 | Commonly targeted by the PLA; and experienced the post-conflict land return and reallocation processes. | Close contact with complex local government processes in land registration and return. |
| Peace Committee | 2 | Officially responsible for the victim registration and compensation process after the conflict in Dang. | Part of local government, and responsible for the verification of beneficiaries of government funds. |
| Political Parties | 2 | Commonly targeted by the PLA, and directly involved in the local political transition after the conflict. | Widely identified as a major source of corruption, self-identified as holding local government accountable. |
| District Police | 1 | Internal knowledge of the police and security force approaches during the conflict and recovery. | Part of the state apparatus of corruption prevention. |
| Rural community leaders | 11 | Knowledge of the PLA and security forces in rural areas during the conflict, to compare to urban experiences. | Knowledge of exposure to corruption amongst historically marginalised ethnic and linguistic groups. |
| Business Leaders | 1 | Knowledge of the effects of conflict on the local economy, and the local economic recovery in the transition. | Often seen as the victims of corruption in local government, but also as the perpetrators of black markets. |

The focus of Stage One on the background to conflict and corruption led me to engage with respondents with a direct connection to these issues through their occupation and activism. Reflecting this and the ease of access to this group via LD, I began with journalists, and branched out to other professional groups based on the outcomes of these interviews. For example, the indication from interviews 1(07)-1(09) that Ghorahi had an active former-PLA network and that civil society groups had engaged with local government on corruption led me to engage with representatives from these networks. The respondent group from Stage One is thus principally comprised of elite perspectives.

As shown in Table 4.3C, the respondent group which emerged through theoretical sampling in Stage Two shares many of the characteristics and logics of those from Stage One, but with the addition of experiences from shopkeepers and small business operators in Ghorahi bazaar. I engaged with this group to gain insight into the everyday experiences of these issues amongst an unconnected 'ordinary' population. This nuanced the information gained from those with direct occupational connections to conflict and corruption issues. The relatively large number of interviews I conducted amongst this respondent group reflects both their absence from Stage One, and the depth and complexity of additional issues raised during initial interviews with this group.

Table 4.3C – Theoretical sampling in Stage Two

| Group | # | Logic (Experience of Conflict) | Logic (Experience of Corruption) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Journalists | 8 | Targeted by the security forces and the PLA, and closely connected to the changing political system. | Knowledge of the language used around corruption, and engaged in reporting on this issue. |
| Political Parties | 8 | Commonly targeted by the PLA, and directly involved in the local political transition after the conflict. | Widely identified as a major source of corruption, self-identified as holding local government accountable. |
| Civil Society & NGOs | 8 | Representing communities particularly impacted by the conflict, such as the disabled and conflict victims. | Self-identification as part of local efforts to control corruption by advocating on behalf of victims. |
| Legal Professionals | 3 | Internal perspective on land return processes, and on the changing structures of local government. | Internal perspective on legal processes to control corruption, and on corruption in the police and legal system. |
| District Coordination Committee | 1 | Part of the new structure of local government which emerged through reforms in the centre. | Part of local government with a formal monitoring role over development projects across Dang. |
| Ethnic Communities | 5 | Representing communities particularly impacted by the conflict, such as the Tharu and Magar communities. | Self-identification as part of local efforts to control corruption by empowering minority communities. |
| Shopkeepers & Small Business | 22 | Everyday experience of the conflict period and transition, particularly Maoist demands for donations. | Everyday experience of corruption, without a direct 'anti-corruption' role. |
| Business leaders | 4 | Able to provide a top-level perspective on the impacts of conflict on business and the local economy. | Self-identification as part of local efforts to control corruption through advocacy on behalf of business. |
| Big business & industry | 5 | Indications of differing levels of exposure to PLA targeting than small business respondents. | Exposed to higher levels of government than small business respondents. |
| Rural communities | 6 | Knowledge of the PLA and security forces in rural areas during the conflict, to compare to urban experiences. | Lesser access to government services and lesser exposure to failed development projects |

The respondent group which resulted from the application of theoretical sampling across the two stages of my fieldwork thus comprises of those who, by virtue of their occupation and organisational roles, have a connection to anti-corruption or to conflict and those without this direct link. Respectively, the first of these groups provided a principally analytical perspective on these issues, and the second were principally focused on their personal experiences. My analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption combines both of these perspectives, whilst being sensitive to the overlap and divergence between and within these groups. A full list of my respondents is given in Appendix 4.3.

In addition to the logic underlying respondent selection, three features of the respondent group require further discussion: First, I have excluded the eleven interviews in Stage One and six in Stage Two which were conducted in rural areas surrounding Ghorahi. My decision to pursue interviews in these areas was based on an emergent theme around rural-urban separation in experiences of corruption from Stage One, which I sought to expand on in Stage Two. However, I faced significant barriers to access in this setting. As well as heightening my outsider status, LD was also treated with some suspicion in these rural areas. This resulted in a greater proportion of interview requests being declined, and limited the depth of discussion with those who agreed. Given the resource and time constraints of my fieldwork, I decided that I was unlikely to achieve the level and depth of participant engagement necessary to provide a contextualised comparison to urban Ghorahi. As such, I have excluded the small number of responses gathered from these respondents, and focus my analysis on urban perspectives.

Second, the majority of my respondents are male. Rather than a deliberate aspect of theoretical sampling, this reflects the difficulties in accessing female respondents which LD and I faced as two male researchers. In particular, we encountered a reluctance amongst potential female respondents to be interviewed in the private setting required to discuss corruption and conflict effectively and safely. I considered employing a female translator to aid with this, however no suitable candidate could be found. These issues exacerbated the wider absence of women from the media, political parties and from business within Ghorahi, which formed the main respondent groups I identified via theoretical sampling, meaning that my efforts to increase the presence of women respondents produced limited results.

Finally, I could not recruit any members of the armed forces in Ghorahi in either stage of my fieldwork. Despite LD's repeated attempts to contact current and former members of the Nepal Army resident in the city, we could not establish access to this group. Whilst inherently difficult to assess, LD noted his lack of familiarity with those in the current military establishment as a contributor to this, along with a culture of separation of the military from the civilian population. This is despite the physical proximity of a major Nepal Army barracks to Ghorahi city centre. Military voices are thus absent from the respondent group, despite their connection to the conflict period and recovery. I discuss the impacts of this and the other features of my respondent group throughout my empirical analysis.

*Methods*

Across both stages of my fieldwork, I used extended interviews as the primary means of gathering information. Reflecting the design described above, I conducted interviews with distinct but complementary purposes within each phase: the first focused on the themes necessary to verify case selection and assess the sensitivity of key topics and the second on the intensive development and expansion of themes around corruption and conflict. Reflecting the contrasting aims of my two stages of fieldwork, I used written notes to record responses in Stage One, and in Stage Two I engaged full audio recording and transcription. Across both stages, I included the respondent's background, the setting of the interview, and the rapport between the respondent, LD and myself in order to retain key elements of the context. Despite my expectations, the majority of respondents appeared unfazed by the use of audio recording, and this was possible across all interviews in Stage Two.

The nature of the interviews I conducted, supported by LD, were guided by two principles from CGT: First, the content of interviews in both stages was driven by theoretical sampling. Like the process for participant selection, this entailed the iterative development of themes of questioning through a continual process of reflection and review (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). Doing so required a combination of continual analysis of responses, theoretical memos, and informal discussions with LD, but also developed as I established the extent of sensitivity over controversial topics through the experience of the interviews. For example, I found aspects of corruption less sensitive than I initially assumed, whilst personal experiences of the conflict were less openly discussed than I assumed.

Second, my interview style drew on the constructivist intensive interviewing approach. Distinct from the often pre-determined thematic progression within semi-structured interviewing, this approach is characterised by following the emphasis of participants as they engage with key concepts (Charmaz, 2006: 25; 2014: 84). My interviews thus typically started with questions about the general impact of corruption and life in the conflict, rather than the themes which I had developed through theoretical sampling at that stage. My follow-up questions then followed the emphasis placed by the respondents within the broad themes of corruption and conflict, and introduced the themes arising through theoretical sampling as points of comparison. An example of this progression is given below:

> "Did you face pressure for donations from the Maoists during the conflict time?
> The Maoists took donations from all businessmen – they requested this two times from me. But my home is the rural area – in the Dhelkuri valley – so my family used to provide some of the cadres with grains. So I told them that we couldn't provide from both sides – I said I couldn't pay in cash, because we were already providing grain from our home. I didn't pay, but other businessmen had to pay.
>
> How did they respond to that suggestion? Did they just accept it, or was there any negotiation or difficulties after that?
> They didn't respond very well – they didn't think I was a good person, and they behaved badly towards me. They used to treat me as a rival to the Maoist party, as an opposition to the party.
>
> What did that mean?
> They used to think I wasn't helping them, and wasn't taking positively to the conflict, but they didn't regularly create problems about that. They just didn't have a good perception of me. They couldn't come here regularly.
>
> What do you think they were doing with the donations that they took from businessmen in general? Were they all for the conflict, or were they used for corruption or personal benefit?
> I think perhaps that they misused the donations. They got it personally, and used it for themselves." 2(53) Electrical business owner

Practically, because of the limits to my Nepali language ability, my interviews were conducted using LD as a translator. Given the significance of language in constructivism and CGT, I provided training to LD which stressed the need for literal translation. Alongside this, I conducted reviews of audio recordings and translations with LD throughout Stage Two to ensure a consistently high quality of translation, and to enable me to develop a clear picture of the language and terminology used around corruption and conflict. This enabled me to respond to terms specific to corruption and conflict in Nepali, and encourage respondents to elaborate on terminology where necessary.

In addition to interviews, I also used observational memos throughout both stages of my fieldwork. Typically consisting of a photograph and written explanation, I most frequently used this method when I travelled to areas of the city that my respondents had linked to the conflict or to corruption. This included a number of failed or partially completed building projects which many respondents characterised as examples of corruption, as well as the areas of the city they described as most affected by the conflict. I then used my observations alongside themes developed from prior interviews when questioning respondents, which led to more detail in questions specific to the experience of corruption and the impacts of the conflict. An example memo is given in Appendix 4.4.

*Ethics and risk management*

Before entering the field, my research design was subject to an ethical review and risk assessment by the University of Birmingham. A summary of the major considerations I put forward in these reviews is given in Appendix 4.5. The majority of these provisions would necessarily occur in interview-based research by an external party in a developing country, such as the need for information security and data protection, procedures to respond to instability or natural disasters, and care around sensitive interview topics (Crawford et al, 2017). However, three of the decisions I made within these processes warrant further discussion, as they diverge somewhat from common procedures.

First, I elected not to use a written information sheet and signed consent procedure. I did so because of the sensitivity of the topics of my research, which I deemed likely to provide an insurmountable barrier to obtaining written consent. I instead engaged a verbal process of consent at the start of each interview, and verbally confirmed this with the participant at the end of each interview. This confirmation step is particularly important in allowing the respondent to reflect on how they want their information to be used in light of their responses. The training I provided to LD during Stage One and our discussions after each interview ensured that this was delivered consistently and fully.

Second, the consent procedure was influenced by my positionality and that of LD. Through the early stages of the fieldwork, it became clear that my identity as a western ‘guest’ and LD’s relatively elite status had the potential to limit the capacity of some potential respondents to refuse requests for interviews. Whilst the extent to which this influenced the respondents is inherently difficult to assess, my discussions with LD highlighted the need to ensure consent was explained in such a way to minimise social pressure. Interviews were terminated in two instances where I judged that participants had felt undue pressure to engage, and our approach to consent evolved based on this experience.

Finally, my decision to keep the identities of the respondents anonymous required greater reflection than I had expected based on the formal ethical review process. Specifically, a significant minority of respondents expressed a preference to have their names used where they were quoted in this thesis. From their perspective, this was a way of expressing confidence in their responses, and having ’nothing to hide’. Beyond procedural reasons, my decision to override this preference reflects my use of quotations in combination. Whilst wanting to respect respondent preferences, I determined that it

could not be guaranteed that those who expressed a desire to have their name included would retain this preference if seen in combination within other responses. As such, throughout this thesis I refer to my respondents by interview number and occupation, e.g. '2(38) Agricultural business owner'.

### 4.3.4 Adaptations to the research design

Thus far, I have reflected on the processes underlying the 89 interviews which inform the empirical chapters to follow. In doing so, I discussed the exclusion of interviews conducted in rural areas distinct from urban Ghorahi and two instances where I terminated interviews due to concerns over consent. However, this was not the only adaptation I made to my research design whilst conducting fieldwork. To close this section, I now discuss how Ghorahi emerged as the sole location of my fieldwork, rather than the comparative analysis I had originally intended. In Chapter Ten, I reflect on how this adaptation shaped my research, and how this might be addressed in future research.

The first iteration of my research design included a comparative element. Specifically, I sought to compare Ghorahi to an urban area in Rolpa District. Rolpa includes the areas in which the Maoist movement had its origins, and in which there was a history of Maoist political mobilisation before the conflict (De Sales, 2013). I intended to engage with the experiences of those living in a major market town in this District and, through this, to compare conflict-induced change in corruption across differently conflict-affected areas. During Stage One, I conducted interviews with 35 respondents in Rolpa. To facilitate this, I employed KG – a journalist and political activist from Rolpa.

Whilst only indirectly involved in party politics during Stage One, the local government elections which took place in Rolpa between the first and second stages of my fieldwork led to KG being employed in local government. In addition to limiting his availability, this led my fieldwork in Rolpa to be directly related to KG's new areas of work, and to have the potential to conflict with those connected to him. I attempted to adapt to this by shifting my focus to Liwang, the headquarters of Rolpa District, but lacked the logistical support necessary to conduct sufficient interviews in this comparatively more challenging area of Nepal. Because of these challenges, I have excluded the 35 interviews from Stage One and 8 from Stage Two from my analysis, and focus solely on Ghorahi.

The changes to my research design which came out of the changing political conditions between Stages One and Two mean that I could not realise the comparative element of my original design. This does not undermine the core contribution of this thesis to the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption, but does leave the question of variations in this relationship based on different experiences of conflict open. Whilst limiting my analysis in this area, responding to this challenge in the field also meant that I could conduct fifteen further interviews in Ghorahi in Stage Two. The account of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi which I develop over the chapters to follow is deeper than would have been the case had the comparative element of my design been realised

## 4.4 Analytical approach

My fieldwork yielded 25 responses recorded in written notes from Stage One, 64 audio recordings from Stage Two, and a set of theoretical memos and observational notes collected across both stages. In this section, I set out the process by which I analysed this information; focusing first on transcription and data management, and second on the coding process. Following this, I reflect on the conduct and outcomes of these processes, including the influence of my positionality and assumptions.

### 4.4.1 Transcription

The use of theoretical sampling in my fieldwork required an overlapping process of data collection and analysis. Reflecting this, I attempted to write up written notes and transcribe interview recording on the day they were conducted, and in some instances delayed further interviews to allow this to occur. Aided by the additional background notes I took for each interview, I did so to ensure that, to the maximum extent possible, the context of the interview remains present as transcripts and notes are constructed (Birks & Mills, 2015: 75). This included, for example, notes on the openness of the respondent to potentially controversial topics, and the influence of the setting.[17]

The emphasis on language within CGT (Charmaz, 2014: 94) was also central to my approach to transcription. Rather than focusing only on the English translation provided by LD, I maintained Nepali terminology around corruption alongside the English translation across the transcriptions of

[17] For example, interviews conducted in cafes and public areas of hotels

interviews in Stage Two. In addition to consulting the Nepali language resources that I had developed across five months of language tuition, I used daily review meetings with LD to ensure accuracy as my picture of these concepts and the contestation around them emerged. The key terms developed from this and the manner in which they are used form a central part of the context for conflict-induced change in corruption, and are introduced in Chapter Five.

The emphasis on contextualisation present in both these elements did, however, need to be balanced against ethical considerations relating to respondent protection and consent. As I discussed in Section 4.3, I have elected not to use the names of respondents, but this alone is insufficient to protect their identities. Reflecting this, during transcription and in the empirical chapters to follow, details I deemed sufficient to identify the respondent have been altered, as have the names of others mentioned within interviews. The exception to this is major public figures, such as political leaders and others in the public eye. The specific details I have changed reflect my assessment of the number of those in Ghorahi with the characteristics described, and the vulnerability of the respondent.

### 4.4.2 Coding and theoretical development

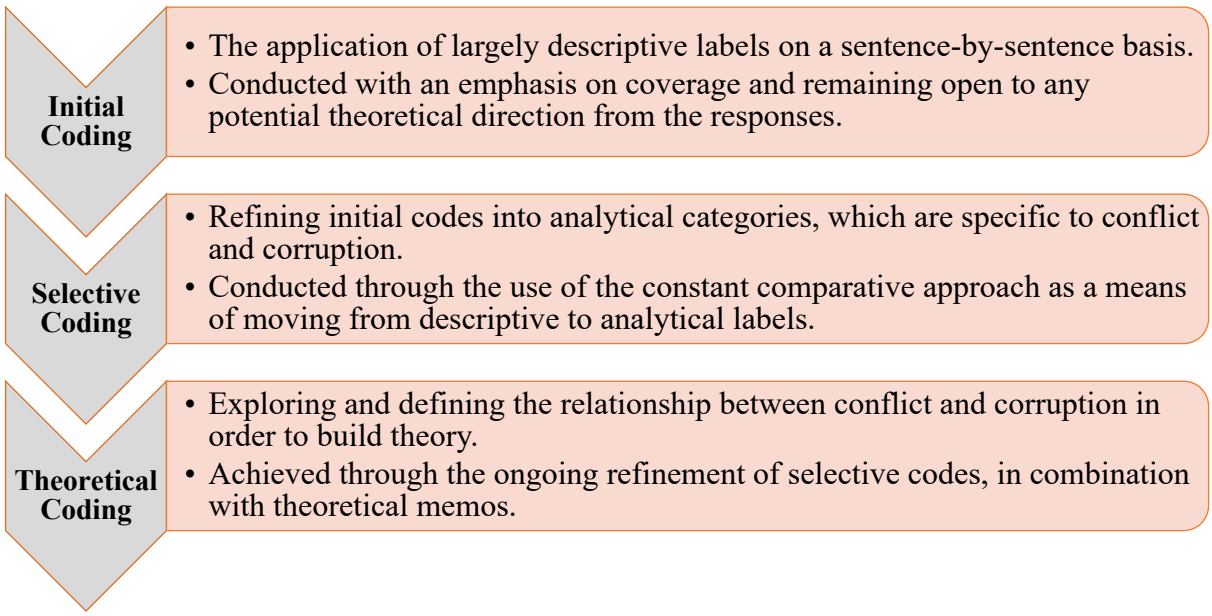
Across the two stages of fieldwork, my analytical approach was as follows: First, during and subsequent to Stage One, I used the coding processes described below to produce an initial analysis of major themes relevant to corruption and conflict amongst the respondents. In Stage Two, I added transcripts to the set responses from Stage One as I conducted and transcribed additional interviews, from which I developed and refined the themes and concepts present in the set of responses as a whole. The coding process I describe here thus relates to the whole set of responses.

Whilst all grounded theory studies entail coding, the stages of coding are the subject contestation across methodological works within this approach. As I introduced in Section 4.2, this contestation stems from debate between Glaser and Strauss over the role of coding paradigms in theoretical development, and in particular the role of axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This leads many grounded theorists to identify their coding approach as either Glaserian or Straussian (Apramian et al, 2017; Hernandez, 2009). Whilst narrowing through methodological developments since the 1990s,

including the development of CGT, this still diverts methodological attention in grounded theory to debates over 'pure' or 'authentic' elements of the approach (Charmaz, 2014a: 1081).

As is common in CGT (Charmaz, 2006; 2014: 113), I opted for a three-stage coding process summarised in Diagram 4.4A. This process is comprised of initial, selective and theoretical coding. Consistent with the emphasis on participant-led conceptualisation within constructivism, this coding approach prioritises openness and spontaneity as routes to theoretical development, rather than rigid coding paradigms. These coding paradigms are not entirely absent from contemporary methodological works on CGT, but are seen as an optional and potentially distortionary addition, to be used with caution. This contrasts the central role of coding paradigms in Strauss and Corbin's (1990) work, and fits more closely with the Glaserian branch of grounded theory (Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Kelle, 2007).

Table 4.4A – Three stage coding process




In the first instance, I coded my transcripts line by line, producing a set of 'initial' or 'open' codes (Charmaz, 2014: 116; Urquhart, 2013: 45). These initial codes are intended to reflect the meaning intended by respondents as closely as possible, in a manner which is "provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data" (Charmaz, 2014: 117). I implemented this through assigning nodes in NVivo to the vast majority of sentences in my interview notes and transcripts, and in doing so attempted to follow the emphasis in the responses rather than a preconceived logic. I did so through an iterative process of

re-labelling and review to ensure codes faithfully represent the responses, whilst acknowledging my role in the construction of codes. An example of this process is given in Table 4.4B.

Table 4.4B - Initial coding

| **Transcripts (2(02) Journalist)** | **Initial Codes** |
|---|---|
| Q: What are the major political issues affecting Dang? | |
| "Dang was badly affected by the conflict, … | Dang as a comparatively heavily impacted area of Nepal |
| … and in the post-conflict period the political leaders have sought to bring about significant change, including in Dang. | Political leaders driving change nationally and locally |
| There was a social revolution because of the conflict, … | Conflict as a driver of social change |
| … and the people have become more aware. | Awareness as an element of social change |
| Despite this, the political leaders are still involved in corruption - … | Political leaders as corrupt actors |
| … people see the lack of development progress, and the lack of spending within the area, and so they think there is corruption. | Lack of development and spending as proxies for corruption |
| The political leaders have tried to convince the people that they are transparent, and free from corruption, … | Public relations efforts by political leaders |
| … but they have not convinced the people of this." | Popular perceptions of political leaders |

The second aspect of coding - 'selective' (Urquhart, 2013: 48) or 'focused' (Charmaz, 2014: 138) coding - moves from the largely descriptive set of initial labels to a set of increasingly analytical codes, which are the foundations of theoretical development. Reflecting the concept of constant comparison I discussed in Section 4.2, this second aspect of coding is largely concurrent to initial coding, with the set of focused codes evolving as initial codes are added and refined. Through this process, I refined initial codes into categories defining dimensions of experiences of the conflict and of corruption amongst the respondents. An example of this process of refinement is given in Table 4.4C, showing how I grouped and developed the codes in Table 4.4B from initial to focused codes.

Table 4.4C - Focused coding

| Initial Codes | Focused Codes |
|---|---|
| Dang as a comparatively heavily impacted area | Conflict intensity |
| Political leaders driving change nationally and locally | Political change through conflict |
| Conflict as a driver of social change | Awareness through conflict |
| Awareness as an element of social change | Awareness through conflict |
| Political leaders as corrupt actors | Continuity in political corruption |
| Lack of development and spending as proxies for corruption | Proxies for corruption |
| Public relations efforts by political leaders | Continuity in political corruption |
| Popular perceptions of political leaders | Continuity in political corruption |

The final stage, theoretical coding, considers how the concepts which emerged from focused coding are connected. This emphasis on the connection between emergent concepts distinguishes theoretical from focused coding (Charmaz, 2014: 150), however there is overlap between these stages. To complement the continual refinement of concepts at this stage, I developed these relations through the use of theoretical memos.[18] These memos describe the emerging relationship between aspects of the conflict and of corruption, and were written as often as relationships occurred to me. Typically starting from a single quote and comment which typifies a relationship, these memos were expanded and grouped as the responses were coded. An example memo is provided in Appendix 4.2.

The outcome of the theoretical coding process is the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi which I set out over Chapters Six to Eight. These are: [1] the corrupt transformation of the mid-level Maoist elite, [2] instability and politicisation in the local and central governance systems, and [3] the transformation of mindsets and awareness. These three elements collectively define the respondents' experiences of conflict-induced change in corruption. In Chapters Six to Eight, I discuss each of these three elements in isolation. Reflecting the emphasis within CGT on

[18] Glaser (1965: 443) wrote that memos "provide the content behind the categories, which are the major themes of the theory". The collation of memos is central to theoretical development process described by Glaser & Strauss (1967: 113), and contemporary use of CGT (Urquhart, 2013: 110)

theory building, in Chapter Nine I then integrate these relationships into a combined theory of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, and compare this to the four theories of this relationship evident in the literature – as I discussed in Chapter Two.

#### 4.4.3 Reflections

I selected the coding process described above based on its compatibility with the constructivist theoretical approach I set out in Chapter Three, but also because of the flexibility that this approach afforded over more prescriptive coding paradigms within other branches of grounded theory. This flexibility is advantageous because it reduces the extent to which coding is channelled towards pre-determined ends, and thus is more conducive to theoretical innovation. However, with this flexibility comes the increased capacity for my decisions and positionality to influence coding processes. Acknowledging this, here I reflect on my assumptions and positionality in the coding process.

As I discussed in Chapter Three, constructivist epistemology defines researcher and respondents as co-constructors of knowledge. In contrast to the more conventional emphasis on researcher agency alone (Breckenridge et al, 2012), this frames participant as well as researcher agency and the positionality of those as influences on responses. The coding process forms an extension of this construction of data, but is one in which the participant is absent. Whilst supported by reflective discussions with LD, the codes constructed through the above process reflect my input far more than any other. On reflection, two aspects of my positionality particularly influenced this process.

First, as is implicit in the research question in Section 4.1, I assumed that, at some level, experiences of corruption were influenced by experiences of conflict among my respondents. This assumption inevitably leads to greater interest in instances where the relationship between these phenomena is confirmed or refuted than in those where it is simply absent. Whilst representativeness in the positivist sense is not the goal of CGT (Charmaz, 2014: 8), this assumption has the potential to lead to this relationship being overstated compared to the extent to which it is present amongst the respondents. This would undermine the fit of the emergent theory to the information gathered in the field, the core validity criteria in grounded theory (Chiovitti & Piran, 203; Hernandez, 2010: 159).

I have attempted to manage the impacts of my focus on conflict-induced change in corruption by also analysing the nature and causes of corruption in Ghorahi in general. I use this information on forms of corruption which are a constant presence, or which have changed for reasons other than the conflict and transition, as point of comparison for the three relationships between corruption and conflict emergent from the coding process. I present this in Chapter Five, in which I discuss the language used to describe corruption in Ghorahi, and in Chapter Nine, in which I integrate the three forms of conflict-induced change in corruption with corruption in Ghorahi in general.

Second, my theoretical approach to corruption is linked to an interest in the forms of corruption which do not conform to the public-private divide. In particular, the fact that constructivist scholars and others criticise the focus on public sector bribery as the primary form of corruption has led me to take a particular interest in forms and understandings of corruption which contradict this. The risk stemming from this is that the genuine dominance of experiences of bribery amongst my respondents could be understated in an effort to ensure that divergent - but far less prevalent - forms are represented. The attempt to counter a dominant international discourse on the nature of corruption thus can itself lead to the experiences of the respondent group being misrepresented through the coding process.

My efforts to manage the impact of my theoretical positionality within the coding process comes first through ensuring that the initial coding process covered all representations of corruption, even where examples of bribery in particular added little to the category. In the chapter to follow I discuss the nature of corruption in Ghorahi without reference to the impacts of conflict, and within this consider the frequency of different forms of corruption. This emphasis on frequency is far from the only driver of this discussion, but is a significant point of reference in ensuring that the emphasis remains driven by prioritisation within the respondent group. Comparisons of forms of corruption specific to the conflict to corruption in general are also a key element of the discussion in Chapter Nine.

### 4.5 Summary

In this chapter I have set out the principles, practical realisation and analytical strategy that I employed during and subsequent to my fieldwork. I began by linking the social constructivist ontological approach I discussed in Chapter Three with constructivist grounded theory, moved to the

two-stage research design based in this approach, and finally detailed how I developed findings and theory of conflict-induced change in corruption from this case.

My reflections across the research design and analytical approach emphasised the influence of my positionality and that of LD in constructing a relationship between corruption and conflict in Ghorahi. These reflections describe a difficult balance between factors which eased access to the field and facilitated a large number of in-depth interviews to be conducted in relatively short period of time, but which also shaped the nature of the respondent group and raised ethical considerations around consent. Reflections in this chapter also detailed how my focus on Ghorahi alone emerged through developments in the field. I consider the implications of this, and how future research might address the question of intra-local variations in conflict-induced change in corruption in Chapter Ten.

The structure of the four chapters to follow reflects the outcomes of the coding process which I have described in this chapter, as well as the emphasis constructivism and CGT place on contextualised analysis. In Chapter Five, I build from the influences on the case selection discussed in this chapter to the context of conflict and corruption experienced by those I interviewed in Ghorahi. As well as reflecting the need for contextualisation within constructivism and constructivist grounded theory, this reflects the imperative to consider the general prevalence of different experiences of corruption which stem from the reflections in this chapter. In Chapters Six to Eight, I then set out each of the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption which emerged from the coding process and in Chapter Nine, integrate these elements and discuss their contribution to the literature.

# Chapter Five: Corruption and conflict in Ghorahi

## 5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two, I discussed the ways in which Nepal's conflict differs from those which have driven theoretical development on conflict-induced change in corruption in the literature, and how my focus on change at the local level and in the long term reflects two under-explored areas of this relationship. Following this, in Chapter Four, I discussed the factors which led me to focus on Ghorahi as an example of conflict-induced change in corruption at this level and time period. Drawing on the theoretical approach set out in Chapter Three, I also discussed the need to define corruption in context, based on the understandings of those studied. Reflecting this, in this chapter I introduce the experiences of conflict and of corruption among my respondents. This provides the context for the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption I discuss over Chapters Six to Eight.

This chapter has two main parts: In Section 5.2, I discuss my respondents' experiences and reflections on the 1996-2006 conflict and the post-2006 recovery. Reflecting the themes emphasised across the respondent group, in this section I focus on the isolation of Ghorahi from the impacts of the first five years of the conflict, the transformative impacts of the 2001 PLA attack on the city, and everyday life during the emergency period which resulted from this attack. Moving to the post-conflict transition, I then discuss the reintegration of former PLA combatants into the city, the changes in the governance system, and the transformation of the Maoists into a mainstream political party.

In Section 5.3, I discuss the nature of corruption in Ghorahi, as constructed by those in the city. Reflecting the emphasis on language within social constructivism detailed in Chapter Three, I focus on how the respondents describe and discuss corruption, and the set of acts and standards which distinguish corrupt and legitimate behaviours in this context. To do so, I set out the key corruption-related terminology in the responses, the judgements expressed in accounts of corruption of a variety of forms, and how these linguistic and normative components act back on those in the city. Together, this provides the context for the discussion of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi which I set out over the three chapters to follow.

## 5.2 Conflict and transition in Ghorahi

Across the literature on Nepal's conflict, the majority of analysis is focused on those rural areas in which the Maoist movement was formed and on the political dynamics of conflict and transition in Kathmandu. With the exception of the consequences of the 2001 PLA attack on Ghorahi – the first large scale assault on the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) in an urban area (Pasang, 2008) – the literature includes little analysis of the experiences of urban populations outside of Kathmandu. This reflects the concentration of Maoist control and ideology on historically marginalised communities in rural areas and the historic concentration of political power in the capital (Subedi, 2013).

In this section, I discuss how my respondents experienced and perceive the 1996-2006 Maoist conflict and the post-2006 transition. Within each sub-section, I situate my respondents' experiences and perceptions alongside the key events of the conflict and transition in the literature. I do so to contextualise the discussion of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi to follow among the broader set of events in Nepal, and in particular to highlight areas in which the experiences of this population differ from the experiences of those in Maoist-dominated rural areas and in Kathmandu. I return to this discussion when considering the transferability and limits of this case in Chapter Nine.

### 5.2.1 Experiences of the conflict

From the Maoist perspective, the conflict began with the 1996 declaration by the then United People's Front Nepal. Concentrated in remote areas of Rolpa and Rukum Districts, this small force conducted skirmishes with isolated police outposts, and initially received little attention from the government or military leadership in Kathmandu (Eck, 2010; Subedi, 2013). However, as these attacks escalated beyond the areas in which ideological affinity with Maoism had been present since the 1950s (Seddon, 2010), the police conducted operations aimed at limiting the Maoists militarily. The repression employed in these operations drove many historically marginalised populations towards the Maoists, aiding their growth across rural areas from 1998 (Adhikari & Samford, 2013; Graham, 2007).

Whilst bordered by Rolpa to the north, the early events of the conflict in the Maoist base areas and the rural areas to which the Maoists expanded after 1998 were largely peripheral to the experiences of those I interviewed in Ghorahi. At this time, the city had little of the road and communication

infrastructure seen now, and the flow of information from rural communities was limited. A small group of journalists I interviewed reported on the violence and motivations of the Maoists,[19] however the conflict had little direct effect on Ghorahi. As such, for the vast majority of those I interviewed, the conflict is synonymous with the 2001 PLA attack and the emergency period which followed.

My respondents' focus on the 2001-2006 period is evident in their responses to questions I posed on life in the conflict period in general. These questions were almost universally responded to with a focus on the period after 2001, and in particular on the restrictions on everyday life faced during the state of emergency initiated by King Gyanendra.[20] Those few who referenced events before 2001 tended to do so only by means of contrast to the emergency period, or chance encounters with PLA combatants during travel in rural areas.[21] A minority, like 2(03), also spoke of encounters with those displaced in the early phases of the conflict, however this was far from common across the respondents.

> "There are a lot more victims in the rural areas though, as many people were forced to give shelter to the Maoists, and because of this were the targets of the security forces. The people in the city did not face these impacts, they just read about it and heard stories from those who fled from the rural areas into the city." 2(03) Journalist and academic

In part because of the limited direct impacts of the conflict on everyday life in Ghorahi before 2001, the respondents describe the Maoists as an external and remote group during the early phase of the conflict. This is reflected in how the respondents describe the populations that the Maoists appealed to and the areas of the country that their combatants were recruited from, both of which are dominated by references to impoverished rural communities.[22] The respondents thus characterise the conflict as having been external to the city population before 2001, and that for many there was a feeling of immunity from Maoist attack. Indeed, 1(09) and 1(12) describe that the conflict was only of interest to the politically minded in Ghorahi throughout the late 1990s, despite mounting violence in the rural Hill areas proximate to the city.

[19] 1(09) Journalist and activist; 1(12) Journalist
[20] 2(22) Legal professional; 2(60) Electronics business owner; 2(74) Clothing business owner
[21] 2(16) Journalist; 2(49) Animal supplies business owner; 2(56) Medical business owner
[22] 1(12) Journalist; 2(36) Tharu community representative; 2(41) Senior business representative

> "There was vast discrimination between the lower and the upper castes in the villages, and so they tried to recruit lower caste people and get them to join the war. They wanted them to fight against discrimination." 2(16) Journalist

At the national level, the 2001 PLA attack on Ghorahi was transformative of the conflict. As well as representing the first successful PLA assault against a fortified Royal Nepal Army (RNA) barracks in an urban area, the attack transformed attitudes in Kathmandu as to the capabilities of the PLA. This triggered a switch from police to military-led counter-insurgency and led to the declaration of a state of emergency (Adhikari, 2014: 65; Chalmers, 2012: 68; Jha, 2014: 87). With the state of emergency came the most violent months of the conflict (OCHCR, 2014), with the RNA and armed police force deployed into heavy-handed operations in the Maoist base areas. As I discuss below, this escalation of the conflict ultimately resulted in the stalemate which facilitated key talks between the Maoists and the political establishment in Kathmandu in 2005.

Whilst widely discussed as a turning point in the literature on the conflict, the impacts of the PLA attack on Ghorahi is only set out in detail in an account published by Pasang (2008: 113), the former Chief of the PLA. Pasang describes that 1,100 PLA simultaneously attacked the city from multiple directions, and overran the RNA and police garrison of 325. Whilst Pasang's claims on the relative losses on each side are dubious, accounts I gathered from senior local government officials,[23] journalists[24] and other residents of the city[25] during the attack confirm the extent of destruction in the city in Pasang's account. This includes the destruction of government offices, the District Police Headquarters and the RNA barracks, as well as the raiding of the city bank. The respondents also attest to the shock felt at the attack, given the rural concentration of Maoist attacks before 2001.

The respondents describe the 2001 attack as transformative of everyday life in Ghorahi. Most directly, the attack was the first and only major attack by the PLA on the city area, and as such is synonymous with the start and the height of experiences of conflict-era violence for those I interviewed. However, the intense but brief period of physical damage inflicted on the city, and on the infrastructure

[23] 1(18) District Peace Committee member; 1(19) District Peace Committee member; 2(19) UML District representative
[24] 1(08) Journalist and activist; 1(09) Journalist and activist; 2(03) Journalist and academic
[25] 1(25) Small business owner and former senior business representative; 2(74) Clothing business owner

of the state in particular, is emphasised only by those directly connected to local government, party politics and the media at the time of the attack.[26] For the respondent group as a whole, the impacts of this attack are instead described through the following two sets of experiences.

First, the respondents stress the failure of the security forces to protect the city, and the chronic sense of vulnerability to further attack by the PLA that this introduced. Whilst the Maoists were seen as a rural and therefore external force, the illusion that Ghorahi was immune from the conflict was shattered by the brief but highly destructive incursion of the PLA in 2001, and the inability of the security forces to defend even their own bases in the city. Consequently, the respondents describe the aftermath of the attack principally in terms of feelings of fear and the suspicion of outsiders to the city. [27] This marked the end to immunity from the conflict for the city, and for many the real start of the conflict period.

> "[T]he security forces were not providing security at that time. The District Headquarters was attacked by the Maoist party. The army barracks itself was not secure!" 2(41) Senior business representative

> "If any new person came here in the shop, we didn't think it was a customer. We thought it might be the Maoist making enquiries or looking for help. There was terror. If we saw a new person in the market or on the street, we thought it was the Maoist planning an attack[.]" 2(74) Clothing business owner

Second, the respondents describe the days after the attack and the emergency period through reference to the increasingly draconian measures to control the population imposed by the security forces. Rather than as a necessary response to a PLA attack, the fact that these provisions were implemented in the context of perceived failures of the RNA to defend the city means these measures are not seen as having been to the benefit of ordinary people. Rather, they are seen by some as part of an effort of the security forces to ensure their own protection, after being exposed by the PLA.[28] However, for the majority, they are simply described in terms of the intrusions imposed on daily life.

The respondents' accounts of the restrictions imposed by the security forces in the wake of the 2001 attack widely include curfew and limits on movement to rural areas, which were near-universal

[26] 2(19) UML District representative; 1(28) Senior police officer; 1(09) Journalist and activist
[27] 1(08) Journalist and activist 2(49) Animal supplies business owner; 2(53) Electrical business owner
[28] 1(17) Journalist; 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(41) Senior business representative

experiences. The impacts the respondents emphasise beyond this vary principally by the profession of the participants: Those involved in business emphasise restrictions on goods seen as useful to the Maoists, including fast food and clothing.[29] Journalists emphasise the direct censorship of their reporting on RNA losses and on Maoist movement, and a wider context of fear in reporting.[30] Political activists were limited in their capacity to gather and meet with cadres, with the emergency period seen to close political space.[31] Together, these accounts give a picture of an increasingly closed environment within the city after November 2001, the intensity of which is largely described as at the whim of the security forces, rather than to the benefit of the population of Ghorahi.

> "The security forces restricted us opening at night and in the early mornings. They also restricted the number of guests in the hotel as well. The security forces didn't give permission for more than 3 or 4 people to gather in one place during the emergency time." 2(58) Auto business owner

Pressure from the security forces was not, however, the only manner in which the emergency period transformed life in Ghorahi. Rather, as the Maoists drove the security forces out of the rural areas of Dang,[32] the respondents describe themselves as increasingly stuck between the security forces and the PLA. Most literally, both the Maoists and the security forces restricted movement to the rural areas, particularly for those connected to rival political parties,[33] but also exerted pressure on the urban population in other ways. For those in business, the Maoists exerted pressure for donations through their network of cadres, often accompanied by threats of violence. These demands exacerbated the toll of the pressure from the security forces on everyday life, and compounded declines in the city economy.[34]

> "The Maoists used to regularly demand donations from me. I sometimes used to provide the donations, but I couldn't give what they expected. I was afraid that they could do anything – they could attack me or anything – so I was always afraid". 2(78) Factory Owner

[29] 2(16) Journalist; 2(52) Medical business owner; 2(54) Senior business representative
[30] 1(08) Journalist and social activist; 1(29) Journalist; 1(35) - Journalist
[31] 1(13) Journalist and former PLA combatant; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(19) UML District representative
[32] 1(28) Senior police officer
[33] 1(22) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(19) UML District Representative
[34] 2(59) Auto business owner; 2(77) Petrol station worker; 2(50) Business community representative

The respondents' accounts of the peak of the conflict thus focus on the restrictions they experienced in their everyday lives, and the fear rampant after the 2001 PLA attack. They describe themselves as having been trapped between a security force unable to provide effective protection, and an external Maoist threat able to reach into the city militarily, and through their network of cadres. Neither the security forces nor the Maoists are described as having acted principally in a protector role, and equivalences between the pressure from both sides are a frequent feature of the responses. The respondents thus characterise the 2002 to 2005 period as one of constant pressure from both sides.

### 5.2.2 Experiences of the transition

The de-escalation of violence and peace agreement which followed emerged through changes in the military and political context in 2005/06. Militarily, the two sides were increasingly locked in stalemate, with the PLA unable to repeat their successes against the RNA in Ghorahi, and the RNA's lack of experience in counter-insurgency meaning that they made little progress against the PLA in rural areas (Gobyn, 2009; Mehta & Lawoti, 2010). Politically, King Gyanendra's 2005 coup against the elected government produced a brief alliance of political parties in Kathmandu, and aligned them with the republican demands of the Maoist leadership (Bhatt, 2010; Wagle & Jackson, 2015; Mishra, 2009). This alignment of political and military factors led to a ceasefire, widespread protests against the monarchy, and the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) in 2006 (Whitfield, 2012).

The peacebuilding process which followed from the CPA had two main components: First, the Government of Nepal and the Maoist leadership oversaw a demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) process which led to the retirement of 92% of verified PLA combatants (Wagle & Jackson, 2015). The remaining minority were integrated into the Nepal Army, which was reformed to fall under democratic control (Upreti & Vanhoutte, 2009). Second, the governance system was fundamentally transformed, moving from a unitary constitutional monarchy to a federal democratic republic (Whitfield, 2012). The Maoists emerged as the largest party in the first set of elections under this new system, but failed to replicate this success in 2012. In 2018 the Maoists merged into the Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) to form the Nepal Communist Party.

The factors which lead to the CPA and which have shaped the DDR process and political transition have been the subject of extensive academic analysis (see, for example, Subedi, 2014; Upreti, 2014; Whitfield, 2012). However, despite the extent to which the conflict was driven by the exclusion of peripheral populations, areas outside of Kathmandu typically feature in this only to the extent that they influenced events in the centre. Amongst the most highlighted of these has been the violence in the Terai which emerged over the drawing of federal boundaries (Strasheim, 2018). These episodes of violence were, however, concentrated in the Eastern Terai, and did not inspire a similar degree of contestation in the western area. How the transition has been experienced in Ghorahi and other areas in which tensions over federalism have not been inflamed is therefore largely absent from the literature.

Despite the contrast between my respondents' experiences of the conflict and the national level picture set out in the literature, the respondents emphasise many of the same elements of the transition present in the literature. News of the ceasefire, PLA combatants entering cantonment, the signing of the CPA, and the 2008 Maoist-led government are described as having incrementally boosted the confidence that violence would not return, including amongst respondents without political and media connections.[35] There was widespread tentativeness in the first two years of the transition given the breakdown of talks in 2001,[36] however this is equally present on the national level, particularly during the period in which the Maoists exited the transitional government (Martin, 2012; Whitfield, 2012).

> "It was still fearful just after it ended. I couldn't believe the government or the Maoist, because they could again just start the conflict. There were many peace talks before between the government and the Maoist, many were broken, and the Maoist again started the conflict … When they made an agreement for the peace process, and the Maoist also participated in the government, at that time only I could believe it[.]" 2(75) Clothing business owner

Despite the instability of the early transition and the fear of a return to violence the respondents associated with this, the respondents now see the Maoists as a political force. Even for those who were directly targeted by the PLA as political opponents[37] or who were subject to violent pressure for financial

[35] 2(12) Disability rights activist; 2(49) Animal supplies business owner; 2(75) Clothing business owner
[36] 1(35) Journalist; 2(19) UML District representative; 2(80) Agricultura business owner
[37] 1(22) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representatives

donations,[38] the military roots of the Maoist party are described as an aspect of their past, rather than the factor shaping the current or future direction of the party. As I discuss in Chapter Six, elements of this insurgent history are central to the experience of corruption in Ghorahi. However, from the perspective of the transition alone, the central level transformation of the Maoists to a political force resonates with the experience of those I interviewed in Ghorahi. As 2(80) summarises, the Maoists are now widely seen as part of the mainstream of party politics in Ghorahi and Nepal more broadly.

> "[W]hen they started to settle in the cantonments, and after the peace process started, and they made some agreements, and were willing to come into the parliament, the people were convinced that the Maoists would not return to conflict. So, people stopped being afraid of them. We thought that the Maoist were more like the other political parties - like UML and Congress. They became the same. They didn't have power like in the conflict time, so it wasn't necessary to fear them." 2(80) Agricultural business owner

The transformation of the Maoists from a military to a political force is a central aspect of the respondents' accounts of the transition. The relatively educated nature of many of the respondents means that they were well connected to news from the centre, which played directly into their confidence in the transition locally.[39] However, the respondents also describe progress in the transition through the return to normality and openness in everyday life after 2006. Given the absence of conflict-era violence in Ghorahi apart from the 2001 PLA attack, this theme of the responses principally consists of accounts of change in the restrictions imposed on the population by the police and the RNA.

As with accounts of life in the conflict period, discussion of the emerging openness in the post-conflict period is dominated by references to livelihoods. This includes the ability of business owners and traders to freely move goods into rural areas without pressure from the security forces or fear of attack by the PLA,[40] the return of political party mobilisations in the city and later in its rural surroundings,[41] and the ability of the media to approach government and security forces, and to publish without fear of censorship.[42] The transformation of encounters with the security forces are therefore as

[38] 2(41) Senior business representative; 2(42) Factory owner; 2(52) Medical business owner
[39] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(24) Civil society organisation leader; 2(80) Agricultural business owner
[40] 2(44) Bookshop owner; 2(50) Business community representative; 2(79) Factory owner
[41] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative
[42] 1(12) Journalist; 1(36) Journalist; 2(03) Journalist and academic

much an aspect of accounts of the transitional period as changes within the Maoists in the centre, contrary to the emphasis typical in the literature on the transition at the national level.

For the majority of those I interviewed, the lessening of the restrictions which had been imposed by the security forces was the most direct experience of the changing conditions of the transition. However, accounts from those active in local party politics during the transition also widely reference the interface of this opening environment with the transformation of the Maoists in the centre.[43] For these respondents, agreements between the Maoists and other parties at the national level and the removal of limits on political activities by the security forces in Ghorahi are jointly described as having fostered increasingly cooperative links between political party representatives in the city. These improving relations brought progress in the centre into the local experience, particularly the 2008 Maoist-led coalition in the first post-conflict Constituent Assembly.

> "There was a realisation amongst the local leaders that we couldn't hold feelings for revenge for a long time. We saw that, at the central level, the top leaders were working together in one place and that we had a coalition government. So, we thought that we can't be enemies at the village level. So, we slowly improved relations and became more social with each other." 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative

The final major theme across the respondents' accounts of the transition is the impact of the arrival of significant numbers of ex-PLA combatants into the city. Influenced by the proximity of the 5th Divisional cantonment and the broader trend toward urban migration amongst ex-PLA, Ghorahi and the neighbouring city of Tulsipur have seen amongst the largest influxes of ex-PLA of any area of the Terai (Robins & Bhandari, 2016). The ex-combatant activists I interviewed estimated that a minimum of 2,100 ex-PLA settled in these cities subsequent to the cantonment period, and remained in the decade since.[44] In addition to being an important theme of the respondents' experience of the transition, this was significant in verifying the reasons for my focus on Ghorahi, as I discussed in Chapter Four.

The social reintegration of ex-combatants is characterised by the DDR literature as amongst the core challenges to long term stability in Nepal and in general (Robins & Bhandari, 2016; Subedi, 2014;

[43] 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(44) Bookshop owner
[44] 1(14) Social activist and former PLA combatant; 1(15) Social activist and former PLA combatant; 1(27) Journalist and former PLA combatant

Subedi & Jenkins, 2018). However, whilst feelings of unease appear across the respondents' accounts of the initial arrival of large numbers of ex-PLA, the ex-combatant population of Ghorahi is described as having become an accepted part of the population of the city.[45] Informing this is a sense that the context in which the majority of ex-PLA resettled to the city is entirely apart from the conditions of conflict in which they joined. This sentiment is linked both to the political transformation of the Maoists in the centre and the changing conditions of everyday life discussed above.[46] References to ex-combatants within the city thus stress the extent to which their presence has become normalised and their place amongst the wider population of the city, as stated by 2(49).

> "[G]enerally, ex-combatants just came from the cantonment and started a business. There wasn't a problem for them. The people thought the war had ended, and it was a normal situation. It wasn't difficult for them". 2(49) Animal supplies business owner

The experiences of those I interviewed in Ghorahi thus largely resonates with the literature on the transition. This is despite the contrasting nature of the respondents' experiences from much of the national picture of the conflict and the focus of much of the literature primarily on the transition in the centre. In their reflections, many respondents stressed that conflict remains a significant event in the history of the city, particularly given the role of the 2001 attack in transforming the conflict and the drastic changes in everyday life which followed.[47] However, the contemporary Maoist party, relations with the security forces and everyday life are seen as entirely apart from the conflict and the early stages of the transition. As I show across the chapters to follow, conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi is thus far from an expression of incompleteness in the transition or ongoing instability.

### 5.3 Corruption in Ghorahi

As I set out in Chapters Three and Four, this thesis engages a constructivist approach to corruption, assessed through constructivist grounded theory (CGT). This approach sees corruption as the product of human agency, and locates knowledge of corruption amongst those studied. Reflecting

[45] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(49) Animal supplies business owner; 2(54) Senior business representative
[46] 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(44) Bookshop owner; 2(51) Bookshop owner
[47] 1(07) Journalist; 1(19) District Peace Committee member; 1(24) Human rights activist

this, here I set out the nature of corruption amongst those I interviewed. To do so, I first discuss the Nepali terms which the respondents engage in their accounts of corruption. Following this, I discuss the dividing lines between corrupt and legitimate behaviours which inform the use of these terms.

### 5.3.1 Concepts

Literally translated, corruption in Nepali is *bhrastachar*.[48] Indeed, among the minority of my respondents who speak English with a degree of fluency, and who chose to do so in responding to my questions, corruption and bhrastachar are used synonymously and often interchangeably.[49] My questions on the general state of corruption were framed in terms of bhrastachar by LD and myself, with follow-ups focusing on terminology and concepts engaged by the participants where this diverged from the literal translation. Through this process of moving from the general to the specific with each respondent, I identified the following conceptual landscape of corruption-related terminology.

As is often the case with 'corruption' in English (Génaux, 2004), the respondents most directly associate bhrastachar with the payment of bribes when accessing public services. Experiences of demands for bribes to access local government services are ubiquitous across the respondents, and dominate much of their initial reactions to my questions on the state of corruption in Ghorahi specifically and Nepal in general.[50] Bhrastachar is thus closely tied with *ghus,*[51] the literal translation of 'bribe', with which comes an association to the abuse of powers granted by the state, and the exchange of money.

Whilst the immediate focus on bribery is common in responses on *bhrastachar*, this term is also applied as a pejorative term to denote undesirable behaviours. Indeed, the Nepali term *acharna*,[52] from which the latter element of *bhrastachar* is derived, denotes conduct or behaviour. Reflecting this, *bhrastachar* is also used in reference to undesirable behaviours which are not directly financial in nature, with characterisations of those involved in corruption often invoking their broader bad conduct,[53] *kharab*

[48] भ्रष्टाचार – for the purpose of accuracy I provide Nepali terms in devanagari when they are first used.
[49] 2(03) Journalist and academic; 2(21) Journalist; 2(48) Dairy products business owner
[50] 2(02) Journalist; 2(04) - Rastri Jan Mocha District representative; 2(17) Landlessness Activist
[51] घुस
[52] आचरण
[53] 2(21) Journalist; 2(32) Gender rights activist; 2(76) Clothing business owner

*acharna*,[54] as well as financial gain. This is less common than the focus on bribery, but indicates the versatility of the term. Two of the journalists I interviewed described this as follows:

> "Corruption, in Nepali, is 'bhrastachar' … 'Bhrasta' means bribery and these things, as you mentioned, and 'acharna' is your personality, or conduct. So the two together is corruption. It can be bribery … [i]t can be immoral, or exploitation." 2(21) Journalist.

> "In Nepal, the term corruption as bhrastachar is synonymous with financial transactions. So, in the rural areas there is a lower budget available, so in total there is less corruption in the classic sense. However, corruption can also be thought of as discrimination. If the system is discriminatory, we could also call this corruption." 2(03) – Journalist and academic

Second to bhrastachar, discussions of corruption are framed in terms of *dalal*,[55] a noun meaning 'broker' or 'mediator'. Whilst applicable to all of those in a mediator role, *dalal* is used in the pejorative to denote those who provide connections and facilitation to elites, but do so without the positive contribution more commonly associated with Nepal's deeply interconnected social relations. Brokers are seen as able to play this role because of an informational advantage or access to power which they have cultivated, and which they engage for a financial benefit.[56] However, it is the exploitation of their power rather than the nature of benefit they receive alone which links *dalal* to *bhrastachar*.

The many responses describing *dalal* concentrate on two forms of brokerage.[57] First, there are *dalal* within government offices, who are seen to facilitate the procurement of bribes by bureaucrats. In these accounts, the local level bureaucrats are characterised as directing those attempting to access government services towards brokers, who then use their position to manage access to the bureaucrats in exchange for bribes.[58] Many respondents suggest that this is particularly prominent in offices in which complex processes limit the ability of service seekers to complete the necessary documentation directly, with lawyers and former bureaucrats with inside knowledge of the process acting as brokers. Both the bureaucrat and the broker are characterised as benefitting from this arrangement.

> "Brokers are not helping the farmers, they are exploiting them. Yes, they will contact them with the new landowner, but they will only do it to get something. The broker will get the same

[54] खराब आचरण

[55] दलाल

[56] 22(14) Nepali Congress District Representative; 2(21) Journalist; 2(22) Legal professional

[57] 2(16) Journalist; 2(20) Journalist; 2(24) Civil society leader

[58] 2(11) Legal professional; 2(17) Landlessness activist; 2(56) Medical business owner

> relationship with the landowner as well. The landowner also wants to manage the problem of distributing the land to the landless people, but can't identify them. They want to do it through a monetary relationship, but they want the problem to be solved. So the broker acts a mediator, and manages the relationship to get benefit from both sides." 2(17) Landlessness activist

Second, businessmen are characterised as *dalal* where they are seen to take advantage of complexities between buyers and sellers in a range of conventional transactions. The selling of land is a particularly common context in which this is discussed, with brokers seen as exploiting the complexity faced by sellers in finding buyers and in dealing with the government land registration process.[59] Similar characterisations are applied to those who mediate between factory owners and their customers, and between farmers and crop purchasers. As with the bureaucratic context, it is the exploitation of a lack of access and knowledge which is central to usage of this term, and its link to *bhrastachar*.

> "Generally, the brokers are the retired bureaucrats from the land taxation office. They know everything about that process … Some of the lawyers who write documents for land registration and this process are also involved. They are regularly trying to get this kind of benefit, because they know everything about this process and documents."2(24) Civil society organisation leader

The final term central to the respondents' accounts of corruption is *kalo bazaar*,[60] a 'black market'. Unlike *dalal* and *bhrastachar*, which are primarily engaged in accounts of those in the public sector, *kalo bazaar* is applied primarily to those in the private sector.[61] As well as being outside of the taxed and regulated market system, the central element of *kalo bazaar* is the perceived exploitation of customers through artificially raised prices, even where this is legal. This is informed in part by the existence of regulation on business margins, but more broadly relates to the legal but illegitimate exploitation of scarcity. The pejorative and accusative nature of *kalo bazaar* means it is typically reserved for those who combine informal or clandestine trade with exploitation through price, however this is not always the case, particularly during periods of shortage.

> "When there was the blockade or strikes, there is shortage, and the customers use the black market. It's normally with the food items. When there is a shortage of food a businessman can sell at a higher price. People will still buy. The government has a policy here that a business

[59] 2(24) Civil society organisation leader; 2(33) Maoist Centre District Representative; 2(38) Agricultural business owner

[60] कालो बजार

[61] 2(06) - Senior business representative; 2(20) Journalist; 2(57) Grocer

> shouldn't get more than a 20% margin, but on the black market they can do more. There are so many cases where there is a 100% or more on something." 2(60) Electronics business owner

5.3.2 Dividing lines

The nature of the three terms above and the actors they denote inform much about the context of corruption in Ghorahi: *Bhrastachar* and the terms related to it are understood to be concentrated but far from solely confined to the public sector, invoke exploitation as well as a clandestine character, and are informed more by expected norms of behaviour than legal provisions. Here I expand on the dividing lines between the acts which are and are not described in terms of *bhrastachar*, *dalal* and *kalo bazaar*, and the factors which determine the legitimacy of acts according to the respondents.

Running across the three concepts discussed above is the theme of unfairness and injustice. This is most explicit in the distinction between informal but legitimate trade and black markets, central to which is the exploitation through price. This is also invoked in the characterisation of the benefits obtained by brokers which, whilst often legal, are seen to violate the routine exchange of favours in Nepali society. The wider set of comments from the participants, particularly around the actions of political leaders, emphasises the extent to which this standard informs the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate behaviours. This is apparent in statements like those from 2(06) and 2(29):

> "[B]efore they were the President or minister, they would have to get medical treatments in hospitals in Nepal. But when they become President or a minister, they go abroad for treatment. Businessmen see this in the newspapers - that the Prime Minister or the leader of a political party was provided with 50 lakh rupees to go and get his treatment, and that they got these funds from the government. We see that the people are not getting this kind of facility, but the Ministers are getting these facilities for their treatment." 2(06) Senior business representative

> "[W]e grow vegetables - tomatoes, cabbage, onion - then the businessman will come from Tulsipur bazaar with a truck. He will fix the price, not the farmers. He fixes the price here, then he takes the vegetables, and sells them in the market for a much higher price. So the mediator, or the broker, get more benefit from farming than the farmers. The brokers get the money without the labour." 2(29) Maoist Centre District representative

These quotes are representative of the role of inequality in informing the construction of corruption in Ghorahi. Here, it is not suggested that the benefit of foreign medical treatment obtained by the political elite falls outside the system, or that there has been an abuse of power to obtain it. Rather, this falls into the language of corruption because of the distinction between what is available to an elite

and the perceived conditions faced by the wider population. Similar distinctions are found in discussion of brokers: the fact that benefit is obtained without the level of work seen to justify it informs the *dalal* concept, as does the contrast in the financial status of the broker and those they are seen to exploit.[62] In both regards, it is inequality which is central to the characterisation of these acts as corrupt.

Alongside the emphasis on inequality is the significance of motive in distinguishing legitimate and corrupt acts. This distinction is best expressed in the different judgements applied to those receiving and giving bribes. The motive ascribed to the giver is typically that of an 'ordinary' person overcoming the otherwise impassable barriers to access which exist in local government bureaucracy or elsewhere. Their power and agency in the situation is typically described as minimal, given the nature of the system.[63] The taker, by contrast, is seen as motivated by a mentality which emphasises wealth and status, and having the discretion to create artificial barriers to services in order to facilitate payment.[64] This contrasting motive, and the contrasts in power underlying it, result in a situation where bribery can be simultaneously widely condemned and widely practiced without contradiction.

The distinction between the giver and taker, and the perception of motive underlying this, is visible in the language the respondents use in describing acts of bribery. Most commonly, bribes are expressed as being taken (*ghus linu*)[65] rather than being given (*ghus dinu*),[66] with the act of the giver described instead with reference to the outcome they sought to achieve. References to bribes in exchange for faster completion of work or the guarantee that work will be completed within a single day are the most common characterisation applied to the giver.[67] This is widely seen as legitimate given the difficulties of travelling to the government offices in the city from the surrounding rural areas of the District.[68] This emphasises the power of the bureaucrat over the speed of the process, and therefore their responsibility for the transfer of bribes, whilst minimising that of the giver.

[62] 2(38) Agricultural business owner; 2(47) Furniture business owner; 2(51) Bookshop owner;
[63] 2(21) Journalist; 2(37) Tharu community representative; 2(40) Agricultural business owner
[64] 2(02) Journalist; 2(04) - Rastri Jan Mocha District representative; 2(53) Electrical business owner
[65] घुस लिनु – to take a bribe
[66] घुस दिनु – to give a bribe
[67] 2(02) Journalist; 2(04) Rastriya Janmorcha District Representative; 2(11) Legal professional
[68] 2(09) Journalist and gender rights activist; 2(54) Senior business representative; 2(83) Bank clerk

> "They are obliged to offer the money because without it they won't get the service on time. People know this, and so they come ready to offer the money. The bureaucrats are immoral, they want an extra income source, and so they collect the money from the people on a daily basis. Its only small amounts, 50/100/200, but they collect it very regularly from the people coming to access the government services." 2(02) Journalist

A third and final dimension to the divide between corrupt and legitimate acts comes in the focus on rapid changes in wealth, which combines elements of the theme of injustice and motive. Across the responses, the rapid transformation of wealth is often sufficient for the language of corruption as *bhrastachar* to be invoked, without necessarily requiring discussion of specific activities which might fall into the more conventional account of corruption.[69] This is typically informed by comparisons to the education and business background of those involved, and to the success or otherwise of 'normal' businesses and amongst the 'ordinary' population of the city.[70] Together, these form a standard of legitimate earnings, against which changes in wealth are judged.

As I discuss in Chapter Six, the role of rapid changes in wealth, and the comparison of this to a norm which defines legitimate earnings, is particularly significant to conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi because of its application to the former Maoist elite who settled in the city during the transition. However, this understanding of corruption based on illegitimate and unexplained wealth is far from solely applied to this group: examples of brokers, bureaucrats and political leaders outside of the Maoist party are also described in the language of corruption because of what the respondents see as unexplained changes in their wealth and status.[71] The example from 2(51) below focuses on brokers, and emphasises the perceived gap between the education and skills of this group and their apparent wealth, which is in itself sufficient to describe this activity as corruption.

> "Most of the brokers are not so educated, and not so talented or skilful. If anyone wants success in their life, it takes time, demands some skills, and demands some level of education. But a person who is not educated and not skilled, how can they get so much success in such a short time? Definitely there is suspicion about them. I think it's impossible to get success like that in legal ways. No one is getting that wealth in just a few years." 2(51) Bookshop owner

[69] 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(07) Journalist; 2(51) Bookshop owner
[70] 2(07) Journalist; 2(19) UML District representative; 2(21) Journalist
[71] 2(02) Journalist; 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(08) Journalist

The construction of corruption in Ghorahi is thus informed by socially-contingent standards of inequality, fairness and legitimacy. The distinction between the private and the public central to the accounts of corruption in much of the literature are comparatively less significant, as are the legal standards which form the official barriers between corrupt and legal behaviour in Nepal. These norms and the language invoked to describe them are fluid over different contexts and sets of actors, something central to the impacts of conflict on corruption described in the chapters to follow.

### 5.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have set out the context for the relationship between conflict and corruption which I discuss over the chapters to follow. In doing so, I first drew a number of distinctions between the characterisation of the 1996-2006 conflict in the literature and the experiences of those in Ghorahi. Here, I showed how the experiences of this urban population with close proximity to the RNA contrasts the common depiction of the conflict as a rural phenomenon. For those I interviewed, the conflict was experienced through one transformative act of PLA violence, and the fear and suppression which followed from the reactions of the security forces. However, I also argued that the post-2006 transition in Ghorahi has in many respects been shaped by news of the incremental gains in the centre, which reinforced changes in the restrictions and fear experienced in everyday life.

On corruption, I have set out the language which the respondents engaged in responses to general questions on corruption, and the set of standards and value judgements underlying the distinction between corrupt and legitimate behaviours in this context. I explained this distinction in terms of relative power, motives, inequality and the rapid transformation of wealth, across concepts relating to bribes (*ghus*), black markets (*kalo bazaar*) and brokers (*dalal).* The nature of corruption in this context stands apart from an often technocratic and legalistic discussions common in the wider literature, as I discussed in Chapter Two. It also demonstrates this fundamental dependence of corruption in this context on human agency, the key ontological condition of constructivism which I set out in Chapter Three.

The three chapters to follow build from this context to set out the three areas in which conflict has shaped the nature and extent of corruption in Ghorahi. Chapters Six to Eight are respectively focused on the transformation of the Maoist elite, on instability and politicisation in the central and local

governance system, and social change among rural and urban communities. After discussing each of these three relationships individually and in the specific context of Ghorahi, in Chapter Nine I return to the contextual discussion in this chapter to consider the broader transferability of these relationships, and the contribution of this analysis to the four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption which I set out in Chapter Two.

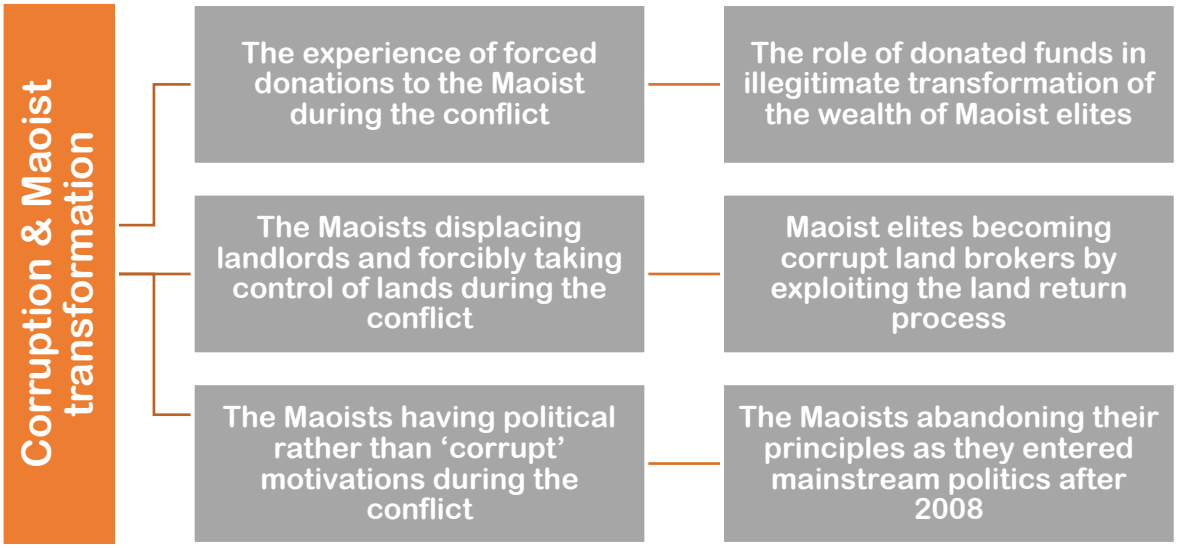
# Chapter Six: Corruption and the transformation of the Maoists

> "There were so many errors and problems with the governance system, and most people thought that the Maoists could change that. The Maoist demanded these changes in the system. Most people thought that they would change this system, and other problems in the society. But the Maoists became the problem." 2(83) Bank Clerk

## 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I set out the first of three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi; the corrupt transformation of the Maoist elites. I do so in three parts, summarised in Diagram 6.1A below. First, I discuss the respondents' experiences of forced donations to the Maoists during the conflict, and how this impacts the respondents' reflections on the Maoist elites who resettled in Ghorahi after the conflict. Second, I discuss the legacies of land capture by the PLA during the conflict and link this to the perception that Maoist elites have become brokers (*dalal*) during the transition. Finally, I discuss the respondents' reflections on the ideology of the Maoists and link this to perception that Maoist-led governments have failed to deliver on promises to marginalised communities since 2008. In concluding, I bring these three elements together, and show how the sense of inequality and injustice central to the construction of corruption in general is informed by the clash between these ideological reflections and the experience of forced donations and land control.

Diagram 6.1A - Corruption and the transformation of the Maoists



My focus on the Maoists in this chapter reflects the specific set of corruption dynamics which the respondents link to this group, and the root of these dynamics in their experiences of the conflict. Compared with the other major political parties represented in Ghorahi, the dynamics relating to the Maoists are more prominent in the responses, and are more directly related to the conflict. I discuss the other political parties active in Ghorahi in the broader context of changes in the governance system in Chapter Seven. The relationship I set out in this chapter is informed by 1,158 coded statements from 89 respondents, developed under the approach I set out in Chapter Four.

### 6.2 Corruption and forced donations to the Maoists

As I discussed in Chapter Five, clandestine demands for donations were a common element of the respondents' encounters with the Maoists during the conflict. Eleven years later, these encounters inform a widespread perception that mid-level[72] Maoist elites in Ghorahi have transformed their lifestyles through corrupt means. I show this in two parts: First, I discuss how the respondents frame forced donations in their accounts of the conflict period. Here I show that, despite threats of violence and the financial difficulties many faced, that the link from this aspect of conflict to corruption is not simply a reflection of resentment of these demands. Following this, I show that this link is instead informed by the radical transformation of the wealth of the Maoist elite since the conflict, the comparisons the respondents draw between this and the lack of change in their own lifestyles, and the fragmentation of the Maoists after the conflict.

The responses which inform the relationship between corruption and experiences of forced donations which I discuss in this section are summarised in Table 6.2A; grouped by the major themes of this discussion and the occupational category of the respondents. As shown, the responses informing this span all occupational categories, but are particularly concentrated amongst those working in a range of small businesses in Ghorahi bazaar. I discuss the factors underlying this concentration and variations

[72] 'Mid-level' refers to those relatively senior in the PLA and political movement during the conflict, but who did not have direct access to the top leadership. These elites now commonly hold District-level positions in the Maoist party, with the top-level elite predominantly residing in Kathmandu.

in how this relationship is constructed across the occupational categories and other aspects of the backgrounds of the respondents throughout this section and in Chapter Nine.

Table 6.2A – Sources & respondents[73]

| | Sources | References |
|---|---|---|
| Themes | 59 | 276 |
| Bargaining | 21 | 35 |
| Looting & other forms of fundraising | 9 | 16 |
| Targeting of demands | 21 | 37 |
| Transformation of wealth | 27 | 66 |
| Motives for demands | 20 | 26 |
| Use of force | 13 | 22 |
| Sources | 59 | 276 |
| Journalists | 11 | 25 |
| Business | 32 | 188 |
| Business representatives & civil society | 8 | 18 |
| Political party representatives | 5 | 40 |
| Legal representatives | 1 | 3 |
| Police & local government | 2 | 2 |

### 6.2.1 Forced donations in the conflict

Whilst largely absent from the literature on the financing of the Maoists (see, for example, Adhikari, 2014; Seddon, 2010; Upreti, 2006), demands for donations were amongst the most common direct experience of the Maoists across the respondents.[74] This is second only to being present in the city during 2001 PLA attack, the details of which I discussed in Chapter Five. For those without connections to the Maoist party, these demands for donations are described as an inescapable part of life during the height of the conflict. The level of RNA and police presence meant that demands were delivered in a clandestine manner, typically via letters and phone calls from Maoist cadres with knowledge of the city.[75] The inescapability of these demands is a central theme of the respondents' accounts, despite the distance between the respondents and the PLA throughout the conflict.

[73] The themes summarised here include only the elements central to the relationship developed here and as such the totals in the first row are greater than the sum of the themes listed below.
[74] It is discussed at some level by all 59 of those listed in Table 6.2A.
[75] 2(55) Electronics Business; 2(59) Auto Business

> "No one could escape from donations. When they requested, you had to pay. The amount could be different, if you could bargain and convince them the business wasn't so big they would reduce the amount, but no one could escape." 2(49) Animal supplies business owner

While demands for donations are widely described as inescapable for those without connections to the Maoists, the specific amount demanded was far from uniform. Based on comparing the experiences of respondents of differing backgrounds[76] and in the comparisons made by the respondents themselves,[77] the amounts demanded by Maoist cadres varied based on the individual's wealth and political connections. Despite the feeling of distance from the PLA before the 2001 attack, the respondents emphasise the ability of Maoist cadres to target their demands on those with greater ability to pay, and on those the Maoists saw as their political opponents; particularly members of the Nepali Congress or UML. The extent of this difference and the amounts paid in general vary significantly, with some such as 2(39) seeing themselves as particularly exploited because of their wealth.

> "It was very difficult … the small businessman had to pay 500, 1000, 5000, like this, but the big businessman had to pay 50,000 or 1 lakh.[78] It was different for the different business". 2(39) Agricultural equipment business owner

The emphasis the respondents place on wealth and political connections in their accounts of forced donations to the Maoists is linked to the wider theme of bargaining around these demands. Whilst the demands themselves were inescapable for the majority, those with personal connections to Maoist cadres are characterised as having been able to avoid making payment altogether.[79] Other forms of connection are also significant; for some of those in business, opportunities for bargaining arose where Maoist cadres were using their services in a clandestine manner,[80] whilst for others having family in Maoist controlled areas who had already provided donations proved an effective bargaining tool.[81]

[76] For example, 2(78), a factory owner, reported paying 200,000 on one occasion and 500,000 on another, whilst 2(82), the owner of a small bookshop, reports paying 500 on one occasion.
[77] 2(39) Agricultural business owner; 2(45) Publisher; 2(82) Bookshop owner;
[78] 100,000
[79] 2(11) Legal professional; 2(19) UML District representative; 2(43) Hotel owner
[80] 2(16) Journalist; 2(38) Agricultural business owner; 2(82) Bookshop Owner
[81] 2(55) Electronics Business owner

Leaders of business groups and civil society describe a collective role in this, and emphasise their successes in reducing the level of donations paid by those they represented.[82]

> "Did you face demands for donations from the Maoists?"
> "Not for any big amounts, just a request to provide some amount. I only gave 500 rupees, I told them that I was only selling books, not a big business. They were regularly getting books from me, so they were convinced." 2(82) Bookshop owner

Whilst significant, the emphasis that some respondents place on bargaining with the Maoists must be seen in the context of the threats of violence underlying the demand for donations. Despite the successes reported by some in reducing payment and the close proximity of the security forces, Maoist demands are widely seen to have been backed by a credible threat of targeted violence. Echoing the rural characterisation that the respondents apply to the PLA which I discussed in Chapter Five, the possibility of being kidnapped and forcibly taken to areas under Maoist control was a particularly common fear.[83] Direct experience of such violence is not widespread amongst the respondents, however the threat was clearly an influence on efforts to bargain. Indeed, as I discuss below, for many the payment of donations is framed as a worthwhile means of avoiding violence.

The demands for donations by the Maoists exacerbated the financial hardship widely felt during the conflict, even among the relatively wealthy.[84] When combined with the role of violence in the demands, it could be concluded that the perception of corruption now focused on Maoist elites in Ghorahi is an expression of feelings of injustice over these payments. The fact that this centres on a financial transaction could be judged to motivate the expression of this in terms of corruption, given the financial connotations of *bhrastachar* set out in Chapter Five. However, when the moral judgements that the respondents apply to these donations are considered, it is clear that this is not the case.

Whilst adding to the burden of the conflict, the judgements the respondents apply to the Maoists' demands for donations in discussions specific to the conflict time are mediated by variations in these demands based on wealth, and the possibility of bargaining. Rather than feelings of anger or exploitation,

[82] 2(41) Senior business representative; 2(50) Business community representative
[83] 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(49) Animal supplies business owner; 2(50) Business community representative
[84] 2(39) Agricultural business owner; 2(41) Senior business representative; 2(42) Factory owner

the respondents instead focus on their success in bargaining, or in the avoidance of payment altogether. The account from 2(50) below is typical of this, with the respondent first emphasising the struggles of the conflict, and second the drastic reduction in the demands from the Maoists he claims to have achieved. Donations are thus remembered as having been burdensome, but the moral judgement applied to this is influenced by how the demands were targeted and by the bargaining process.

> "The Maoists demanded a 12,000 donation from me. But I discussed with them - I said I don't have so much money, and I can't pay. I had to pay for my family and take care of all of the things for my business. I was facing a financial shortage. After bargaining, I provided only 500 rupees. I didn't pay 12,000, but only 500." 2(50) Business community representative

The judgement the respondents apply to forced donations during the conflict is also influenced by the protection from violence that the payments are seen to have provided. Despite the Maoists themselves being the source of the violence, making a donation is commonly framed as a route to relative security, meaning that doing so is widely seen as having been a worthwhile exchange.[85] The exact cause of this incongruity is difficult to determine, however it in part reflects the external nature of the PLA cadres believed to inflict the violence, compared with the more local Maoist cadres delivering demands for donations. Consequently, a willingness to provide donations at some level is a common theme of the responses, and doing so is seen as a legitimate exchange for projection from violence.

Compared with that applied to the payer, the judgement applied to the Maoist cadres extracting the payments within the conflict time is more contested. For respondents with links to the Nepali Congress and UML, the demand for donations indicates an exploitative core of the Maoist movement which was emboldened by the military power of the PLA. For these respondents, this is inherently linked to corruption.[86] However, for those outside of party politics, the opportunity that payment offered to avoid violence from the Maoists dominates the judgement applied. Indeed, respondents describe themselves as either not knowing or not caring about the use of the donated funds during the conflict time, so long as it provided a route to avoiding violence. The response from 2(79) is typical of this:

[85] 2(47) - Furniture Business; 2(48) - Shopkeeper; 2(50) - Hotel Owner
[86] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative

> "Did you feel more secure, having paid them?"
> "That's the main reason. Most people were afraid of the Maoists, if you provided donations, then you were safer from the Maoists." 2(79) Factory owner

The judgements applied to forced donations during the conflict resonates with those applied to public sector bribery, as I set out in Chapter Five. As with these bribes (*ghus*), those providing donations to the Maoists during the conflict are not themselves judged to be 'corrupt', with the threat of violence from the Maoists seen to justify the payments, and the inescapability of demands limiting the agency ascribed to the payer. However, it is not simply dissatisfaction with this which drives this link to corruption in the contemporary context. Rather, as I discuss next, it is the effect these donations are seen to have had on the Maoist elites who received them which links this to the respondents' perceptions of corruption in the post-conflict period.

### 6.2.2 Corruption after the conflict

The link between the demand for donations during the conflict and the contemporary experience of corruption in Ghorahi reflects three themes, which I discuss here: First, I discuss what the respondents see as the radical and public transformation of the lifestyles of Maoist elites in Ghorahi since the conflict. Second, I discuss the contrast the respondents draw between this radical transformation and the changes in their own lives, and the sense of what is possible through legitimate means informed by this. Finally, I discuss the contrast the respondents draw between the lifestyles of the Maoist elite and the former rank and file of the PLA, and how this fragmentation has reinforced perceptions of elite corruption.

In Chapter Five, I referred to the significant internal migration of former PLA combatants after their exit from cantonment, and the fact that large numbers of these former combatants had chosen to settle in Ghorahi. I further detailed that, despite the impacts of the conflict on Ghorahi, the presence of former PLA in the city is now widely accepted, and that this indicates the successful transformation of the Maoists from an armed group into the political mainstream. However, as I now discuss, the respondents also see this period of transition as one in which the lifestyles of mid-level Maoist elites in the city have been radically - and illegitimately - transformed.

The transformation of the lifestyles of the Maoist elite is typically described with reference to two status symbols: first, that since relocating to the city after the conflict, these elite have constructed large multi-storey buildings in the central market area for personal and business use.[87] Despite the wealth of the city relative to much of Nepal, and certainly to the neighbouring areas of Dang District,[88] such buildings are a recent addition to the city, and their construction is a matter of public notoriety. Second, that these elites are seen driving or being driven in large vehicles, owned either by the party or personally.[89] This is in a context in which travel either by public bus or by motorbike are visibly dominant, and travel in private cars is prohibitively expensive for many.[90] Other symbols of newly acquired wealth are associated with this group, but across the responses these two are by far the most common, and align with how the respondents describe wealth in the urban environment in general.

The fact that the Maoist elite in Ghorahi are seen to have acquired these symbols of wealth since the end of the conflict is noteworthy for the respondents in itself. Indeed, it is amongst the most common themes raised in discussions specific to this group in the post-conflict period and features widely across respondents of a range of backgrounds.[91] However, it is not the presence of this wealth alone which leads the respondents to connect this to corruption. Rather, this connection is supported by the perception that the scope and the speed of transformation is unexplainable by any legitimate means. This draws on the impoverished backgrounds widely associated with the Maoists at all but the highest levels of leadership, and perceptions of what change in wealth is possible through legitimate business activity.

The scope of the transformation in the wealth of the Maoist elite in Ghorahi is seen as particularly radical because of the consensus among the respondents that those involved in the Maoist movement during the conflict came from impoverished backgrounds. Whilst lacking specific details of the backgrounds of the Maoist elite who have settled in the city, the respondents' accounts of the backgrounds of these elites widely focus on precarious rural conditions.[92] Despite the fact that the PLA

[87] 2(19) UML District representative; 2(46) Auto business owner; 2(56) Medical business owner
[88] See Table 4.3A in Chapter Four
[89] 2(07) Journalist; 2(51) Bookshop owner; 2(57) Grocer
[90] Based on my own observations and discussions with LD
[91] 2(07) Journalist; 2(13) UML District representative; 2(42) Factory owner
[92] 2(19) UML District Representative; 2(82) Bookshop Owner; 2(55) Electronics Business

was recruited from across the country during the height of the conflict (Eck, 2010), this is supported by the association of the Maoists with Rolpa and Rukum Districts, references to which focus on their status as amongst the most impoverished areas of Nepal.[93] As 2(82) expresses, this widespread perception that the mid-level Maoist elites came from conditions of rural poverty accentuates the scope of the transformation in their lifestyles after the conflict:

> "It's very visible and obvious that their lifestyle is high. They were in the jungles at that time, they didn't have enough clothes to wear or enough food to eat at that time. But now we see that their lifestyles are very high, with their vehicles and buildings" 2(82) Bookshop owner

The scope of the transformation of wealth amongst the Maoist elite since the conflict is further reinforced by what the respondents see as the lack of change in their own lives over this same period. For the majority of respondents, the post-conflict period is characterised in terms of the return to normality in the wake of economic decline and restrictions placed on everyday life during the emergency period.[94] This is particularly true of those operating small businesses, who see the eleven years since the conflict as allowing for a return to normality in lifestyles, but not for radical improvement. This return to normality, and the recovery of what was lost because of the conflict, informs the respondents' understanding of what is possible through legitimate means, and provides the standard against which the transformation of the Maoist elite is compared. This is true of respondents across the wealth scale including those, like 2(80), who are themselves in a position of relative wealth and power:

> "They're wearing shoes that cost 10,000 rupees. I'm in business all my life, but I'm only wearing shoes costing 1,000 or 1,500! My situation is the same, but the Maoist leaders have changed so drastically." 2(80) Agricultural business owner

The scale of the transformation in lifestyles of the Maoist elites, informed by comparisons to the lives of 'ordinary' people and the background ascribed to these elites leads many to conclude that this change is unexplainable by legitimate means. Several respondents expressed this explicitly, using their experience in business as a standard of legitimate gain.[95] Because of the lack of a legitimate

[93] 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(20) Journalist; 2(82) Bookshop owner
[94] 2(11) - Legal Advocate; 2(16) Journalist; 2(42) Factory Owner;
[95] 2(51) Bookshop owner; 2(54) Senior business representative; 2(60) Electronics business owner

explanation, this transformation is widely seen as fundamentally corrupt. However, it is also in accounting for this gap that the respondents invoke their experiences of forced donations during the conflict, and through which the transformation is typically framed.[96] This provides an explicit mechanism which fills the gap between Maoist transformation and what is possible via legitimate means.

The link the respondents draw between their experiences of forced donation in the conflict and the transformation of the wealth of Maoist elites in the post-conflict period is on occasion discussed simply as Maoist elites keeping funds intended for the conflict for themselves.[97] Their position in the Maoist party during the conflict and transition is seen to have afforded this opportunity, and many are characterised as seizing upon it. However, it is also often discussed as these elites using the funds donated to launch businesses once they had relocated to the city, mirroring the actions of the top leadership.[98] The contribution of otherwise legitimate business activity to the wealth of these elites is thus also framed as corrupt, because it is seen as rooted in the exploitation of donated funds.

> "The Maoist leaders who became rich used the donation which they had collected in the conflict time, and used it in business. They expanded their business because of those funds, it was the main source to them." 2(43) Hotel owner

The perceived use of donations for personal rather than party benefit is seen to be fundamentally corrupt by the respondents, and aligns closely with conventional definitions of corruption focused on misuse of power which I discussed in Chapter Three. However, rather than legalistic or technocratic standards to define 'misuse', underlying this is a standard of fairness rooted in comparisons to ordinary life. Like the broker (*dalal*) concept which I introduced in Chapter Five, this is informed by the comparison between the inputs and outputs of work by ordinary people and elites.[99] The respondents' references to the ordinary people since the conflict thus serves not only to define the boundaries of what is possible through legitimate means, but what is fair to earn. The transformation of the Maoist elites, backed by comparisons of their backgrounds to their new lifestyles, is seen to violate this principle.

[96] 2(16) Journalist; 2(53) Electrical business owner; 2(80) Agricultural business owner
[97] 2(53) Electronics business owner; 2(55) Electronics business owner; 2(56) Medical business owner
[98] 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(48) Dairy business owner; 2(78) Factory Owner
[99] 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(43) Hotel owner; 2(55) Electronics business owner

In addition to comparisons to their own lifestyles, the violation of the principle of fairness is informed by the contrast the respondents draw between Maoist elites and the rank and file of the PLA after the conflict. As I discussed in Chapter Five, the respondents emphasise the normalisation of the former PLA rank and file in the city after the conflict, despite the impacts of the 2001 attack and emergency period on their lives. Informing this normalisation is the sense that this population have faced increasingly comparable livelihood challenges to the broader population of the city since their exit from cantonment, and are now living lives comparable to the general population.[100] Indeed, many expressed that former PLA rank and file are increasingly indistinguishable from the wider city population.

The 'ordinary' lives of the former PLA rank and file in Ghorahi reinforces two aspects of the respondents' perception of conflict-induced change in corruption: First, it enables a line to be drawn between those who remained connected to the Maoist party after the conflict, and thus who were able to benefit from donated funds, and those who separated from it. As is generally the case across the respondents' accounts of corruption, the party is seen as a mechanism by which corrupted funds are accessed or, at the least, the means of protecting corrupt gain.[101] The capacity of political leader to provide protection to those involved in corruption is a charge levied across the three major parties, however it is particularly acute in the case of the Maoists because of the transformation of elite wealth.

Second, the comparison between the different levels of the Maoist party in the post-conflict contributes further to the violation of the principle of fairness central to the construction of corruption amongst the respondents. Specifically, the elite are seen to have benefitted at the expense of the rank and file of the party who are widely seen as drawn from marginalised communities and impoverished rural areas.[102] The extent to which the respondents sympathise with the plight of former PLA since the conflict varies considerably, however the sense of abandonment by the elite as the party entered the political mainstream is common. The former PLA rank and file thus provide a standard of what is possible without political connections, and access to donated funds, as well as a symbol of the illegitimacy of the newly acquired wealth of the party elite.

[100] 2(03) Journalist and academic; 2(09) Journalist and ender Rights Activist; 2(60) Electronics business owner
[101] 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(16) Journalist; 2(24) Civil society organisation leader
[102] 2(03) Journalist and academic; 2(08) Journalist; 2(49) Animal supplies business owner

6.2.3 Summary

Demands for donations were amongst the most common experiences of the conflict, and were central to the respondents' direct interactions with the Maoists. The pressures of the conflict period lead the respondents to frame these demands in terms of minimising their exposure to violence. Because of this, how the donated money was spent during this time was unknown to the respondents and was also largely irrelevant to their motivations for providing the money. However, after the conflict, the radical transformation of the wealth of the Maoist elite who settled in the city has led these demands to be central to the perception of corruption. This perception combines the experience of donation with a radical and rapid transformation in wealth, unexplainable by legitimate means, with the continuity in everyday conditions of the respondents, and with the lives of the former PLA rank and file.

> "So many leaders have changed their lives dramatically. They said that they were poor in the conflict time, for example one leader was a dry cleaner, who used to just wash clothes, but now he's the wealthiest person in the bazaar. He has his vehicles, lots of land. Everyone knows he's misused the money". 2(60) Electronics business owner

## 6.3 Corruption and land control

The experience of forced donations and the corruption dynamics linked to this is the single most significant aspect of conflict-induced change in corruption specific to the Maoists across the respondent group. However, this element of conflict-induced change in corruption is also informed by the legacies of Maoist land control during the conflict, and issues arising in the land return process. As I discuss here, the theme of land control constitutes a further mechanism by which the Maoist elite in Ghorahi are seen to have illegitimately transformed their lifestyles through the conflict and transition. This adds to this the sense that elements of the mid-level Maoist elite have become corrupt brokers (*dalal*).

The respondent group which informs the theme of land control is summarised in Table 6.2B. As shown, this primarily consists of those from political and media backgrounds. This reflects the largely external nature of land control issues to the life of urban populations during the conflict and subsequently. However, this group includes two respondents[103] who reported to have been the victims of displacement from their lands in rural areas of Dang by the Maoists, and who came to live in Ghorahi

[103] 1(10) Landlord; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative;

as a result of this displacement. It also contains three with direct involvement in the land return process,[104] and one with direct experience of the capture of government lands through his work in the District Police.[105] This, along with the experience of a number of journalists,[106] provides a diverse and detailed insight into this legacy of the conflict for corruption.

Table 6.3A – Sources & respondents

| | Sources | References |
|---|---|---|
| Themes | 30 | 338 |
| Nature of Land Control in the Conflict | 23 | 80 |
| Impacts on Affected Populations | 17 | 78 |
| Maoists as Brokers | 16 | 48 |
| Resolution Process | 11 | 48 |
| | | |
| Sources | 30 | 338 |
| Journalists | 8 | 81 |
| Business | 7 | 36 |
| Business Representatives & Civil Society | 7 | 83 |
| Political Party Representatives | 5 | 113 |
| Legal Representatives | 1 | 8 |
| Police & Local Government | 2 | 17 |

### 6.3.1 Land control in the conflict

The redistribution of lands was a central aspect of Maoist ideology at the outset of the conflict (Bhattarai, 1996; Joshi & Mason, 2010). This focus on land was driven by the concentration of subsistence agriculture amongst historically marginalised communities and the historic links between landholding and political power. Whilst variable across Nepal, the literature describes the often violent displacement of landlords as the Maoists expanded their control over rural areas during the conflict (Joshi & Mason, 2007; Khalil, 2012), and some efforts to initiate land redistribution via Village People's Governments in the Maoist base areas (De Sales, 2013). Drawing on the Chinese experience, the Maoist leadership sought an end to feudal land relations and a move to collective farming (Wickeri, 2011).

[104] 1(19) District Peace Committee Member; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative;
[105] 1(28) Senior Police Officer
[106] 1(08) Journalist and social activist; 2(07) Journalist; 2(08) Journalist

Despite the transformation the Maoists achieved in their base areas, Maoist land control in the rural areas surrounding Ghorahi is described by the respondents as going little beyond the displacement of landlords, and the symbolic declaration of lands being under Maoist control.[107] Indeed, the presence of PLA and Maoist party cadres on these lands is seen as having been rare even at the height of the conflict. The Maoists are instead characterised in a reactionary fashion; being present only if there was an attempt to reassert control by former landlords, or in response to pressure by the security forces on the farmers using these lands.[108] As with demands for donations, landlords associated with rival political parties are seen to have been more vulnerable than those without political affiliations, and the often absent owners of large plots of land more vulnerable than local landlords.[109]

Owing to the presence of the security forces in Ghorahi, Maoist land control during the conflict most affected the southern areas of Dang, particularly the relatively isolated Deukhuri valley. This is described by the respondents as reflecting the larger landholdings, and with this wealthier landlords, concentrated in this comparatively flat and fertile area of the District.[110] The closest instance of Maoist landholding to Ghorahi indicated by the respondents was a Tharu-majority village of Bargaddi, approximately 10 kilometres from the central bazaar. This village is notorious because of the mass killing of up to 17 farmers by the RNA which followed the Maoist incursion.[111] However, both the confinement of the security forces to the urban centre and the inability of the District police to protect even their own lands from capture[112] implies a widespread pattern of Maoist land control across Dang.

Whilst there is relative consensus over the scope of displacement of landlords, the impacts of Maoist land control on affected populations in Dang is contested. Representatives from the historically landless Tharu community (McDonaugh, 1997) and of landless peoples in general, attest to the significance of promises of land reform in driving support for the Maoists among their communities.

[107] 1(17) Journalist; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(17) Landlessness activist
[108] 1(17) Journalist; 2(46) Auto business owner
[109] 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(19) UML District Representative
[110] 2(13) UML District Representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(17) Landlessness activist
[111] 1(17) Journalist; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative
[112] 1(28) Senior police officer

Exploitative landholding practices, often involving forced labour and servitude, are described by these respondents as driving the impoverished condition and discrimination of their communities. The displacement of landlords is described by these leaders as having brought some improvement in condition during the conflict by ending these exploitative practices. This is presented as a radical period of transformation in livelihoods and rights, in the context of incremental improvement.[113]

> "They could plough and use the land to their benefit. If anyone tried to dominate or exploit them, they could get the support of the Maoist party, and they would target them." 2(17) Landlessness Activist

The two direct victims of Maoist displacement,[114] the journalists who reported on these issues[115] and those involved in the land return process after the conflict[116] acknowledge elements of these benefits to landless populations from Maoist land capture in general. However, they also emphasise the gap between the realities of Maoist land distribution in Dang and the party's rhetoric. In particular, they point to the continuation of sharecropping arrangements, in which the Maoists demanded crops after landlords were displaced, and the lack of legal title granted to famers using lands under Maoist control. Their conclusion from this is that there was little material change for farmers during the conflict, with the Maoist cadres argued to have taken a comparable role to the landlords that they had displaced, and thus failing to deliver on a central aspect of their ideology.

> "When the Maoists captured the land during the conflict, they changed the system so the half of the amount would go to the Maoist party, rather than the landowner. So they still lost half of what they produced, and the Maoist party benefitted from this." 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative

My focus on the experiences of those in urban Ghorahi means that the voices of farmers in communities affected by Maoist land control are necessarily absent from this discussion. Because of this, I cannot reconcile the competing accounts of the impacts of Maoist land control on farmers in the

[113] 2(23) Magar community representative; 2(35) Tharu community representative; 2(36) Tharu community representative
[114] 1(10) Landlord; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative
[115] 2(03) Journalist and academic; 2(07) Journalist; 2(08) Journalist
[116] 1(19) District Peace Committee member; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative

areas surrounding Ghorahi, and do not seek to do so. However, despite this lack of direct experience for many in this sub-set of the respondent group, for those in the media, local government and party politics in particular, land control remains one of the central themes by which the activities of the Maoists during the conflict are understood. As I discuss next, issues in the land return process and in particular in the sense that Maoist cadres have transformed themselves into brokers since the conflict is significant to conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi.

### 6.3.2 Corruption after the conflict

The small group of respondents[117] who were directly connected to the management of captured lands in the post-conflict period characterise this process as an informal and protracted series of negotiations between Maoist cadres, landlords, farmers, and various interlocutors. These processes were initiated in lieu of clarity from the central and local government over the conditions in which land should be returned, itself a reflection of the contestation over land return in the centre (Adhikari, 2011). Rather than disputes over ownership, the often drastic increase in the value of the land and an ideologically-driven reluctance of the Maoist cadres to allow landlords to return are perceived by these respondents as the primary causes of tension and delay. This emphasis on the obstructionist tendencies of Maoist cadres in part reflects the political makeup of those directly involved in the land return process,[118] but is broadly consistent with the view of journalists from a range of political backgrounds.[119]

Echoing that discussed in relation to forced donations, responses specific to the complexities in the land return process after the conflict focus on the group of mid-level elites who resettled in Ghorahi. Across those with and without direct connection to the land return process, the return of displaced landlords and the re-establishment of their claims to land highlights their capacity to determine the outcomes of negotiations over land with few consequences. This power is described as stemming from the influence of Maoist elites on the small communities from which landlords were displaced, and the

[117] 1(10) Landlord; 1(18) District Peace Committee member; 1(19) District Peace Committee member; 1(28) Senior police officer; 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(17) Landlessness activist; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative
[118] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative
[119] 1(08) Journalist and social activist; 2(07) Journalist; 2(08) Journalist

use (or abuse) of the voice of these communities in the negotiation with landlords. Fear of violence is also seen as contributing to this, but declined as the PLA demobilised and as the Maoists entered the political mainstream through the 2008 elections.[120]

> "The Maoists had created pressure against the landowner, which meant that he could not return to there. The Maoists were also not ready to return the land without a payment. The Maoists told him that he could either sell the land, and that there would be no problem after that, or he could not, but either way that he could not return." 2(08) Journalist

The theme of fragmentation is also key to how the respondents characterise those Maoist elites involved in the capture of lands. Across respondents involved[121] and uninvolved[122] in the land return process, the central and District level Maoist party is described as having often reached a compromise with landowners, which typically allowed them to return. However, the elites directly occupying the lands are seen to have resisted these higher level settlements and to have continued to negotiate for payments and control. To these respondents, this vertical fragmentation of the Maoist party explains why, despite the agreements reached by those affected there remains a number of areas of land under the control of mid-level Maoist elites in Dang District. These lands are for the most part those belonging to the police, colleges and temples, rather than those of individual landlords.

The emphasis on the power of the mid-level Maoist elites over the return of captured lands further informs the sense that these elites have illegitimately benefited from the conflict. The legacies of conflict-era land control are described as contributing to the radical transformation of the wealth of mid-level Maoist elites, adding to that relating to forced donations. The manner in which this characterised is in some aspects straightforward; those connected to issues of land control and elements of the wider respondent group see Maoist elites as having benefitted from the sale of captured lands, and from payments taken from returning land owners as a condition of sale.[123] This is perceived to further explain the wealth and success of these elites in business since the end of the conflict, and is characterised as fundamentally illegitimate and, through this illegitimacy, as corrupt.

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[120] 1(28) Senior police officer; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative
[121] 1(19) District Peace Committee member; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative
[122] 1(24) Human rights activist; 2(07) Journalist; 2(08) Journalist
[123] 2(07) Journalist; 2(11) Legal professional; 2(39) Agricultural business owner

The link from conflict era land control to the respondents' perceptions of corruption is not, however, solely built on the financial contribution of funds gained through this process to the transformation of the wealth of the Maoist elite. Rather, it is also informed by the perception that these elites have transitioned into a broker (*dalal*) role which, as I set out in Chapter Five, is one of the core concepts by which the respondents understand corruption. This is expressed in explicit references to Maoist elites as land brokers by two respondents.[124] However, in general this exists through the subtler parallels which several respondents draw between these elites and brokers in other contexts.

> "The Maoist leaders who captured the lands became the brokers who sold the land. They got the lands through the conflict for a cheap price, and then sold it to others. They would threaten the landowners, and say that they can sell the land for a low price to them, or they would capture the land, and stop the landowner from using it." 2(11) Legal professional

The likening of the mid-level Maoist elite to brokers rests on two themes specific to accounts of their involvement in land control during and after the conflict, and one general to the nature of those involved in the trade of land. On this more general point, the respondents characterise the land selling process as bureaucratic and complex, and one in which barriers to direct engagement between buyer and seller are exploited.[125] The act of engaging in this business as a mediator is therefore widely seen as questionable in itself, with the gains ascertained widely described as far exceeding their contribution to the process.[126] This mis-match between the input and output of work is central to the broader construction of corruption through inequality and injustice, as I discussed in Chapter Five.

Second, the Maoist elites involved in the sale or control of captured lands are judged to have exploited the fear present immediately after the conflict to obtain further profits.[127] The exploitation of fears exacerbates the wider sense of exploitation associated with the barriers to the trade in land, and through this contributes to the sense of illegitimacy. The focus of the respondents on the power of these elites is central within this; both in their capacity to prevent the return of landlords many years after the end to violence, and in their capacity to resist directives for land return within their own party. They are

[124] 2(08) Journalist; 2(11) Legal professional
[125] 2(02) Journalist; 2(04) Rastriya Janmorcha District representative; 2(07) Journalist
[126] 2(21) Journalist; 2(38) Agricultural business owner; 2(40) Agricultural business owner
[127] 1(10) Landlord; 2(07) Journalist; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative

thus seen to benefit from the protection offered by connection to the Maoist party, as I set out in Section 6.2, but also from the degree of autonomy resulting from the fragmentation of the Maoist movement as it transformed into a mainstream political party after the conflict.

Finally, despite consensus amongst the respondents that the vast majority of personal lands captured by Maoists during the conflict have been returned to the original landowner or has been sold, the elites who profited from this are characterised as continuing in the broker (*dalal*) role in the long term.[128] As with the role of conflict-era donations in the establishment of businesses after the conflict, the root of their capacity to engage in this business in assets seized in the conflict further delegitimises this ongoing business activity. This impact of the conflict for corruption is therefore not confined to the resolution of the small group of cases in which captured lands are still held by Maoist cadres, but rather is seen to have facilitated these elites in joining what to many is a fundamentally corrupt profession.

#### 6.3.3 Summary

While the urban nature of the respondent group means few were directly exposed to Maoist land capture during the conflict, the legacies of conflict-era land capture contribute to the respondents' perceptions of corruption among the mid-level Maoist elites. Compared with forced donations, those who emphasised this link were overwhelmingly drawn from those with political, media and activist backgrounds, however the degree of consensus across these groups indicates that it is far from motivated by political opposition to the Maoists alone. Rather, as well as providing further explanation for the radical transformation of the wealth of the mid-level Maoist elite, this is informed by the perceived transformation of these elites into land brokers, and the belief that these brokers have been the principal beneficiaries of land capture in the decade since the end of the conflict.

## 6.4 Corruption and the motivations of the Maoists

The transformation of the Maoist elite after the conflict, and the roots of this in forced donations and land capture, is central to the contemporary perception of corruption amongst the respondents. To complete this link, I now turn to how the respondents reflect on the motives and principles of the Maoists

[128] 2(08) Journalist; 2(11) Legal professional; 2(39) Agricultural business owner

in initiating the conflict, and in particular to the theme that the Maoists have deviated or 'forgotten' these principles in the post-conflict period. This further explains how corruption focused on the mid-level elite in Ghorahi not only reflects their financial gain since the conflict, but also the values that this is seen to violate. The responses which inform the link between are summarised in Table 6.2C.

Table 6.4A – Sources & respondents

| | **Sources** | **References** |
|---|---|---|
| Themes | 65 | 325 |
| Abandoning Principles | 33 | 140 |
| Fragmentation | 12 | 37 |
| Maoist Party Perspectives | 4 | 31 |
| Principles & Motives | 41 | 100 |
| Recruitment | 18 | 32 |
| | | |
| Sources | 65 | 325 |
| Journalists | 15 | 84 |
| Business | 20 | 65 |
| Business Representatives & Civil Society | 10 | 36 |
| Political Party Representatives | 9 | 132 |
| Legal Representatives | 1 | 7 |
| Police & Local Government | 1 | 1 |

### 6.4.1 Motivations in the Conflict

The respondents' accounts of the motives of the Maoists focuses on an overlapping set of priorities to the demands set out by the movements' leadership before the conflict (Bhattarai, 1996; Bhushan, 2016). Most commonly, the respondents highlight caste and ethnic discrimination as central to the ideology and motivation of the Maoist leadership in starting their armed campaign, and their broader focus on historically marginalised communities and those in poverty in rural areas. Because of demographics of Dang District (NepalMap, 2018), the respondents commonly highlight the particular focus of the Maoists on the Tharu community, which is seen by Tharu[129] and non-Tharu[130] respondents alike as having been excluded from political power, education and access to land across Nepali history.

[129] 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(35); Tharu community representative; 2(36) Tharu community representative; 2(37) Tharu community representative
[130] 1(08) Journalist and activist; 2(23) Magar community representative; 2(17) Landlessness activist

Within conversations specific to the ideological motivations of the Maoists, explicit references to communism appear only among the handful of respondents connected to Maoist party politics.[131] This is, however, consistent with how the Maoist leadership sought to convey their ideology, which focused on the translation of communist principles to the conditions of Nepal, rather than imposing a model of communism from elsewhere (Bhushan, 2016; Upreti, 2006). An absence of explicit references to communism thus does not imply that the respondents characterise the Maoists as divergent from these principles, however they understand them. Rather, as has historically been the case in Nepal (Gellner, 1997: 175; Lawoti, 2010), this reflects an alignment of 'communism' with anti-feudalism, republicanism, democratisation, and rights for oppressed communities.

The connection the respondents draw between the Maoists and marginalised groups is particularly apparent in their accounts of PLA recruitment during the conflict. While for some the Maoist leadership are seen to have exploited the vulnerability of marginalised communities to drive recruitment rather than sincerely 'believing' in these principles,[132] cynical motives are not ascribed to those from these communities. Rather, the legitimacy and necessity of change for historically marginalised communities is seen as the key driving force for those recruited into the rank and file of the PLA. This is particularly evident in responses from Magar and Tharu community leaders,[133] but is more widely present across respondents of all backgrounds.[134]

> "[T]hey had the slogan to release the Tharu people from slavery. At that time there was the bonded labour system, and 98% of those involved in that system were from the Tharu community. They were oppressed by the so-called upper castes. So the Tharu people thought that, if we participate in the Maoist movement then we will be released from this system". 2(15) Tharu community representative

The respondents' characterisations of the motives of the Maoists are broadly consistent with accounts of these motives in the literature (Eck, 2010; Subedi, 2013). Where they differ is in the lack of

[131] 2(04) Rastriya Janmorcha District Representative; 2(10) Nepal Communist Party District representative; 2(33) Maoist Centre District representative
[132] 1(08) Journalist and activist; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative
[133] 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(23) Magar community representative; 2(36) Tharu community representative; 2(37) Tharu community representative
[134] 2(16) Journalist; 2(17) Landlessness activist; 2(31) Senior member of District government

references to violence as driving elements of marginalised communities towards the Maoists. This reflects the urban nature of the respondent group which, as I discussed in Chapter Five, isolated them from the routine violence from the security forces common to areas in which many PLA combatants were recruited (Pettigrew, 2004). The respondents' focus on discrimination, and the set of promises for radical change they see the Maoists as having made to historically marginalised communities, thus may overstate the significance of this to those recruited to the PLA. However, across the respondent group, these promises are nonetheless central to the understanding of Maoist recruitment.

The respondents' understandings of Maoist ideology and recruitment is thus centred on the theme of discrimination, with the Maoists' leadership seen as promising radical change for marginalised communities. When discussing this, I asked many of the respondents about the extent to which they view corruption as relevant to the ideology of the Maoists during the conflict. I did so with the intention of examining specific experiences of Maoists targeting those involved in corruption, but also to understand how the respondents connect the Maoists and corruption during the conflict period, given the characterisation applied to the mid-level Maoist elite in the post-conflict.

Across the respondents, none - including current Maoist party officials[135] - suggest that corruption was a primary motivation for the Maoist leadership. For the small group of current and former Maoist party members interviewed, change in corruption is described as having been included in the fundamental change in the governance system they sought through the conflict, rather than something which required explicit attention. For these respondents, corruption is inherent to what they see as the feudal structure of power in Nepal throughout its history. However, for the wider respondent group the issues of marginalisation discussed above dominate how the Maoists are characterised, and several were directly dismissive of the suggestion that corruption was significant to the Maoists in the conflict.[136]

> "We wanted to change the corruption system by changing the whole governance system"
> 2(33) Maoist Centre District representative

[135] 1(14) Social activist and former PLA combatant; 1(15) Social activist and former PLA combatant; 2(29) Maoist Centre District representative; 2(33) Maoist Centre District representative
[136] 2(09) Journalist and gender rights activist; 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(55) Electronics business owner

The exception to the trend across the respondents on the link between Maoists ideology and corruption comes from the small group of journalists and businessmen who briefly experienced rural areas under Maoist control.[137] In these responses, the Maoists are described as having targeted businessmen and traders they judged to be engaged in exploitative black market selling (*kalo bazaar*). As I discussed in Chapter Five, rather than an inherent reflection of their informality, black markets fall into the language of corruption where they are seen to entail exploitation, and it is exploitation through price that the Maoists are described as responding to. This is, however, framed as part of the wider focus of the Maoists on marginalised communities and the targeting of those seen as exploiters in rural settings. These acts are thus seen as a means to an ideological end, rather than a priority.

> "[W]hen anyone tried to start a black market to access the goods, the Maoists in the villages would control these, and so no one tried to do this kind of activity openly. Some businesses may have tried to get involved in that kind of market, but when they would try to sell goods for a high price on the black market then the Maoists were there with their People's Governments, and they would punish the people who were involved in the black market. 2(06) Senior business representative

The combination of these factors leads corruption to be largely absent from the respondents' understandings of motivations of the Maoists. Rather, issues of discrimination and empowerment epitomise Maoist ideology to the respondents, and are seen to have formed the primary appeal of the movement to those recruited by the PLA. Despite their experiences of the post-conflict period, the respondents remain largely uncynical about these motivations, particularly at the level of the PLA rank and file. However, as I discuss next, the perception that the Maoists reneged on these promises after the conflict reinforces the perception of corruption specific to forced donations and land control.

### 6.4.2 Corruption after the conflict

In Chapter Five, I discussed how the transformation of the Maoists from an armed to a political force at the central level resonates with those I interviewed in Ghorahi. This is despite the respondent group containing many who were either political opponents of the Maoists during the conflict and subsequently, who were subject to violence or intimidation by the PLA during the conflict, or who were

[137] 2(02) Journalist; 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(07) Journalist

direct witnesses to the 2001 PLA attack. The discussion above built on this, arguing that the majority of respondents do not view the Maoists as initiating the conflict for cynical ends. Rather, the respondents largely describe an overlapping set of ideological claims to the Maoists themselves.

The respondents' accounts of the ideology of the Maoists informs their perceptions of corruption through the view that, since the conflict, the Maoists have abandoned their radical programme of change. This discussion focuses on the failed expectations for change by the Maoists as a political force in Kathmandu, which reinforces the perception of corruption linked to Maoist elites in Ghorahi. Following the emphasis of the respondents, I discuss this in three elements; first, the expectations of the Maoists whilst in government since 2008, second the specific set of expectations around land reform, and finally the comparison to the Maoist splinter groups which have emerged since 2006.

The respondents with backgrounds in the media[138] and in rival political parties[139] speak specifically about the actions of the first Maoist government, and the expectations of the party at this time. They suggest that, given the sweeping gains made by the Maoist party in the 2008 elections and the wider mood of the country after the conflict, that the Maoists were given a clear opportunity to govern, and to implement a radical programme of change. Whilst not expressed in the same analytical terms, respondents outside of politics and the media[140] speak of similar expectations of the Maoists during this time. Both highlight the changes occurring in the structure of the political system, but also expectations for change in their everyday lives, and those of the marginalised communities.

In common with the literature which I discussed in Chapter Five, the Maoist party representatives I interviewed emphasise the radical changes in the system of governance since 2006, particularly its republican and federal character.[141] These are characterised both as direct achievements of the Maoist party through the conflict, and as a sign of the party delivering on elements of its promised programme of change. The Maoists I interviewed, however, are not naive to the lack of transformation in everyday lives felt amongst many of the people, particularly those from marginalised communities.

[138] 2(03) Journalist and academic; 2(09) Journalist and gender rights activist; 2(20) Journalist
[139] 2(04) Rastriya Janmorcha District Representative; 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative
[140] 2(41) Senior business representative; 2(56) Medical business owner; 2(83) Bank Clerk
[141] 2(29) Maoist Centre District representative; 2(33) Maoist Centre District representative

The quote below from 2(33), a senior Maoist figure at the District level, encapsulates this tension, and what they see as yet to be delivered of the promises made during the conflict:

> "The main achievement of the conflict was its political achievements - the political system was transformed. At the moment when we talk about the ordinary life of the common people, we don't see so many changes in general life. But the political change will lead to changes in everyday life - political change will create economic improvement, and change in the everyday status of the people." 2(33) - Maoist Centre District representative

Whilst in many cases acknowledging the scope of political change in Nepal since the end of the conflict, for the respondents as a whole the continuity in everyday life acknowledged by respondents such as 2(33) drives a sense of unmet expectations of the Maoists in government. Specific to governance, there is a common sense that, despite the changes in the centre, experiences of government services at the local level have largely remained constant for ordinary people. Central to this is continuity in experiences of bribery when accessing local government services, the single most common form of corruption directly experienced by the respondents, which is seen as having survived the transition unchanged.[142] Given the radical ideology the respondents associate with the Maoists from the conflict, this continuity has led to a sense of unmet expectations for change in everyday life since the conflict.

> "We've seen political change, and change in the overall system, but from the perspective of the ordinary people they don't see practical changes in their daily lives. When we go to the government office … we face the same problems we always have. There is not a good response from the bureaucrats, and there is not a systematic way to do their work. This type of problem is still there." 2(51) Bookshop owner

The sense of continuity in everyday life, and therefore of unmet expectations for radical change by the Maoists, is also informed by the manner in which conflict-era land capture has been resolved across Dang District. Whilst direct experience of land return is confined to a small sub-set of the respondents, the issues of land redistribution and access are central in how many respondents describe the ideology of the Maoists as an armed group. The perception that Maoist-led governments have facilitated the return of lands to wealthy landowners, and that this has been at the expense of farmers from marginalised communities,[143] therefore stands in direct contrast to the motivations they ascribe to

[142] 2(17) Landlessness activist; 2(43) Hotel owner 2(51) Bookshop owner
[143] 2(03) Journalist and academic; 2(11) Legal professional; 2(17) Landlessness activist

the Maoists during the conflict. This, in combination with the sense that the Maoist party had an opportunity to govern, reinforces to the perception that the Maoists abandoned their principles.

> "The landlords have got the property back, and the documents that some people were given by the People's Courts in the conflict mean nothing. Not even the Maoist party will recognise the documents from the People's Courts now they are in government. If they don't recognise these, no one will." 2(03) Journalist and academic

The continuity of everyday life and accounts of the land return process serve not only to limit the achievements of the Maoists in the eyes of many of the respondents, but through this also exacerbate the perception of corruption specific to Maoist elites in Ghorahi. Most directly, the lack of radical land redistribution by Maoist-led governments in Kathmandu exacerbates the perception of corruption associated with Maoist elites in the city. Here, the wealth of the mid-level Maoist elites who have assumed a broker (*dalal*) role stands in contrast to the perceived fortunes of landless and other marginalised peoples.[144] This contributes to the sense of injustice and inequality central to the understanding of corruption amongst the respondents, as I discussed in Chapter Five.

A final nuance in the effects of the changing principles of the Maoists on the perception of corruption focused on the Maoist elite in Ghorahi comes in the comparison between the Maoist party and the splinter parties which have emerged since 2006. Amongst the many groups active across Nepal (Hachhethu, 2008), Nekra Bikram Chand's Nepal Communist Party, widely referred to as the 'Biplap Maoists', is used as a common point of comparison by respondents. As well as through the theoretical sampling process I described in Chapter Four, I developed this theme through drawing the attention of respondents to graffiti painted by cadres of the Biplap Maoists across the city.

Whilst a fringe political force with little support amongst the respondents, the Biplap Maoists are significant because they are seen by some to embody the revolutionary nature of the Maoists during the conflict. Echoing the actions ascribed to the Maoists during the conflict, efforts by the Biplap Maoist cadres to inflict symbolic punishments on those linked with prominent corruption scandals in Ghorahi and to capture lands were highlighted by a small group of respondents.[145] This particularly concentrated

[144] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(41) Senior business representative
[145] 1(09) Journalist; 2(06) Senior Business Representative; 2(11) - Legal professional

on the punishment applied by cadres of the Biplap Maoists to the contractor involved in a delayed road building project on a major route out of the city, as described by 2(06) below. This punishment is seen as having been delivered in lieu of effective action by the city government.[146]

> "[T]his Maoist faction, the one led by Biplap, punished him by smearing oil on his face, symbolically. They said that he was a corrupt man, so they punished him like this. This was a punishment like what was handed out during the conflict time by the People's Governments" 2(06) Senior Business Representative

As a whole, the respondents do not view the type of direct action and symbolic punishments associated with the Biplap Maoists as a sustainable solution to corruption. However, to some the comparison of this group to the mainstream Maoist party further highlights the extent to which the Maoists have failed to deliver radical change since the conflict, including on corruption, despite their opportunity to govern. It also highlights the extent to which the Maoist party has dropped their 'radical' approach toward historically margined communities, and have abandoned their principles through the transition. In this regard, the responses from those within and outside of the Biplap Maoists are alike; both emphasise that, through their transition to the political mainstream, the Maoists themselves are seen to have become part of the corruption problem. 2(83) summarises this as follows:

> "There were so many errors and problems with the governance system, and most people thought that the Maoists could change that. The Maoist demanded these changes in the system. Most people thought that they would change this system, and other problems in the society. But the Maoists became the problem." 2(83) Bank clerk

### 6.4.3 Summary

The final component of this first element of conflict-induced change in corruption linked the abandonment of the principles that the respondents associated with Maoists during the conflict with contemporary perceptions of corruption amongst the mid-level Maoist elite. The clash between the expectations of change specific to the Maoists with the reality they have been seen to deliver whilst in government reinforces to the respondents the sense that the Maoists, as 2(83) put it, "became the problem".[147] This shares a symbiotic relationship with perceptions of corruption specific to mid-level

[146] 2(07) Journalist; 2(24) Civil society organisation leader; 2(57) Grocer
[147] 2(83) Bank clerk

Maoist elites in Ghorahi: perceptions of the failure of Maoist governments to control corruption and to deliver the broader changes expected are reinforced by experiences of corruption amongst their cadres locally. Simultaneously, the involvement of mid-level Maoist elites in Ghorahi in land brokerage and the radical transformation in their wealth is particularly illegitimate because of the failings of the party to deliver on these promises whilst in government.

### 6.5 Conclusions

In Chapter Five, I showed that the respondents view the Maoists as a transformed force - associating the movement with party politics far more than its insurgent past, both at the central level and in their view of Maoist cadres in Ghorahi. I concluded from this that one of the central successes of the peacebuilding process in Nepal highlighted by the literature largely resonates with the experience of those that I interviewed. In this chapter, I have demonstrated how perceptions of corruption among those I interviewed have been shaped by the actions of the Maoists during the conflict, and this otherwise successful transformation from an armed to a political force.

The link developed in this chapter started with one of the most common experiences of the Maoists during the conflict - the demand for donations. Here, I highlighted that for many, the payment of donations was justified by the escape from violence that it facilitated, and that these payments formed a means by which the respondents coped with the conflict. I went on to show, however, that the radical transformation of the wealth of mid-level Maoist elites in Ghorahi since 2006 has meant that these demands for donations now represent the perceived roots of corruption in the conflict. The framing of this as corruption reflects the contrast the respondents draw against the lack of radical change in their own livelihoods since the conflict, and the conditions of the former rank and file of the PLA.

The second element of the relationship focused on land capture. Whilst secondary to the influence of forced donations, I showed how the management of lands captured by the Maoists during the conflict has led to Maoist elites in Ghorahi being further associated with corruption in the post-conflict period. Drawing on the characterisation of the broker (*dalal*) role I discussed in Chapter Five, I showed how this informs the construction of corruption in Ghorahi both in the sense that it contributes to perceptions of an illegitimate transformation of elite wealth, but also that it leads the respondents to

liken the Maoist elites with a category of business seen to be fundamentally corrupt. Far from being confined to lands captured during the conflict, I showed how this has been seen to enable the permanent transformation of these elites into brokers.

In the final area of the discussion, I expanded on the sense of illegitimacy underlying the link from land control and forced donations to the respondents' perception of corruption. I did so by exploring the set of motivations and ideologies that the respondents ascribed to the Maoists in initiating the conflict, and in the post-conflict period. Here I showed that, despite the complete transformation of the system of government, the respondents see the Maoists as failing to deliver on key promises to marginalised communities. This failure exacerbates the sense of illegitimacy associated with the transformation of the wealth and lifestyles of the Maoist elites within Ghorahi, which is central to the widespread framing of this transformation as corrupt. As I have discussed throughout, conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi is thus far from purely financial, but is constructed through standards of legitimacy, equality and political principles, as well as observable changes in wealth and status.

# Chapter Seven: Corruption and governance

> "What's happening in Nepal - Congress will have the power for 6 months, and there will be a gentleman's agreement. The Congress will lead for 6 months, they'll make an agreement with the opposition. And they just close their eyes for 6 months, and think 'my turn will come'." 2(40) Agricultural business owner

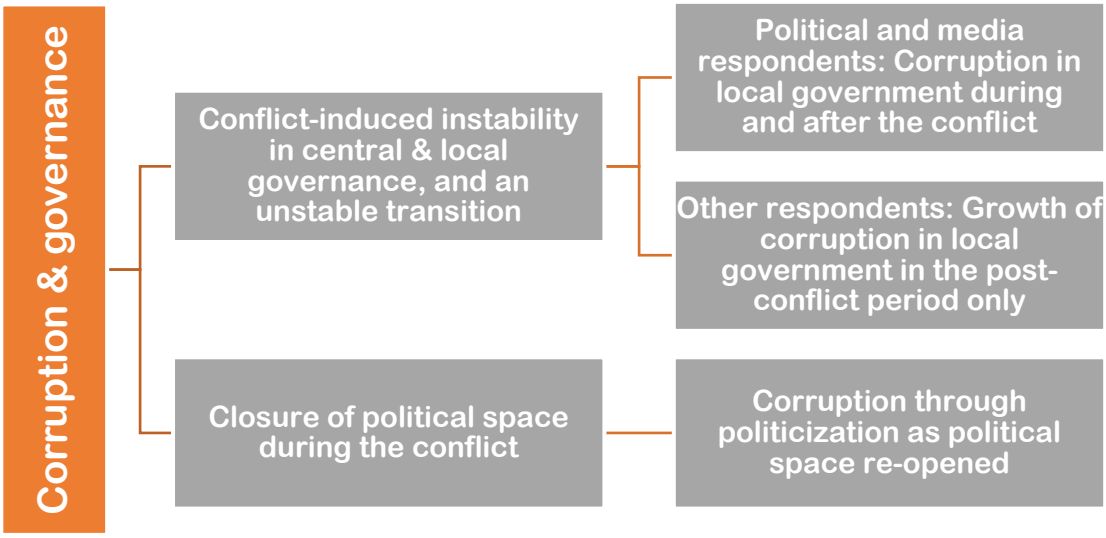
## 7.1 Introduction

In discussing the effects of Maoist transformation in Chapter Six, I referenced the effects of the conflict on local government. As was the case across Nepal (UNOCHA, 2007), the respondents indicate that the Maoists displaced members of rival political parties, local government and others deemed to be part of the traditional structures of power. I also set out how reflections on Maoist-led governments contributed to the respondents' perceptions of corruption, owing to failed expectations for change in everyday life, despite radical change in the structure of national and sub-national governance. In this chapter, I examine the impact of conflict on the respondents' perception of corruption through changes in the governance system – building on these elements of change specific to the Maoists.

I discuss conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi through changes in the governance system through two key themes: First, I link the destabilising effects of the conflict on local and national governance to the respondents' perception of corruption during and after the period of ongoing violence. Here, I focus on the legacies of bureaucratic control of local governance and the impacts of unstable coalition politics in the centre on perceptions of corruption in Ghorahi. Second, I discuss the closure of political space during the conflict and the politicisation of local government during the transition. I link this to the development of what the respondents perceive as a corrupt elite network between political party representatives, bureaucrats and businessmen under the post-conflict system of local government.

The relationship I develop in this chapter is informed by 1,081 coded statements from 89 respondents. As in Chapter Six, I detail the elements of the respondent group which inform each of the themes discussed in a table in each section. Whilst sharing much in common, in this chapter the distinction between those with and without insider knowledge of local government during the conflict is particularly significant. Given the proximity of my fieldwork to the elections held in 2017, throughout this chapter I also consider the influence of the timing on this element of conflict-induced change in corruption. I return to the broader impact of timing on this analysis in Chapter Nine.

Diagram 7.1A - Elements of the relationship




The broader context of changes in local government during the conflict and transition are vital to the discussion to follow: The PLA were highly effective in displacing local government officials and destroying government buildings in rural areas (Pasang, 2008). Rural officials across the country fled for the relative safety of the urban District headquarters, leaving these areas cut off from services and development budgets (UNOCHR, 2007). Maoist control over rural Nepal also made the 2002 elections for local officials impossible. In reaction to this, from 2002 government-appointed officials were granted control of Village Development Committees (VDC) and District Development Committees (DDC) (Byrne & Shrestha, 2014). By the end of the conflict, rural local government was decimated across the majority of the country (UNOCHR, 2007), compounding the historic neglect of rural development.

The compromise over local government made in the conflict meant that, in many cases, officials due for election in 2002 served until the end of the conflict (Asia Foundation, 2012). Recognising the lack of accountability and capacity this had created, in 2006 the Ministry of Local Development implemented the All-Party Mechanism (APM), which granted political party officials a limited formal oversight role in local decisions (Dix, 2011). The APM was abolished in 2012, under widespread criticism of corruption and abuse in local government, however the political parties generally retained a significant informal role (Strasheim, 2018). Owing to political divisions over the federal system in Kathmandu, particularly over the drawing of federal state boundaries in the Terai (Breen, 2018), state-appointed bureaucrats controlled VDC and DDC level government from 2002 until 2017.

### 7.2 Corruption and instability in local and national governance

In this section, I link the instability in the governance system across the conflict and transition to perceptions of corruption in Ghorahi. I do so in two parts: In Section 7.2.1, I discuss how the impacts of conflict on everyday life led many respondents to be separated from local government, and from the corruption dynamics otherwise commonly associated with these services. I then compare this to the perception of those involved in the media and local government during the conflict, whose insider status leads to a contrasting construction of corruption during this period – focused on the growing dominance of appointed officials after 2002. I go on to show, however, that these two contrasting visions of conflict-induced change in corruption in local government have converged during the transition.

In Section 7.2.2, I then discuss the impacts of instability in national level governance in the aftermath of the conflict. Here, I link the chaotic nature of post-2006 politics and the demands of institutional reform to what it is widely perceived as a missed opportunity for effective anti-corruption policy from successive governments since 2008. This builds on the discussion specific to the post-2008 Maoist governments in Chapter Six, and shows how instability in the central political system is seen to have perpetuated a cycle of corruption in the local governance system. The responses which inform these two links and themes within each are summarised in Table 7.2A.

Table 7.2A - Respondents & themes

| | **Sources** | **References** |
|---|---|---|
| Themes | 80 | 487 |
| Conflict-induced instability in local governance | 44 | 135 |
| Instability and corruption in local governance | 58 | 225 |
| Central government stability & coalitions | 28 | 80 |
| Central government policy | 23 | 46 |
| | | |
| Sources | 80 | 487 |
| Journalists | 16 | 83 |
| Business | 33 | 172 |
| Business representatives & civil society | 13 | 66 |
| Political party representatives | 11 | 124 |
| Legal representatives | 3 | 18 |
| Police & local government | 4 | 24 |

7.2.1 Corruption & instability in local governance

The respondents' accounts of local government in the conflict highlight the extent of disruption in the rural areas surrounding Ghorahi, and do so in a manner closely comparable to the national picture which I described previously. The subset of respondents involved in political parties or local government in rural areas in the early phases of the conflict tell of violent displacement of local government officials and political rivals as Maoist influence grew, with the police unable to provide effective protection in the rural areas of the District.[148] Consequently, they describe that many rural populations were entirely isolated from local government during the conflict, with displaced officials being concentred in urban centres, particularly around the District administration in Ghorahi.[149] Particularly after 2001, those in rural areas seeking to access government services are described by these respondents as exposed to an arduous and dangerous journey, resulting in the de facto exclusion from all services for rural populations across Dang. 2(19), himself a member of the DDC during the conflict, summarises this as:

> "The offices were centralised in the urban areas. This wasn't just the VDC offices, but all functions of the government, such as the postal offices, and agricultural development banks. So the people could only get their services by coming to the urban areas. But this was very difficult. The Maoists were dominant, and they made the people afraid of coming to get services from the government offices." 2(19) UML District representative

As 2(19) states, the separation of rural populations from local government during the conflict is seen by those in party politics as having primarily resulted from Maoist pressure on officials and from their suspicions that those seeking to travel to urban areas would report the movements of the PLA. However, it is clear from the wider respondent group that the actions of the security forces also contributed to the exclusion of rural people from local government. Accounts from respondents of a range of backgrounds stress the suspicion among the police of potential spies in Ghorahi, and an assumption that those in rural areas had greater ideological affinity to the Maoists. This is despite the greater exposure of rural populations to Maoist violence throughout the conflict (OHCHR, 2015). Rural-

[148] 1(22) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative.
[149] 1(07) Journalist; 1(13) Journalist & former PLA combatant; 2(16) Journalist.

urban separation, and the resultant barriers to accessing local government services, are thus seen to have stemmed from pressures from both parties to the conflict.

From the perspective of those working in[150] or reporting on[151] local government during the conflict, the separation of urban and rural not only limited the capacity of rural populations to access services, but was fundamentally prohibitive of the developmental functions of local government. These respondents suggest that the implementation of infrastructure and other development projects was near-impossible outside of the major urban centres after 2001. As well as the general risk of violence, the Maoists are described as actively repelling efforts by local government to engage in areas under their control, or as permitting projects only on the condition of donations. This, along with the destruction of government buildings,[152] severely constrained local government across rural Dang.

Accounts of local government during the conflict by those involved in party politics and the media are informed by a combination of experiences of urban and rural areas, and an insider perspective on the intended functions of local government. By contrast, those respondents whose views are informed principally by their personal experiences place less emphasis on disruption in local government in response to questions specific to the conflict. Indeed, some like 2(55) suggest that services largely functioned normally throughout the conflict, with the curfew imposed by the security forces the most significant barrier to accessing services.[153] Whilst the majority of respondents do not explicitly reject disruption in this way, there is a clear disparity between respondents with and without an occupational connection to local government in these descriptions of local government in the conflict.

> "To register I had to get a recommendation from the chamber of commerce, then from the municipality office, and I had to register to the tax office. It wasn't difficult - I just collected the documents and registered. They did it in time[.]" 2(55) Electrical business owner

[150] 1(18) District Peace Committee member; 1(28) Senior police officer; 2(19) UML District representative
[151] 2(09) Journalist and gender rights activist; 2(11) Legal professional; 2(16) Journalist
[152] 1(07) Journalist; 2(19) UML District representative. See also Pasang, 2008: 113.
[153] 2(53) Electrical business owner; 2(54) Senior business representative; 2(55) Electrical business owner

Reflecting the contrasting accounts of the impacts of the conflict, perceptions of corruption in local government during the conflict are stratified between respondents with and without connection to political parties and the media. The dominant perception amongst those with these connections is that instability during conflict led to the growth of corruption amongst VDC and DDC officials. The theme of rural-urban separation is central to this, with these respondents suggesting that budgets intended for development in areas under Maoist control were abused by officials in Ghorahi.[154] Consistent with the framing of conflict-induced change in corruption as the exploitation of fragility, as I discussed in Chapter Two, this is rooted in references to the lack of oversight from the central to the local and at the intra-local level under the system implemented in 2002, and the broader chaos of the emergency period.

The forms of conflict-induced corruption highlighted by the subset of respondents in the media and party politics echoes the financial dimensions of *bhrastachar* which I set out in Chapter Five. This includes the abuse of budgets intended for rural communities cut off from the urban centres by the PLA and an increase in demands for bribes in frontline services, exacerbated by rising absenteeism amongst officials in the District administration.[155] Underlying this are references to the lack of local elections, meaning that officials could be relatively assured of their ongoing access to power, and a lack of concern from a central government now fully occupied with dealing with the Maoist threat.[156] As 2(16) describes, the fact that officials relocated to urban areas also means that they are seen as having been relatively protected from the Maoists, and thus operated with relatively unchecked power.

> "[I]n the bureaucracy and in the regular development works, there was a great deal of corruption. There was no one to control the bureaucrats at that time. The government was not focused on them, and the Maoists did not have a way of controlling that. So they got a great chance to be involved in corruption during that time." 2(16) Journalist

As I discuss below, control of local government by unelected officials also informs perceptions of corruption of respondents of a range of backgrounds in accounts of the transition. However, for those without close connection to local government, references to the corrupt exploitation of conditions of the conflict by local officials are infrequent. This is certainly the case when compared to the prevalence of

[154] 2(09) Journalist and gender rights activist; 2(16) Journalist; 2(20) Journalist
[155] 2(09) Journalist and gender rights activist; 2(11) Legal professional; 2(16) Journalist
[156] 2(07) Journalist; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative

experiences of forced donations by Maoists cadres, as I discussed in Chapter Six. Those who I asked to explain this lack of reference to corruption in local government suggest that during the conflict the focus of the ordinary people was on survival and everyday needs, and that local government was largely irrelevant to these needs.[157] Indeed, as with 2(59) below, several respondents explicitly reject the possibility of focusing on corruption in local government, given the challenges they faced in daily life after the 2001 PLA attack.

> "Was there corruption in the conflict time?"
> "I don't have any exact information … I didn't know anything about it at that time. No one used to talk about corruption then, I didn't have any information … The focus was only on life and property. Everyone was scared of losing their life, and their property, and just worried about these things. No one took interest in corruption. It wasn't an important issue compared to this."
> 2(59) Auto business owner

The conflict is therefore viewed as a period of heightened corruption in local government only by the minority of respondents with a direct connection to these institutions. Elements of the wider respondent group indicate some suspicion of corruption in local government during the conflict when I questioned them on this directly,[158] but the majority were insulated from these impacts by their urban location, and were focused on factors immediately relevant to everyday life. Unlike the demand for donations by the Maoists, the effects of the conflict on local government therefore had little direct impact on many respondents. However, these divisions in the respondent group lessen when considering the legacies of instability in local government for corruption after 2006.

The end of the conflict and the progressive reassurances that the violence would not return after 2006 brought a gradual end to the pressures on everyday life. As I detail in Section 7.3, with this came the re-opening of political space in Ghorahi, and heightened attention to the structure and nature of government. However, rather than as a separate phenomenon, the respondents widely frame the instability in local government which has followed as an ongoing legacy of the conflict. In particular, the respondents link the control of local government by unelected officials during the transition to the Maoists opposition to elections during the conflict, and to divisions in central government over

[157] 2(35) Tharu community representative; 2(44) Bookshop owner; 2(58) Auto business owner
[158] 2(49) Animal supplies business owner; 2(58) Auto business owner; 2(84) Legal professional

federalism.[159] Knowledge of these processes is necessarily concentrated among those connected to politics and the media,[160] however perceptions of a link from the conflict to instability and bureaucratic control in local government during the transition is common across respondents of all backgrounds.[161]

As I discussed in Chapter Five, bribes (*ghus*) to access local government services are the single most widespread aspect of corruption described by the respondents. Explanations of this prevalence widely invoke the mindset of those in local government, which is seen as focused more on accumulation than public service. In explaining this mindset, the respondents widely reference the unelected nature of officials for a decade after the end to the conflict.[162] As well as the direct effects of a lack of electoral accountability on the ability of the public to punish corrupt officials,[163] the lack of elections is seen to drive a mindset of superiority and separation from the public amongst officials. This is encapsulated in the contrast between descriptions of officials before and after the 2017 elections by 2(50) and 2(37) respectively:

> "In the conflict time there was … a common mindset amongst the bureaucrats that they were superior, and above the ordinary people. This type of mentality is still there amongst some of the bureaucrats now - they will create problems for businessmen to get more tax or create delays in the services, and get extra money indirectly." 2(50) Business community representative

> "[N]ow there is a clear way to go and get the service. There is a Ward Office in the village, and a Ward Chairperson elected by the people. We can directly go to him. He is from the Tharu community in this Ward. The mayor is also from the Tharu community - I can go there and talk to him in the Tharu language." 2(37) Tharu community representative

The statements from 2(50) and 2(37) emphasise the role of the external and unfamiliar nature of unelected officials in driving their engagement in corruption. In a context in which social connectedness is highly valued,[164] the perception that officials sourced their authority from elsewhere and were not from the communities they served undermines their legitimacy. The respondents link this to the willingness of these officials to engage in bribery and budgetary abuse, but is also linked to *bhrastachar*

[159] 2(08) Journalist; 2(12) Disability rights activist; 2(81) NGO representative
[160] 2(03) Journalist; 2(13) UML District representative; 2(31) District government representative
[161] 2(37) Tharu community representative; 2(45) Publisher; 2(50) Business community representative
[162] 2(36) Tharu community representative; 2(45) Publisher; 2(81) NGO representative
[163] 2(03) Journalist; 2(08) Journalist; 2(15) Tharu community representative
[164] Based on my observations across two stages of fieldwork, my prior experience of research in Nepal, informal discussions in Ghorahi, and discussions with LD.

directly through references to the bad conduct (*kharab acharna*) and attitudes of these officials.[165] The widespread expectations of change in corruption with local elections in 2017 is thus not only related to the empowerment of ordinary people through the electoral process, but also through the social proximity of the newly elected officials. This is expressed through references to 'knowing' the new officials, in contrast to the corrupt 'unknown' officials of the previous system.[166]

The responses from those connected to the political parties complement the emphasis on the separateness of local government officials in corruption under the transitional structure. Whilst initially positive about the prospect for inter-party cooperation under the APM, these respondents describe a growing feeling of exclusion of party representatives from local governance in the years after the conflict.[167] Alongside references to budgetary corruption, the construction of corruption in local government during the transition is linked to the feeling that party representatives were unable to engage in the decision making process, and were excluded by officials who source their authority from elsewhere. This is reflected in the contrast between two statements from 2(18) below, who is comparing his experiences in the early and latter stages of local government between 2006 and 2017:

> "The all-party structure encouraged mutual respect at the local level. All of the parties would come together and talk about local issues, we would make a common agreement, and there was no bad intention between us." 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative

> "We were supporters, not planners, or power holders who could make the final decision. The documents could go ahead without our agreement … We could only complain, but the bureaucrats had all the power at that time. They controlled it from the centre to the local level." 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative

As I discuss in Section 7.3, those without a direct connection to party politics contradict the narrative on the role of the political parties in corruption in local governance from 2(18) and others. Indeed, the majority see political parties as at the centre of a corrupt elite network which emerged as political space re-opened after the conflict, rather than acting in the preventative role that party representatives ascribe to themselves. The respondents do, however, share an emphasis on the distant

[165] The link between *bhrastachar* and *kharab acharna* is explained in Chapter Five
[166] 2(37) Tharu community representative; 2(76) Clothing business owner; 2(79) Factory owner
[167] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(19) UML District Representative

nature of local government officials as a legacy of the instability in the conflict. In addition to exacerbating perceived abuses in development and infrastructure projects, this distance between officials and the population also informs the construction of corruption directly through its impacts on the attitudes of the officials which the respondents encounter.[168]

Given the proximity of the local elections, the period in which I conducted fieldwork was one of optimism for change, and for a break with the corrupt legacies of the conflict. The elections are widely seen by the respondents to have offered an opportunity for the re-empowerment of the people, with appointed bureaucrats being replaced by representatives of and from communities in the city. Given the role of the 'external' nature of these bureaucrats in informing perceptions of corruption in local government, this replacement is significant for corruption in itself. However, the proximity of the local elections also meant that, for many, it is simply too early to tell how effective these new officials can be in tackling what they see as the rampant corruption in local government. As I discuss in Section 7.3, this cautiousness is also informed by the links between local officials, political parties and business. Before discussing this, however, I consider the role of national level instability on corruption in Ghorahi.

### 7.2.2 Corruption & instability in central governance

Whilst seeking to follow the respondents' prioritisations in line with the principles of theoretical sampling which I set out in Chapter Four, my focus on conflict-induced change in corruption at the sub-national level meant that the majority of my questions focus on the local dimension of changes in the governance system. However, many respondents also linked elements of corruption in Ghorahi to instability in the central government after the conflict. Reflecting this, I now turn to the impact of instability in central level governance for corruption at the sub-national level.

As with local government, the responses describe a sense of separation from the government in Kathmandu during the conflict. The flow of information from Kathmandu was restricted during the emergency period, travel became hazardous and the respondents focus on their basic needs. As such, with the exception of the initiation of emergency powers after the 2001 attack and King Gyanendra's coup in 2005, even major political changes in the centre during the conflict rarely feature in the

[168] 2(17) Landlessness Activist; 2(20) Journalist; 2(43) Hotel Owner

respondents' accounts. Further, the impact of these two major events are principally described with reference to the implementation by the security forces, who to many came to represent the state during the height of the conflict.[169] As such, even for those in party politics and the media, corruption in central government during the conflict is not a common feature of the responses.

Turning to the post-conflict period, the respondents are broadly positive about the direction of change in the central governance system. In addition to the Maoists entering the political mainstream, this includes broad approval of the federal structure and the establishment of a republic.[170] The attribution of these changes is necessarily contested amongst the respondents, particularly between different political party representatives, however none but the representative of the Biplap Maoists[171] reject the general direction of reform. Attribution for these reforms closely follows the political loyalties, although many acknowledge the political motives of the Maoists in initiating the conflict,[172] and the opportunity for reform that the conflict has created.

Whilst agreeing with the general direction of reform since the conflict, there is a similar degree of consensus that the instability in central level governance during the transition has exacerbated corruption in Ghorahi. Instability in the centre is linked to corruption at the local level in two respects: First, the respondents see the lack of stable government in the centre as a barrier to effective policymaking.[173] In particular, the chaotic changes of coalition agreements since the 2008 election[174] are seen to have resulted in a lack of focus on corruption in policy, and the lack of implementation of existing policy. Governments of all parties are seen as Kathmandu-centric and focused on the short term demands

[169] 1(18) District Peace Committee member; 2(12) Disability rights activist; 2(16) Journalist
[170] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(33) Maoist Centre District representative
[171] The Biplap Maoists oppose the parliamentary system and the transformation of the Maoist movement into party politics. 2(10) Nepal Communist Party District representative
[172] 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(51) Bookshop owner; 2(54) Senior business representative
[173] 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(20) Journalist; 2(38) Agricultural business owner
[174] Between the 2008 election and my first period of fieldwork in February 2017, the Prime Minister of Nepal and the governing coalition of major parties changed seven times.

of coalition-building. This leads both those within[175] and outside[176] of the political class to view the period of change since the conflict as a missed opportunity for change in corruption led by the centre.

> "There isn't control from the government because the government is not stable, and there is no control from them over the ministers. The ministers know that they won't be there for a long time. The bureaucrats also don't care, because they also know they can be replaced soon". 2(55) Electrical business owner

The perceived failure of successive post-conflict governments to focus on and deal with corruption, and the roots of this in the instability of the post-conflict political context, is further reflected in the solutions the respondents pose to corruption. Whilst diffuse across the different forms of corruption experienced in Ghorahi, respondents across backgrounds[177] stress the need for further central government invention specific to corruption, and for the government to ensure the implementation of existing rules and procedures, particularly within the bureaucracy. Indeed, despite the diverse set of experiences of corruption in Ghorahi, the respondents see action by the central government as a necessary first step. The fact that this is absent is, to many,[178] a reflection of short termism amongst the unstable coalition governments which have persisted since the end of the conflict.

Second, as well as underlying the lack of effective policy action against corruption, the respondents point to the unstable nature of coalition politics as directly contributing to corruption in central government. Many outside of the political class view Ministers as engaging in opportunistic financial corruption during their limited period in office.[179] Indeed, for those outside of party politics, each of the three major parties is described as content to allow others to engage in corruption whilst in government, knowing that access to these benefits will quickly be transferred. Rather than necessarily through examples of scandals, this is seen to be a fundamental feature of Nepali politics since 2008,

[175] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(33) Maoist Centre District representative
[176] 2(24) Civil society organisation leader; 2(40) Agricultural business owner; 2(55) Electronical business owner
[177] 2(03) Journalist; 2(18) Nepali Congress District Representative; 2(24) Civil Society Leader
[178] 2(41) Senior business representative; 2(78) Factory Owner; 2(80) Agricultural business owner
[179] 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(24) Civil society organisation leader; 2(40) Agricultural business owner

linked both to corruption in the centre and the distribution of corrupt benefit to cadres at the local level. 2(40) likens this to a gentleman's agreement, in which future opportunities breed collective silence:

> "What's happening in Nepal - Congress will have the power for 6 months, and there will be a gentleman's agreement. The Congress will lead for 6 months, they'll make an agreement with the opposition. And they just close their eyes for 6 months, and think 'my turn will come'."
> 2(40) - Agriculture Business Owner

### 7.2.3 Summary

The impacts of the conflict on the respondents' perceptions of corruption through changes in local and national governance in some respects resembles the focus on the exploitation of fragility in the literature. Respondents within and outside of political parties and the media highlight the effects of bureaucratic dominance at the local level on corruption in local development; an outcome of destruction by the PLA and the instability in the centre as the governance system has been transformed. Further echoing this common framing of conflict-induced change in corruption in the literature, the respondents focus on financial abuses in the public sphere, and associate this with a lack of popular accountability and an environment of impunity. In these respects, the experiences of those in Ghorahi mirrors the default account of conflict-induced change in corruption in the literature, set out in Chapter Two.

Whilst the exploitation of the instability of the central government during the transition is an important component of the respondents' perceptions, this section also shows that this is a far from complete picture of this aspect of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi. Notably, with the exception of those in party politics and the media during the conflict, the conflict period itself is not seen as a period of rampant exploitation of fragility in central government. Rather, these effects of instability in the centre on the respondents' perception of corruption emerged only as a result of the transition, during which the flow of information from Kathmandu returned, and demands on everyday life became comparatively less pressing. These central level dynamics are, however, secondary to the role of local level instability in the governance system which, despite local elections, continues to impact how the respondents understand and experience corruption in Ghorahi.

### 7.3 Corruption and politicisation

In this section, I link the closure and re-opening of political space during and after the conflict to the respondents' perceptions of corruption in Ghorahi. I do so in three parts: First, I discuss how the conflict led to the closure of political space – limiting the activity of political parties, the media and the general population – and how this was reversed with the intense politicisation of the transition. Second, I link the re-opening of political space to the perceived development of corrupt elite networks in local government – integrating officials, political elites and elements of the business community. I contrast this to the accounts of party representatives who see themselves as having acted in a preventative capacity under the APM. Finally, I discuss perceived politicisation of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), Nepal's central anti-corruption agency, and the role of this in the respondents' accounts of account locally.

The responses which inform this discussion are summarised in Table 7.3A. As with the discussion of instability in central and local governance, the nature of the link between politicisation and corruption during and after the conflict is divided between those with and without connection to the major political parties. Central to this is the contrast of the notion common amongst party representatives that they acted as a limit on corruption by state-appointed officials at the VDC and DDC levels under the transitional system against the perceptions of those outside of party politics. I discuss these competing constructions throughout.

Table 7.3A – Respondents & themes

| | **Sources** | **References** |
|---|---|---|
| Themes | 73 | 572 |
| Closure & re-opening of political space in conflict | 36 | 93 |
| Corruption & political networks | 54 | 242 |
| Corruption & the CIAA | 45 | 233 |
| | | |
| Sources | 73 | 572 |
| Journalists | 16 | 122 |
| Business | 33 | 226 |
| Business representatives & civil society | 8 | 89 |
| Political party representatives | 10 | 81 |
| Legal representatives | 3 | 43 |
| Police & local government | 3 | 11 |

7.3.1 The closure and re-opening of political space

As well as separating the population from local government, the conflict led to broader closure of political space in the Ghorahi. In the years before the 2001 PLA attack on the city, those in party politics[180] and the media[181] describe that the security forces sought to limit publication of any reports which exposed their losses on the battlefield, or which portrayed the PLA in a positive light. These effects were, however, confined to those of political and media backgrounds, with the general population being largely unaware of much of the impacts of the conflict before 2001. With the 2001 PLA attack and the emergency period which followed, these restrictions expanded to include reporting on any potentially contentious political issues, and took a direct toll on the wider population.[182]

Several journalists describe the extremes of the pressure exerted by the security forces during the emergency period. This includes direct censorship of their reports by senior RNA officials, brief blanket bans on local newspapers and the arrest of journalists accused of breaking restrictions.[183] Similarly, political activists like 2(13) below describe having to seek permission from the RNA and police for any gatherings, and that unsanctioned meetings of activists were targeted by searches and arrests.[184] These and other respondents broadly engaged in the political sphere also allege that the RNA were involved in the torture of those detained in the city barracks.[185] Independently corroborating these claims is outside of the scope of my research, however it is clear that fear of the security forces after 2001 rapidly closed opportunities for independent reporting and political activism in Ghorahi.

> "The security forces controlled our activities. If we wanted to perform any activities or programmes then we had to go to the administration office. The security forces would also target those staying in hotels for our programmes, and any cadres of the political parties. The government would target any grouping of the people, from any of the political parties. So we couldn't conduct our activities freely[.]" 2(13) UML District representative

[180] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(19) UML District representative
[181] 1(34) Journalist; 1(35) Journalist; 2(16) Journalist
[182] 2(44) Bookshop owner; 2(51) Bookshop owner; 2(82) Bookshop owner
[183] 1(08) Journalist and activist; 1(12) Journalist; 1(29) Journalist
[184] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(19) UML District representative
[185] 1(34) Journalist; 1(35) Journalist; 2(12) Disability rights activist

Amongst those without a direct connection to politics and the media, there is a comparable sense of disengagement from political life after 2001, driven by restrictions from the security forces. As well as the curfew from sunset to sunrise and bans on gatherings,[186] respondents like 2(58) below describe how chance encounters with the security forces reinforced the extent of their control during the emergency period.[187] These pressures added to the disengagement from political life driven by the effects of the conflict exerted on livelihoods, as I discussed in Section 7.2.[188] This is a common feature of the responses as a whole, despite the lack of direct knowledge of the specific pressures faced by journalists and activists at the hands of the security forces.

> "A truck from the army hit a person, and he was killed on the road. The police came and asked about the incident, and I told them. I said the army truck hit him. But the army then came and questioned me. They told me I had to say that something else had happened, that it was different. Not by the army vehicle". 2(58) Auto business owner

The RNA barracks and District Police Headquarters in Ghorahi means that the respondents' experiences of accounts of the closure of political space are closely tied to the actions of the security forces. The PLA widely displaced members of rival political parties and prevented journalists from operating in rural areas,[189] but did not have this direct influence in Ghorahi. Whilst the level of violence outside the city and the emergency provisions in Kathmandu varied, the inability to freely assemble, travel and work were thus a defining feature of the experience of the conflict from 2001 onwards.

As I discussed in Chapter Five, the formal end of the conflict was precipitated by significant popular mobilisations and protest in Kathmandu, motivated by the emerging republican consensus among political parties (Whitfield, 2012). Demonstrations occurred in Ghorahi during this time, but were far from on the scale of those in Kathmandu. As such, despite the intense politicisation of the centre, the respondents describe an incremental re-opening of political space in Ghorahi as restrictions from the security forces were scaled back and as news came of the PLA entering cantonment.[190] For

[186] 2(49) Animal supplies business owner; 2(51) Bookshop owner; 2(56) Medical business owner
[187] 2(39) Agricultural business owner; 2(58) Auto business owner; 2(43) Hotel owner
[188] 2(51) Bookshop Owner; 2(58) Auto Business; 2(59) Auto Business
[189] 1(12) Journalist; 1(34) Journalist; 2(07) Journalist
[190] 2(44) Bookshop owner; 2(75) Clothing business owner; 2(80) Agricultural business owner

those in the media and political parties, the combination of this with the cooperation between parties in republican movement and the Maoists' electoral success in 2008 steadily bolstered confidence to return to working in rural areas.[191] Whilst some faced threats when returning to areas of Dang which had been under Maoist control, this further supported the re-opening of political space in Ghorahi.

In addition to the local impacts of the early phases of the transition in the centre, those connected to party politics also stress the role of the VDC system of local governance in encouraging political activity and cooperation.[192] Bolstered by mutual feelings of exclusion from power by state-appointed officials in local government and the legal authority of the APM, party representatives describe the improvement of relations between political parties in Ghorahi and across Dang. Despite the violence against political cadres by the PLA during the conflict, with the Maoists in government after 2008 this slowly came to incorporate Maoist party representatives.[193] This cooperation and the reopening of rural areas as the security situation improved led to a newly invigorated political environment in Ghorahi.

> "The relationship between the parties was destroyed in the conflict time, but we came together, and had a good relationship locally. It was inclusive, and we had a mutual respect." 2(18) Nepali Congress District representative

The re-opening of political space after the conflict is described by those in party politics as having offered an opportunity to improve the system of local governance. As I discussed in Sections 7.1 and 7.2, control of VDC and DDC-level governance by state-appointed bureaucrats is widely seen as a significant source of corruption, something which politics party representatives see themselves as challenging as political space re-opened after the conflict.[194] However, whilst those outside of party politics welcome the openness of the post-conflict period, their accounts stress the corruption through politicisation which has followed. In Sections 7.3.2 and 7.3.3, I link the closure and re-opening of political space with corruption at two levels. First, I discuss the politicisation of local governance, and

[191] 1(22) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(03) Journalist; 2(13) UML District representative
[192] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(19) UML District representative
[193] This is confirmed by Maoist party representatives 2(29) & 2(33), as well as by those from UML [2(13); 2(19)] and the Nepali Congress [2(14); 2(18)].
[194] 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(19) UML District representative; 2(29) Maoist Centre District representative

the formation of a corrupt elite network between the political parties, bureaucrats and business. Second, I discuss perceptions of the politicisation of the CIAA, linking central and local level dynamics.

### 7.3.2 Corruption & the politicisation of local governance

The view emanating from the political leaders and cadres I interviewed is that the closure of political space during the conflict further undermined accountability in local government officials.[195] They also describe that, under the transitional system of local government, they were largely unable to prevent ongoing corrupt exploitation of budgets and of the population through bribery because of their limited powers under the APM. These respondents thus link the lack of party political influence to the corruption dynamics discussed in Section 7.2. However, for the majority of respondents, the growing influence of political parties in the re-opening political space exacerbated corruption in local government and elsewhere. Here, I focus on those respondents without close political party affiliations.

The link between politicisation and corruption in the post-conflict period is first informed by perceptions of nature of the political leaders active at this time. Against the backdrop of the transforming system of local governance and improving stability, the respondents describe political leaders as returning to power with unreformed mindsets. This is commonly expressed in references to the nature of the thought and belief systems of the political leaders which emphasises factionalism between parties and a short term outlook, both of which are seen to result in financial forms of corruption.[196] As 2(06) expresses below, this draws on a sense of the historic nature of political elites in an unspecified past period, to which they have returned unchanged with the re-opening of political space.

> "I don't think there's been any change in corruption because of the conflict or after the conflict. There is the same types of corruption, because the political leaders have the same type of thinking and are engaged in the same type of activities." 2(06) Senior business representative

The respondents link the unreformed mindsets of political party leaders to the ongoing problem of bribery in local government services since the end to the conflict. Despite the radical transformation

[195] 2(13) UML District Representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(19) UML District representative
[196] 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(11) Legal professional; 2(21) Journalist

to the governance system,[197] the respondents describe a lack of will amongst the re-emerging political elite to change this manifestation of corruption. The return of political party influence in Ghorahi is thus seen to have limited the impact of changes in the governance system on everyday experiences of corruption. However, while bribery represents the most common experience of corruption described by the respondents, it is the perceived growth of corrupt networks between political leaders, business and bureaucrats which captures the majority of the respondents' attention to politicisation.

The link the respondents define between political leaders, business and bureaucrats is most commonly expressed in relation to local development processes. Most directly, the respondents describe attempts by re-empowered political leaders to dominate the committees designated with the oversight of construction works led by local government.[198] Consistent with the often financial construction of corruption as *bhrastachar* which I set out in Chapter Five, the consequences of politicised dominance of these user committees is most commonly described in terms of its impacts on budgets and delayed projects. Informed by the media, personal experience and a wider public discourse, political leaders are widely seen to be both the beneficiary of funds corrupted from development projects, and to offer protection for corruption by the contractors delivering the projects.[199]

> "Political parties are heavily involved in corruption. [T]he Nepal government has a system to implement development projects by the user committees. Not by the contractors entirely. But they pressure the user committees, and provide money to some in the user committees, and this allows them to the control the project". 2(15) Tharu community representative

The politicisation of local development during the transition is particularly significant to the respondents' experiences of corruption because of the numerous visual reminders of failed infrastructure projects which surround Ghorahi. Most notably, political protection is seen to have contributed to the delays and budgetary corruption affecting the construction of bridges on the highways between Ghorahi and Tulsipur to the west and between Ghorahi and Lamahi to the east.[200] The respondents describe the contractors seemingly as immune to investigation and popular pressure, and see the political parties as

[197] 2(02) Journalist; 2(24) Civil Society Leader; 2(40) Agriculture Business
[198] 2(11) Legal Advocate; 2(15) Tharu Community Representative; 2(20) Journalist
[199] 2(06) Senior Business Representative; 2(08) Journalist; 2(84) Legal Advocate
[200] 2(03) Journalist; 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(57) Grocer

responsible for this. The consequences of this for travel from Ghorahi to the second and third largest population centres in Dang District exacerbates the sense of injustice linked to widespread perceptions of budgetary corruption in these projects.[201] Photograph 7.3A below shows one of several examples of part-completed projects near Ghorahi.

Photograph 7.3A - Ghorahi-Tulsipur highway, October 2017

The political protection of contractors and the wider politicisation of development projects since the conflict are the primary means by which the respondents describe the link between these actors. However, alongside this, the respondents also describe reciprocal arrangements between political leaders and contractors. At the centre of this is the widespread perception that the political protection offered to contractors like those involved in the delayed highway construction projects comes at the expense of significant donations and support during elections.[202] Far from passive recipients of funds, political leaders are seen to cultivate these relationships in order to enhance electoral success, with local

[201] 2(24) Civil society organisation leader; 2(40) Agricultural business owner; 2(57) Grocer
[202] 2(20) Journalist; 2(33) Maoist Centre District representative; 2(77) Petrol station worker

development suffering as a consequence.[203] Given the proximity of my fieldwork to the 2017 local elections, these links were a common element of public and media discourse.

To cultivate these reciprocal relations, political leaders, contractors, and elements of the wider business community are commonly described as relying on a new class of broker (*dalal*). Informed by knowledge of protection to those involved in corruption in local development, the re-opening of political space after the conflict is associated with the growth of brokers because of what is perceived as the growing need for connection to political leadership.[204] Those with connections to political leadership are thus seen not only to exploit the protection offered for their own financial gain, but also to engage what is viewed as a fundamentally corrupt activity through brokering these connections to others. This is seen to be particularly relevant to larger industries such as cement and brick production, of which there has been substantial growth in Dang District in years since the conflict.[205]

> "Big businessmen donate to the political leaders, then they get access and influence in the policy level, and regular help for their business. It's very transparent, everyone knows about this relationship, everyone sees the benefits they get." 2(78) Factory owner

In addition to its impact on local development, the formation of these elite networks between political parties, business and brokers is linked to corruption because it is seen to have come at the expense of the ideological integrity of the parties. This is commonly expressed in references to the selection of prominent 'big men' (*thulo manchhe*)[206] for electoral candidates in the 2017 local elections, replicating the problems associated with higher level elections. These selections are seen to have come at the expense of those with long term involvement in party politics, and to many outside of the political sphere represents the increasingly blurred line between the political parties and business.[207] As well as supporting financial abuses in construction, this is described as fundamentally disrupting the electoral

[203] 2(08) Journalist; 2(11) Legal professional; 2(17) Landlessness activist
[204] 2(16) Journalist; 2(20) Journalist; 2(24) Civil society organisation leader
[205] 2(38) Agricultural business owner; 2(52) Medical business owner; 2(78) Factory owner
[206] ठुलो मान्छे
[207] 2(02) Journalist; 2(19) UML District representative; 2(38) Agricultural business owner

process through limiting the choice available to the public, and as cementing political party dominance in elements of the new structure of local government.[208]

The link that many of the respondents draw between the demands of fundraising for elections and political protection for corruption in business and elsewhere points to one of the major contradictions evident from responses on this theme. Namely, the respondents describe the build-up to the various elections held since 2008 as one in which political leaders in Ghorahi are particularly tied to the demands of donors, and thus in which there is significant corruption.[209] However, the respondents also express faith in the capacity of elections to limit some manifestations of corruption, including that linked to politicisation.[210] Elections are thus seen by the respondents as both a cause and a limit of corruption under the reforming post-conflict system of local governance.

The contradiction over the role of elections in corruption reflects the nature of politicisation which the respondents have experienced during the reforms to the governance system at different levels. Specifically, those outside of party politics see political leaders in Ghorahi as benefiting from their links to party networks in Kathmandu, and as gaining their authority from the relative power of their party in central government throughout the transition.[211] The responses thus express the contrast between the drivers of politicisation in Ghorahi and the broader deficit of local accountability. Elections for local government are seen as a means of orientating party representatives back towards the population, rather than their source of power lying with their links to political patronage from the centre.[212]

The re-opening of political space after the conflict has thus been a signal of the return to normality after the restrictions of the conflict period, but also impacts upon corruption. Despite the changing institutional structure, the respondents see continuity in the mindsets of the political leadership since the conflict, the increasing integration between politics and business, and the relative isolation of the political parties from the population. The respondents link this to budgetary corruption in development

[208] 2(09) Journalist and gender rights activist; 2(37) Tharu community representative; 2(47) Furniture business owner
[209] 2(20) Journalist; 2(23) Maoist Centre District representative; 2(76) Clothing business owner
[210] 2(03) Journalist; 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(15) Tharu community representative
[211] 2(20) Journalist; 2(48) Dairy products business owner; 2(54) Senior business representative
[212] 2(03) Journalist; 2(13) UML District representative; 2(37) Tharu community representative

projects, reinforced by visible reminders of failed infrastructure development in Ghorahi, and to the broader sense of party dominance in the context of a decade of limited local accountability.

### 7.3.3 Corruption & the politicisation of the CIAA

As I discussed in introducing the impacts of national level instability in Section 7.2, the questions I posed across interviews in both phases of my fieldwork focused on the local dimensions of conflict-induced change in corruption. This is reflected in the information I gathered on the impacts of politicisation, which focuses on the local factors most immediately relevant to the respondents. To place this in broader context, I now turn to the impacts of post-conflict politicisation at the central level on the respondents' perceptions of corruption in Ghorahi, focusing on the CIAA.

Across respondents of all backgrounds, the theme of impunity is one of the central explanations for the prevalence of corruption across Nepal. At the everyday level, impunity is linked to the ongoing prevalence of bribery in access to government services,[213] and the lack of enforcement action against those responsible for failed local development projects. A sense of widespread impunity is also linked to the frequency with which corruption is highlighted by the media, and conventional wisdom on the scale of corruption in Nepal.[214] This is seen to have persisted despite the advent of the CIAA and legislative provisions against corruption since 2008 (Transparency International Nepal, 2013).

Awareness of the CIAA was widespread across respondents of all backgrounds, although several, like 2(57) below, suspect that many 'ordinary' people in the city would be unaware of the organisation if asked.[215] Underlying this, the CIAA is widely described as disconnected from the local level. This sense of separation from the CIAA is in part a physical one, with the Commission being based in Kathmandu and its local representatives largely unknown to the respondents, and therefore unapproachable.[216] However, this feeling of distance also reflects perceptions of politicisation of the CIAA, linked to impunity from legal action for those who can draw on political connections. The remoteness of the CIAA is thus tied to the post-conflict political dynamics set out above.

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[213] 2(43) Hotel owner; 2(60) Electronics business owner; 2(79) Factory owner
[214] 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(08) Journalist; 2(24) Civil society organisation leader
[215] 2(10) Nepal Communist Party District representative; 2(45) Publisher; 2(58) Auto business owner
[216] 2(04) Rastriya Janmorcha District representative; 2(11) Legal professional; 2(57) Grocer

> "Ordinary people don't know about the CIAA, their process, and how to complain. Some people know that the CDO office is where they can complain to the CIAA, but there is the same problem here. They won't get an application, they won't hear the complaint, so how then can they send it to the CIAA? We don't have access to the CIAA from here." 2(57) Grocer

When discussing the enforcement actions of the CIAA, a common narrative is that the Commission targets those at the lower levels of the public sector, whilst allowing those at the higher level to escape unpunished.[217] The strength of this theme is most evident when discussing bribery in local government services which, as I discussed in Chapter Five, is the most common experience of corruption reported. In the discussion of bribery, the exploitation of the people by those in positions of relative power is significant. However, the respondents do not see CIAA action against low level bureaucrats as a legitimate response to their needs.[218] Rather, instances of low level bureaucrats being targeted by the CIAA highlight what they see as the lack of action against those at the higher level.

The distinction between the unconnected and therefore vulnerable lower level bureaucrat and the connected elite above them is described by the respondents in almost entirely political terms. Rather than a reflection of wealth or social status in isolation of party politics, lower level bureaucrats working in service offices in Ghorahi are seen to be vulnerable to investigation by the CIAA specifically because of their lack of access to political leaders.[219] As expressed in metaphor by 2(02) below, this is something widely seen to be a deliberate strategy of the CIAA leadership, and reflective of the extent of politicised control of the central governance system emerging after the conflict.

> "When a fisherman goes to fish in the sea, he catches the fish from the hook he uses. He will only catch the small fish because of his hook. He can't catch a whale. But he says 'look I've caught a fish', but it is only the small fish. In this way, the CIAA representatives are only arresting the powerless bureaucrats without access[.]" 2(02) Journalist

The respondents' accounts of the politicisation of the CIAA, and of immunity to investigation and prosecution from corruption, centres on the distinction between those with and without access to the major political parties. Indeed, whilst as I discussed in Chapter Six the respondents perceive a

[217] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(38) Agricultural business owner; 2(45) Publisher
[218] 2(02) Journalist; 2(11) Legal professional; 2(24) Civil society organisation leader
[219] 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(17) Landlessness activist; 2(22) Legal professional

concentration of corruption amongst the former mid-level Maoist elite in Ghorahi, they draw no distinction between the protection offered by connection to the Maoists verses connections to the Nepali Congress or UML. Rather, the politicisation of the CIAA is seen to reflect the common empowerment of political parties in the post-conflict period, as political space has re-opened. The changing and unstable nature of coalition politics I discussed in Section 7.2 is thus seen to bring change to the specific groups empowered at the local level, but is not fundamental to the extent of corruption. Rather, the major political parties are seen as content to allow corruption amongst their rivals to go unchallenged, knowing that the nature of coalition politics in the centre will change the structure of beneficiaries over time.

### 7.4 Conclusions

In Chapter Six, I discussed the corruption dynamics which have followed from Maoist demands for donations during the conflict, and from their transformation into a mainstream political party. In doing so, I referenced the targeting of political opponents, landowners and local government during the conflict, and the central place of political change in the respondents' understanding of the motivations of the Maoists. Expanding from the set of impacts specific to the Maoists, in this chapter I have explored the influence of conflict-induced changes in the governance system at the central and local levels on the respondents' perceptions of corruption in Ghorahi. This link combines instability and politicisation.

The impacts of conflict on perceptions of corruption established in this chapter share much in common with the broader literature on conflict-induced change in corruption. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the exploitation of fragility in the public sector is the single most common theories of this relationship across studies of ongoing conflict and post-conflict transition. The exploitation of unstable conditions by an empowered elite, which commonly includes political actors, is a similarly common element of the literature, and one which is affirmed by the experiences of those in Ghorahi. However, whilst affirming the role of instability and politicisation through conflict in corruption, the relationship I have set out in this chapter also contrasts to that common in the literature in two respects:

First, I do not find that the conditions of instability during the conflict resulted in widespread experiences of corruption in local government across the diverse respondent group. Rather, with the exception of those involved in party politics and the media, the respondents' accounts of the conflict

period characterise it as one of disengagement from local government, and a focus on everyday needs. For the majority, the corrupt consequences of this instability only became evident with the ongoing instability of a changing institutional structure during the transition, as the challenges in everyday life faded. This revealed to the respondents the corrupt overspills of bureaucratic dominance of local governance, and the failures of government-led anti-corruption.

Second, the discussion of corruption through politicisation demonstrated the closure of political space during the conflict, and with this a lack of attention to corruption amongst the political elite by many of those I interviewed. As with the effects of the conflict-induced instability on perceptions of corruption in local government, the conflict period itself is not described by the respondents as one of heightened corruption through politicisation, but rather as one of a collective disengagement from politics. By contrast, the growing stability of the post-conflict period is seen to have brought with it the expansion of political party control in local and central governance, and with this the growth of corrupt elite networks at the local level, and impunity for corruption amongst the politically connected.

In Chapter Nine, I compare the effects of the conflict on corruption specific to the governance system to those relating to the Maoists. This focuses on the relative influence of each on the respondents' everyday lives during and after the conflict, and with this their relative role in determining the contemporary nature of corruption. I also further examine the role of corruption in the governance system in reinforcing corruption specific to the Maoists, given the expectations for radical change amongst many of the respondents. However, prior to this, I discuss the final element of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi – which centres on coping and social change.

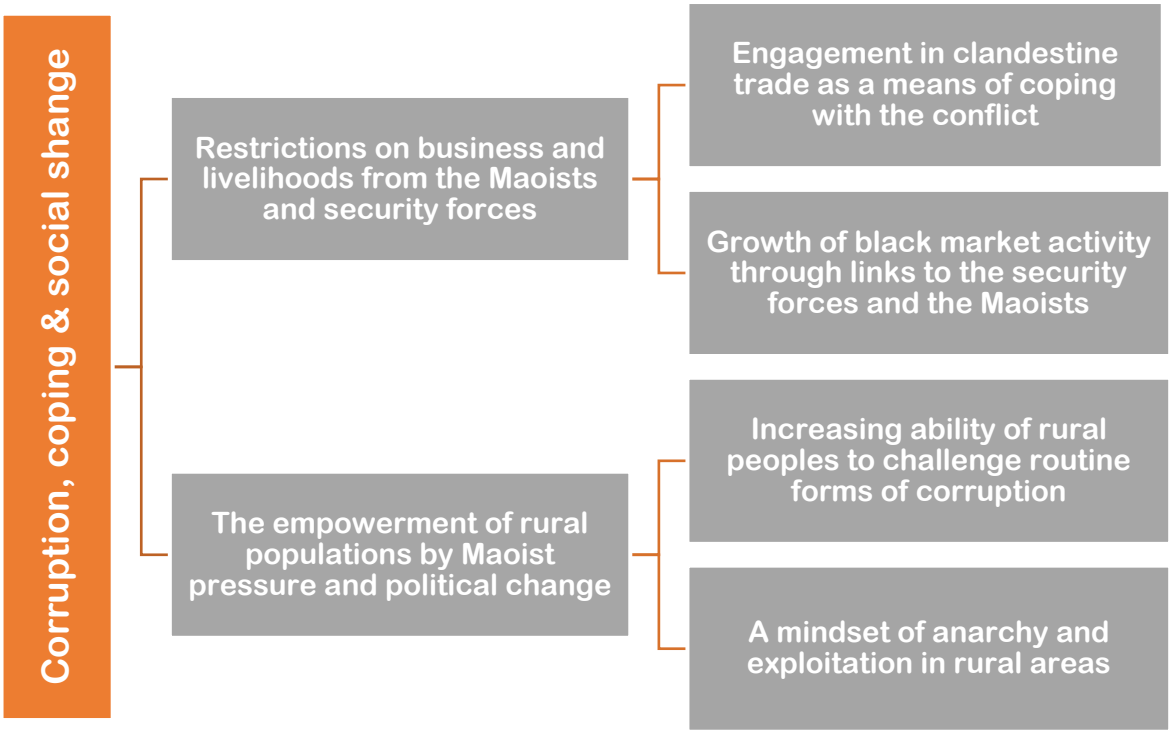
# Chapter Eight: Coping, social change and corruption

> "[T]here's been great change in the society - the education level, the awareness level - most people are educated now. There is a culture of studying, and most people are more aware about their different rights. … There is self-confidence." 2(44) Bookshop owner

## 8.1 Introduction

In Chapters Six and Seven, I showed how Nepal's conflict impacted the respondents' perceptions of corruption among two relatively elite sets of actors – the Maoists who resettled in Ghorahi after the conflict, and the political, local government and business elites in the city. My analysis of these elements of conflict-induced change in corruption focused on how these elite groups are perceived by the diverse set of respondents I interviewed, the majority of whom are not part of this elite. In this chapter I discuss how the conflict has impacted engagement in corruption and the vulnerability to corruption amongst 'ordinary' people, including the respondents themselves. As summarised in Diagram 8.1A, I do so by focusing on the impacts of the conflict on livelihoods in the city, and on perceptions of empowerment and vulnerability amongst rural populations in Dang District and elsewhere in Nepal.

Diagram 8.1A – Elements of the relationship



This chapter has two main parts. In Section 8.2, I show how the conflict affected the livelihoods of ordinary people in Ghorahi, expanding the discussion of restrictions imposed on the population by the Maoists and the security forces in Chapters Six and Seven respectively. I then link these impacts of the conflict to two contrasting sets of corruption perceptions: First, I discuss how a small subset of the business community used what they saw as clandestine but legitimate trade as a means of coping with the effects of the conflict on their livelihoods. I then contrast this to the wider perception that elements of the business community engaged in black market trade during the conflict; exploiting their connections to the Maoists and security forces for corrupt gain. In contrast to the effects discussed in the previous chapters, I show that these effects were confined to the period of crisis at the height of the conflict, and have not created long term legacies for corruption.

In Section 8.3, I show how the conflict has led to change in the respondents' perceptions of historically marginalised rural communities. These changes reflect how those in Ghorahi view the interaction between the Maoists and rural communities in Dang and elsewhere, and the perception that these interactions and the changes in the governance system in the transition have accelerated incremental gains in the empowerment of these communities. I link these effects of the conflict to the perception that rural communities are increasingly able to challenge the routine forms of corruption they experience, and to the respondents' expectations for long term change in the prevalence of corruption. I contrast this to a minority perception that the conflict has instead led to an anarchic mindset amongst rural populations, accompanied by an increase tolerance of elite corruption.

This chapter is informed by 1,049 coded statements from 83 respondents, following the procedure I set out in Chapter Four. As in Chapters Six and Seven, throughout I highlight contrasts in how this element of conflict-induced change in corruption is understood across the different elements of the respondent group. In this chapter, I particularly focus on the contrast between those directly involved in clandestine trade during the conflict and those who were not, and between the political opponents of the Maoists and the wider respondent group. As I discuss in concluding this chapter and in Chapter Nine, this differentiation highlights the sensitivity of conflict-induced change in corruption to the diverse experiences of conflict-affected populations.

### 8.2 Clandestine trade and black markets

In this section, I show how elements of the respondent group adapted to the pressures they faced during the conflict through clandestine trade, and how this is seen by others as part of corrupt black market activity (*kalo bazaar*). I argue that these contrasting interpretations reflect the proximity of respondents to clandestine trade, perceptions of the level of elite connections required to facilitate it, and reflections on the levels of profits obtained. I further show that both of these interpretations are significant in the respondents' reflections on the conflict period, but have not impacted corruption in the long term. Rather, these dynamics were the product of crisis, and are confined to a period distinct from the post-conflict reality. The respondent groups and themes which inform this are shown in Table 8.2A.

Throughout this discussion, I use the term 'clandestine trade' to denote business activity which is hidden and outside of regular channels, but which is seen as distinct from corrupt black market activity by some of the respondents. I do so to acknowledge the contestation between respondents over the actions of business and others involved in this type of trade during the conflict, which to those involved is fundamentally distinct from the features of black market activity which I introduced in Chapter Five. Unlike *kalo bazaar* and the other Nepali terms I set out in Chapter Five, 'clandestine trade' is a term which I have imposed to differentiate how different forms of activity are interpreted, rather than a translation of a Nepali term found in the responses.

Table 8.2A – Respondents and themes

| | **Sources** | **References** |
|---|---|---|
| Themes | 51 | 448 |
| Pressure on business | 45 | 240 |
| Clandestine trade & coping | 17 | 85 |
| Black markets & exploitation | 22 | 123 |
| | | |
| Sources | 51 | 448 |
| Journalists | 8 | 55 |
| Business | 27 | 278 |
| Business representatives & civil society | 9 | 101 |
| Political party representatives | 5 | 12 |
| Legal representatives | 2 | 2 |
| Police & local government | 0 | 0 |

8.2.1 Coping with the conflict through clandestine trade

In Chapter Seven, I described the closed environment which emerged in Ghorahi as a result of the conflict, particularly following the 2001 PLA attack. In doing so, I highlighted the separation from the rural areas of Dang that the respondents associate with this period. In addition to the consequences for political and media activities as I discussed previously, the separation of the city from rural areas posed a significant barrier to many businesses. Indeed, the conflict is described by respondents across a range of backgrounds as a period of decline in the local economy which, whilst not posing a threat to survival, affected the respondents' standard of living.[220] This reflects the comparatively wealthy nature of the respondent group, as I discussed in Chapter Four and reflect on further in Chapter Nine.

Among those active in business during the conflict, those seeking to transport goods to rural areas were particularly affected by the closed environment which emerged after 2001. This subset of the respondents describe arduous checking and permission procedures for travel, restrictions on the transportation of goods, and brief periods of outright bans on travel instigated by the security forces and city government.[221] These restrictions are in part seen as a reflection of the location of the city. As I discussed in Chapter Five, PLA attacks spread from Rolpa and Rukum Districts, which lie directly to the northern border of Dang. This proximity, combined with the direct impact of the 2001 PLA attack on the RNA, is described by the respondents as having driven the security forces' suspicion of those seeking to travel to the rural areas to the north.[222] 2(06)'s account is typical of this:

> "We could not import or export goods out of the District, or out of the valley area at all. I wanted to move goods from here in Rolpa, Rukum and the other hill Districts, but there was such tight security on the way. I had to show and have all of my goods searched whilst I was transporting them." 2(06) Senior business representative

The efforts of the security forces to restrict the flow of goods to rural areas is seen by the respondents to have stemmed from their need to limit equipment required for the improvised explosives commonly used by the PLA (International Crisis Group, 2005). This included the pots, wiring and

[220] 2(06) Senior Business Representative; 2(16) Journalist; 2(39) Agricultural Equipment Business
[221] 2(51) Bookshop Owner; 2(52) Medical Supply Business; 2(54) Consumer Goods Business
[222] 2(16) Journalist; 2(41) Senior Business Representative; 2(49) Poultry Business

batteries required for pressure cooker bombs, restrictions on which placed a particular burden on those involved in the repair and sale of electronics.[223] In addition to military-related equipment the security forces also implemented an array of restrictions to limit the flow of basic necessities to the PLA. After the escalation of the conflict in 2001, this included restrictions on the transportation of fast food, clothing and medical supplies to areas under Maoist control, and to the rural Hill areas in general.[224]

The respondents describe the combination of restrictions from the security forces with demands for donations by the Maoists as having significantly inhibited the livelihoods of many in Ghorahi. Leaders of the business community during the conflict describe a near-total shut down of much of the local economy, with those ordinarily involved in trade to rural areas either forced to close or significantly scale back their activities.[225] The scarcity of goods in rural areas contributed to the pattern of displacement from rural areas to Ghorahi and from Ghorahi to Kathmandu; joining those seeking places of stability as the violence spread. The 2001 PLA attack removed the sense of immunity from the conflict which had been present in the city, and pushed many to consider relocation to Kathmandu.[226]

As well as internal migration, several of those directly affected by restrictions of their business report having either considered or sought employment in foreign countries for themselves or members of their families. In a context of economic decline, foreign employment offered a means of coping with the effects of the conflict through remittances.[227] However, given the cost and administrative requirements of foreign travel, the restrictions the security forces placed on travel out of Ghorahi and the risk of falling victim to Maoist violence in the vast rural areas between Ghorahi and Kathmandu, this was far from a viable option for all.[228] As such, despite the scale of economic decline and the contemporary prevalence of foreign employment in Nepal (Sapkota, 2013), references to this means of adjusting to the effects of the conflict are present only amongst a handful of respondents.

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[223] 2(53); 2(55); 2(60) Electronics business owners
[224] 1(25) Former senior business representative; 2(74) Clothing business owner; 2(75) Clothing business owner
[225] 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(41) Senior business representative; 2(43) Hotel owner
[226] 1(18) District Peace Committee member 1(25) Former senior business representative; 2(54) Senior business representative
[227] 2(06) Senior business representative; 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(74) Clothing business owner
[228] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(39) Agricultural business owner; 2(43) Hotel Owner

Whilst also in the minority of the respondent group, engagement in clandestine trade also provided a means by which a subset of the respondents adjusted to the impacts of the conflict.[229] Given the nature of restrictions imposed by the security forces in Ghorahi, references to this means of coping is particularly present amongst those whose businesses involved the transportation of goods by road into rural areas. In some instances, efforts to bypass restrictions imposed by the security forces simply took the form of hiding goods amongst other items being transported out of the city. However, given the scope of restrictions imposed at the height of the conflict, those seeking to transport restricted goods also sought to draw on connections to the security forces.[230]

Those involved do not describe clandestine trade as having required a close connection to senior members of the security forces through kinship. Rather, those whose businesses were affected by security force restrictions sought to engage any potential contacts as a means of influence.[231] The account set out by 2(52), the owner of a small medical supplies distributor during the conflict, is typical of the type of connections used by those affected. Here, these connections to the security forces are not described as having provided a fool proof means by which any restricted goods could be transported into Maoist-controlled areas at any time. Rather, they are described as having been one tool of those affected by restrictions, the reliability of which varied with time and the nature of the goods involved.

> "My elder brother was working in the hospital, and the army would regularly use the hospital. When the army needed medicine, they would regularly get it from me and from my elder brother. … If I couldn't get [access] another way I would request it [from] them. If the army commander was available and ready to talk, and in a good situation, it might be possible. Sometimes they were too busy patrolling, and couldn't give any time. It wasn't easy to do regularly." 2(52) Medical business owner

The combination of the respondents' experiences of bribery in local government services which I set out in Chapter Five with the expectations from the literature set out in Chapter Two led me to suspect that informal payments could also have played a role in facilitating access to rural areas for those transporting restricted goods. As is the case in the local government, I particularly suspected bribes may

[229] 2(20) Journalist; 2(41) Senior business representative; 2(52) Medical business owner
[230] 2(52) Medical business owner; 2(53) Electronics business owner; 2(54) Senior business representative
[231] 2(52) Medical business owner; 2(54) Senior business representative; 2(56) Medical business owner

have offered a means of substitution if connections failed to the security forces, and I directed a number of questions which reflects this. However, whilst 2(52) and 2(54) makes some reference to informal payments as a last resort, others explicitly reject this possibility,[232] and references to informal payments do not widely appear across the responses. Rather, clandestine trade predominantly consisted of connections to the security forces and the option of hiding goods amongst those of other businesses.

The factors underlying the lack of references to bribery as a means of coping with effects of the conflict on business are inherently difficult to assess. However, it is necessary to consider these given the extent to which it contradicts the role of bribes (*ghus*) which I set out in Chapter Five. Given the openness with which the respondents discuss bribery in other settings[233] and their willingness to discuss clandestine trade facilitated via connections,[234] I do not find it realistic that this absence is driven by reluctance to discuss bribery in relation to the security forces. Nor do I find it realistic that this is simply a missing aspect of the responses because of the number of interviews conducted, again given the exposure of the respondents to clandestine trade in general. Rather, I find that this reflects the nature of relations between the respondents and members of the security forces during the conflict.

Whilst often critical of the capacity of the security forces to protect the city, the respondents perceive that the security forces genuinely feared the PLA, and were acting to protect themselves from a position of weakness.[235] In particular, they see the security forces as having been exposed by the 2001 attack. The restrictions imposed on businesses are therefore likely to have been seen as necessary adaptations by the security forces, rather than orders from elsewhere which could be exploited.[236] Consequently, small financial payoffs potentially available from businesses would not provide a sufficient motivation for those facing the Maoists to waver over provisions significant to their own security. The incentives that the respondents ascribe to local government officials taking bribes are thus different from the motives they ascribe to the security forces during the conflict.

[232] 2(39) Agricultural business owner; 2(59) Auto business owner; 2(60) Electronics business owner
[233] 2(21) Journalist; 2(22) Legal professional; 2(29) Maoist Centre District representative
[234] 2(11) Legal professional; 2(16) Journalist; 2(52) Medical business owner
[235] 2(08) Journalist; 2(41) Senior business representative; 2(47) Furniture business owner
[236] 2(16) Journalist; 2(39) Agricultural business owner; 2(41) Senior business representative

The second factor underlying the absence of experiences of bribery in dealing with the security forces is the widespread fear of the RNA, particularly under the 2001 emergency provisions. This is a common feature of respondents across backgrounds and, as I discussed in Chapter Seven, is particularly prominent amongst those in the media.[237] The combination of this fear with how the respondents interpreted the motivations of the security forces is likely to have precluded approaches to members of the security forces without some level of connection. The existence of a connection thus facilitates the exchange, but also lessens the necessity of bribery which typically acts as a substitute for a lack of personal connections to facilitate a task or favour in other contexts.

> "There was a problem with the security forces too. The security forces would come and pressure to close the hotel in the evening, and tell us not to have guests in the hotel. They would regularly pressure. I would talk to them, and sometimes they would question me. I told them that you are representatives of the government, and you have duty to provide security to businessmen, not to torture us." 2(50) Hotel Owner

The combination of feelings of fear with the motives the respondents ascribe to members of the security forces does not entirely negate the possibility of bribes forming some part of efforts to cope with the impacts of the conflict through clandestine trade. However, it does explain the lack of prominence given to this by the respondents through reducing the kind of encounter in which bribes are otherwise seen to occur - namely those of unconnected individuals interacting with an imbalance of power, with the bribe taking the place of a connection. Reflecting this, the small group of respondents who engaged in clandestine trade as a means of coping with the restrictions of the conflict emphasise the role of connections to the security forces and a willingness to attempt to evade detection, rather than the widespread use of bribes.

For the subset of the respondent group upon which I have focused thus far, clandestine trade offered a means of coping with the restrictions that the security forces placed on their livelihoods. However, as I discussed in Chapter Five, the respondents as a whole associate many of the features I have described as clandestine trade with black markets (*kalo bazaar*), and from this to corruption (*bhrastachar*). This raises the question of why some respondents were willing to engage in this type of

[237] 1(08) Journalist; 1(12) Journalist; 2(07) Journalist

activity during the conflict, and how this relates to corruption during and after this period. Next, I discuss the judgements attributed to clandestine trade by those involved to justify their actions, and then contrast this against perceptions of conflict-era black markets by those without this direct involvement.

### 8.2.2 Clandestine trade, black markets and corruption

The distinction that those involved in clandestine trade draw between their actions and a corrupt black market is informed by three factors. First, through references to the restrictions imposed by the security forces, the respondents characterise the resort to clandestine trade as an unavoidable necessity. Given the relative wealth of many of those I interviewed, this necessity is typically framed in terms of the survival of a business, rather than the fulfilment of basic needs. Consequently, for these respondents, clandestine trade has the same sense of legitimacy as *offering* bribes to public officials,[238] as they are seen as a necessary adjustment to conditions outside of individual control. This reflects the power of the security forces over the population of Ghorahi, particularly during the emergency period.

The second set of justifications that those involved in clandestine trade offer focuses on the needs of those in rural communities. As I discussed previously, clothing, medicines and other basic necessities were restricted by security forces at the height of the conflict, in an effort to limit the resources available to the PLA. Those involved in the supply of these goods describe this as having exacerbated the already significant toll of the conflict on those populations under Maoist control.[239] Those involved in clandestine trade thus see their actions as having been a legitimate response to the needs of rural populations, as well as necessary for their livelihoods. The combination of these justifications, and the legitimacy of clandestine trade that they suggest, is typified by 2(54):

> "I thought it wasn't good for the ordinary people to not get the food that they needed, and that it was creating a more aggressive feeling towards the government. It was a basic need for the people to get food. I also wanted to continue my business. I had invested in my business, and I needed to do business." 2(54) Senior business representative

[238] See the discussion of bribes (*ghus*) in local government services in Chapter Five.
[239] 2(52) Medical business owner; 2(54) Senior business representative; 2(56) Medical business owner

The final set of justifications centre on the contrast between those involved in supplying basic, if restricted, goods to rural areas in order to support themselves and rural populations, against those who engaged in the trade of explicitly banned goods. This distinction is particularly focused on pressure cookers, wiring and other components which the PLA uses to make improvised bombs, the supply of which to areas under Maoist control was banned from early in the conflict.[240] In addition to the consequences of supplying such goods to the Maoists, those who did so are characterised as profiting beyond that needed for survival, and therefore as exploiting the conflict. This exploitation and the motive of profit rather than coping leads such activity to be perceived as corrupt, and provides legitimacy to the actions of those who engaged in clandestine trade in goods with less direct military value.

> "Some businessmen were selling pressure cookers at that time for a very large amount, and they got a lot of benefit from that. It was only possible with connections to the Maoist party, not all businessmen could do that." 2(55) Electronics business owner

For those involved in clandestine trade during the conflict, the combination of necessity, the needs that they judged to exist in rural communities and the contrast between their motives and the motives they ascribe to those supplying banned goods to the Maoists provides justification to acts which would otherwise fall outside of the bounds of acceptable behaviour. This element of conflict-induced change in corruption closely resembles the theme of coping within the literature which I discussed in Chapter Two, and demonstrates the capacity of conflict to transform attitudes regarding otherwise unacceptable corrupt behaviours. For those involved, this was a temporary shift in response to intense pressures, and ceased with the return to 'normal' conditions early in the transition.[241]

The justifications applied to clandestine trade by those involved reflect a combination of conditions only directly experienced by a small sub-set of the respondents. Indeed, whilst there is consensus across those in business and the wider respondent group on the level of economic decline in Ghorahi as a result of the conflict, the specific pressures described by those who engaged in clandestine

[240] I could not determine a specific year in which this ban was initiated, but it was prior to the wider set of bans imposed on consumer goods under the 2001 emergency provisions. 2(38) Agricultural business owner; 2(52) Medical business owner; 2(54) Senior business representative
[241] 2(52) Medical business owner; 2(54) Senior business representative; 2(56) Medical business owner

trade are concentrated amongst those whose businesses required internal trade with rural areas under Maoist control. This leads to a contrasting set of judgements of clandestine trade in the conflict amongst the remaining majority of respondents, which frames these acts as part of a corrupt black market. [242]

In contrast to the small group of respondents who directly engaged in clandestine trade as a means of coping with the conflict, other accounts of how business adjusted to the conflict stress the importance of connections to the Maoists.[243] This stands apart from the accounts of those directly involved in clandestine trade, who stress the bypassing of the security forces as the main barrier to trade in restricted goods, and who describe the Maoists as welcoming the flow of goods into areas under their control.[244] In lieu of direct experience, this reflects the common impression amongst the respondents that the rural areas of Dang and elsewhere were the Maoists' domain, even where their presence was infrequent. This emphasis is expressed by 2(20), as part of his account of the growth of corrupt black markets during the height of the conflict.

> "Generally, those who were involved in the black market had to maintain a good relationship with the Maoist party. Without that relationship with the Maoist party, they could not continue their business at the village level. It was impossible to continue independently". 2(20) Journalist

The emphasis that those who did not rely on clandestine trade during the conflict place on the role of connections with the Maoists is significant in the construction of these activities as part of a black market. Specifically, given the distance between the Maoists and those in Ghorahi,[245] the perception that trade in rural areas was dependent on connections to the Maoists contributes to the sense of exploitation of the conflict by a well-connected and entrepreneurial elite. This is typically described in combination with references to the profits available via these connections,[246] consistent with the financial construction of *bhrastachar* which I set out in Chapter Five. As well as a common theme amongst journalist and political party representatives, this is emphasised by those in business who, like 2(51) did not themselves engage in clandestine trade as a means of coping with the impacts of the conflict.

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[242] 2(08) Journalist; 2(12) Disability rights activist; 2(19) UML District representative
[243] 2(20) Journalist; 2(51) Bookshop owner; 2(55) Electronics business owner
[244] 2(38) Agricultural business owner; 2(52) Medical business owner; 2(54) Senior business representative
[245] The exception to this is the demand for donations, as I discussed in Chapter Six.
[246] 2(16) Journalist; 2(20) Journalist; 2(43) Hotel Owner

> "It was an opportunity for some businessmen who made a connection to the Maoist party and who could then sell goods to the Maoist party. Some businessmen regularly sold medicines, clothes, and fast food. That type of business flourished at that time. They got a lot of profit from that connection." 2(51) Bookshop owner

The framing of clandestine trade as black market activity is also informed by the theme of fear. Rather than connections providing facilitation alone, a minority of respondents also emphasise the immunity from criticism granted to those businesses with connections to the security forces and to the Maoists during the conflict.[247] This is explicit in the quote from 2(58) below, and consistent with the wider closed environment emerging during the conflict I discussed in Chapter Seven. This reinforces the contrast many respondents see between the experience of the conflict for 'normal' unconnected businessman, and the experience of those able to draw on connections to the Maoists and the security forces.[248] The feeling of injustice associated with this reinforces perceptions of corruption stemming from references to profit and exploitation of the conditions of the conflict.

> "No one could speak against those businessmen. They had a good relationship with both sides, and they could make someone a target. Everyone was frightened of them. If anyone tried to speak, the security forces or the Maoists could attack them." 2(58) Auto business owner

The degree to which the conflict is seen to have generated corrupt black markets is thus distinct between those with and without direct experience of clandestine trade. For those who relied on clandestine trade, the restrictions by the security forces and the demands of livelihoods justified engagement in this irregular business activity. References to the lack of profits and the needs of rural communities under Maoist control support this notion of hidden but legitimate activity. By contrast, those without this direct experience stress the exploitation of these conditions of conflict, emphasising the connectedness required by those involved in the levels of profit available for doing so. This is further ratified by contrasts to the conditions facing 'normal' - unconnected - businesses in Ghorahi.[249]

The respondents who frame clandestine trade as part of a corrupt black market view changes in the wealth of those involved as the principle legacy of corruption in this form. However, like those

[247] 2(11) Legal Advocate; 2(58) Auto Sales Business; 2(60) Electronics Business;
[248] 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(16) Journalist; 2(20) Journalist
[249] 2(43) Hotel owner; 2(55) Electronics business owner; 2(56) Medical business owner

directly involved, the conditions which led to the emergence of corruption in this form are seen to have been specific to the conflict, and not transformative of corruption in the long term. As I set out in Chapter Five, the contemporary context in Ghorahi is described as entirely apart from the period of crisis between 2001 and early 2006, and with this the drivers of this form of black market activity have been lost. However, as I discuss next, other elements of conflict-induced attitudinal change are seen to have persisted beyond the conflict, and remain significant to corruption in Ghorahi.

### 8.3 The empowerment of rural communities

In discussing clandestine trade and black markets, I focused on how the respondents interpreted the impacts of the conflict on corruption amongst themselves and others in the urban setting. In this final section of empirical analysis, I turn to how the respondents reflect on conflict-induced changes amongst rural populations, and the effect of these changes on the construction of corruption in Ghorahi. Here, I focus first on how the respondents describe the impacts of the conflict on rural populations, second on the theme of rural empowerment and awareness, and third on the theme of anarchy and exploitation. These latter two themes provide competing visions of long term change in the vulnerability of rural communities to corruption, and are differentiated primarily by the political affiliations of the respondents. The themes and respondent groups which inform this are summarised in Table 8.3A.

Table 8.3A Respondents and themes

| | **Sources** | **References** |
|---|---|---|
| Themes | 72 | 515 |
| Rural empowerment during the conflict | 45 | 196 |
| Rural empowerment since the conflict | 51 | 213 |
| Anarchy and exploitation in rural areas | 33 | 106 |
| | | |
| Sources | 72 | 515 |
| Journalists | 17 | 120 |
| Business | 28 | 140 |
| Business representatives & civil society | 14 | 153 |
| Political party representatives | 10 | 70 |
| Legal representatives | 2 | 8 |
| Police & local government | 1 | 24 |

8.3.1 Empowerment of rural populations through the conflict and transition

In Chapter Six, I highlighted the set of motives that the respondents ascribe to the Maoists in initiating the conflict. Whilst Maoist elites are seen as a driver of corruption in the post-conflict period, the respondents' accounts of the conflict frequently reference the empowerment of marginalised communities by the Maoists, particularly in rural areas. The gap between these expectations and the changes the respondents experienced since 2006 contributes to contemporary accounts of corruption specific to the Maoist elites. However, as I now discuss, the respondents' reflections on conflict-induced change amongst marginalised rural communities are comparatively positive.

Among the small group of respondents who were involved in the PLA or Maoist political movement during the conflict, the empowerment of marginalised rural communities is a central theme in responses specific to the motivations of the movement. Consistent with statements made by the top level Maoist leadership in the lead up to the conflict (Bhattarai, 1996) and since 2006 (Bhushan, 2016: 161), it is the social and economic condition of those in rural areas which they see as motivating the conflict.[250] Communist principles and changes to the governance system are described by these respondents as a means to this end, rather than themselves being the primary motive. This is common in the accounts of those who have remained connected to the Maoist party throughout the conflict and transition, and of those who joined breakaway factions during the transition, like 2(10):

> "We discussed the everyday condition of life with the ordinary people. We wanted to change their lives, and wanted to do this by transforming the society. We focused on poverty, particularly on the differences between the rural areas and the urban areas, and wanted to solve that problem." 2(10) Nepal Communist Party District Representative

The Maoist party representatives I interviewed describe efforts to improve conditions in rural communities in terms closely comparable to those found in the literature (Lecomte-Tilouine, 2010; Schneiderman & Turin, 2004).[251] Alongside ideological education, this includes references to symbolic punishments and the threat of violence against those seen to have perpetrated discrimination against

[250] 2(10) Nepal Communist Party District representative; 2(29) Maoist Centre District representative; 2(33) Maoist Centre District Representative

[251] 1(14) Social activist and former PLA combatant; 1(15) Social activist and former PLA combatant; 2(29) Maoist Centre District representative;

Dalits, indigenous groups, linguistic minorities and other historically marginalised communities. As I discussed in Chapter Six, landlords and representatives of the rival political parties were widely targeted throughout the conflict because of their association to what is seen to have been a feudalistic and repressive state. Unsurprisingly, the Maoist representatives emphasise the role of education in achieving change, and stress that violence was used only as a last resort.

> "We tried to empower the lower caste people. If anyone was still involved in discriminatory practices, then we used to punish them. There were different types of punishment - we would blacken their face with ink, or make them walk through the village wearing a garland of shoes, to show them to the society, and show that this discrimination was wrong." 2(29) Maoist Centre District representative

Accounts from representatives of historically marginalised communities, including the Tharu and Magar ethnic groups[252] and the Dalit community,[253] are largely consistent with accounts of action to empower rural peoples described by Maoist party representatives. In particular, representatives of the Tharu community with intimate knowledge of rural areas outside of Ghorahi describe how the Maoists acted against discriminatory practices perpetrated by landlords. This included ending requirements for unpaid work during the Dashain and Tihar festivals in exchange for access to lands, and acting against sexual exploitation.[254] Whilst part of the ongoing improvement in the conditions of these communities, the conflict is thus seen as a period of increasing empowerment for historically marginalised rural communities by those respondents with a direct connection to these communities.

The theme of empowerment from the accounts of those representing marginalised rural communities is qualified by the sense that it was also these communities which bore the brunt of conflict-era violence. As described by 2(23) below, the security forces were aware that the Maoists sought the support of specific communities in rural areas, and this is seen as having led to suspicion that all those within such areas were aligned with the Maoists. The combination of these assumptions with pressures for recruitment, support and donations by the Maoists are seen to have resulted in the greater exposure

[252] 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(23) Magar community representative; 2(36) Tharu community representative
[253] 2(31) Senior member of District government
[254] 2(35) Tharu community representative; 2(36) Tharu community representative; 2(37) Tharu community representative

to violence amongst members of the Tharu, Magar and Dalit communities in rural areas.[255] This is consistent with the geographical pattern of violence across Nepal present in the Transitional Justice Reference Archive (OHCHR, 2014).

> "The security forces targeted the Magar community as Maoist cadres. There was also the problem that there was the Magar community in the PLA and in the Nepal Army too. Most of the Magar youth were there in the government army, and most of the Maoist combatants were Magar as well. So who was killed in the war? The majority were from the Magar community." 2(23) Magar community representative

The tension between these two effects of the conflict on marginalised communities in rural areas - Maoist empowerment and high levels of exposure to violence - is evident in the manner in which empowerment amongst rural communities is described by the wider respondent group. For those without direct experience of rural areas during the conflict, changes amongst marginalised communities are frequently discussed in terms of the *awareness* of the people, rather than with reference to specific material change.[256] Here, awareness denotes the knowledge rural populations have about their own conditions, and of the practices by which discrimination is enacted. These references to conflict-induced changes in awareness are a common feature of accounts from those of a range of backgrounds, in lieu of specific examples of change in rural areas.

Precise attribution of the changes in awareness of rural populations is often lacking in the accounts of those unconnected to rural areas. In many instances, respondents link change with the presence of Maoists, but this is based on references to their broad ideological orientation rather than detail of their actions.[257] Unsurprisingly, those representing the Nepali Congress, UML and other political parties place less emphasis on the Maoists as a driver of awareness and empowerment. As I discuss in Section 7.3.3, they also qualify this through references to what they see as the growing anarchy in rural communities during the conflict.[258] Where they are positive, this is principally discussed

[255] 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(23) Magar community representative; 2(36) Tharu community representative
[256] 2(02) Journalist; 2(41) Senior business representative; 2(48) Dairy products business owner
[257] 2(51) Bookshop owner; 2(54) Senior business representative; 2(81) NGO Representative
[258] 2(10) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative

with reference to the re-opening of political space and institutional changes which, whilst facilitated by the conflict, they see as being brought about in part through the efforts of their parties.

Whilst a significant driver of change, both those connected to communities in rural areas and the wider respondent group do not see the conflict and transition as the only factor underlying the growing awareness of marginalised communities in rural areas. The growing access of rural youth to education, including in the most impoverished areas of Nepal, is also a key aspect of this theme across the respondent group.[259] This is commonly described in terms of a broader pattern of intergenerational change in Nepal, including references to the growing aspirations, access to technology and employment opportunities open to the youth.[260] Many still see the urban population as apart from those in rural areas in terms of education and other opportunities, however across the majority of the respondents there is a clear direction of change in the awareness of rural populations over time.

> "[T]here's been great change in the society - the education level, the awareness level - most people are educated now. There is a culture of studying, and most people are more aware about their different rights … There is self-confidence." 2(44) Bookshop Owner

Despite the lack of radical change in their own material conditions and widespread acknowledgement of the exposure of marginalised rural communities to violence from both sides, rural empowerment is thus a significant aspect of how those in Ghorahi understand the effects of the conflict and transition. The specific expression of this in terms of the *awareness* of marginalised populations in rural areas reflects this contradiction, and is present across the diverse level of exposure to these communities amongst the respondent group. As I discuss next, despite the picture of worsening corruption in Ghorahi itself established by the Chapters Six and Seven, the idea of a growing rural awareness leads many of the respondents to be optimistic over the direction of future change in corruption amongst rural communities in Dang District and across Nepal.

[259] 2(19) UML District representative; 2(42) Factory owner; 2(44) Bookshop owner
[260] 2(47) Furniture business owner; 2(55) Electronics business owner; 2(75) Clothing business owner

8.3.2 Rural empowerment and corruption

The transformation of the wealth of the mid-level Maoist elite and the politicisation and instability in local governance paint a largely negative picture of changes in corruption resulting from the conflict. These changes reflect the direct experiences of those within Ghorahi, and are central to how the respondents connect the conflict to the impact of corruption in their direct surroundings. However, many also connect the conflict with a more positive transformation in the vulnerability to corruption amongst populations in rural areas. As I now discuss, this reflects perceptions of conflict-induced changes in awareness, and the link of these changes to determinants of corruption.

In Chapter Five, I discussed the role of relative power and knowledge in the construction of corruption in Ghorahi. These factors are central to the respondents' accounts of bribery (*ghus*), in which an empowered official is seen to exploit the necessity with which 'ordinary' people seek services, and the inconvenience many would face if forced to repeatedly travel to a government office from rural areas. These factors are also invoked in discussions of brokers, who are seen to exploit their access and knowledge to elites and state institutions.[261] Whilst bribery is largely seen to be inescapable for all but a small elite, references to the relative disempowerment of marginalised communities are commonly used to account for the different manifestations of corruption faced by different groups.[262] This is encapsulated by 2(17)'s account of bribery in local government offices in Ghorahi:

> "They see that the landless people are uneducated, and that they have no power, so they can directly ask the for money. But when they come across a representative they say 'I am busy now, and I cannot do this work. Come back after a few hours or after a day'. This creates a dilemma - either they pay, or the process won't get done." 2(17) Landlessness Activist

The role of power in how the respondents understand common acts of corruption, combined with the effects of the conflict on awareness, leads many to be positive about the scope for change in the vulnerability of rural populations to corruption. Across the respondents, this is typically framed through references to the growing capacity of rural populations to challenge corruption amongst local government officials.[263] Consistent with the nature of awareness which I set out above, this is typically

[261] 2(11) Legal professional; 2(38) Agricultural business owner; 2(40) Agricultural business owner
[262] 2(02) Journalist; 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(17) Landlessness activist;
[263] 2(04) Rastriya Janmorcha District Representative; 2(08) Journalist; 2(44) Bookshop owner

articulated through references to rural peoples 'speaking out' when asked for bribes (*ghus*) when accessing local government services. This is seen to contrast a past in which social marginalisation prevented rural peoples challenging those in power,[264] the precise expression of which varies depending on the level of connection of the respondent to such communities as follows:

For those respondents directly connected to rural communities, particularly the representatives of the marginalised groups I discussed above,[265] the growing capacity to challenge corruption is typically expressed in terms of the removal of specific manifestations of discrimination. The removal of exploitative landholding practices for the Tharu community is, for example, seen to have removed a significant barrier to Tharu people raising challenges to local power holders by limiting the precariousness of their livelihoods.[266] This is not seen to solely reflect the effects of the conflict, but rather places the actions of the Maoists against the landlords implementing these practices as one significant element in a broader pattern of change in the empowerment of Tharu people over time.

For those respondents without direct connection to marginalised rural communities, the notion that rural populations have a greater ability to speak against routine forms of corruption is rarely tied to specific changes amongst these communities. Rather, as 2(42) describes, it is informed by references to the emerging political openness and institutional changes since the conflict, and the increasing interconnectedness of rural and urban areas after a period in which these domains were largely separated.[267] For others, this is tied to broad references to the aims of the Maoists regarding rural and marginalised communities, and the changing political environment, both of which have challenged previously dominant power structures.[268] The outcome for the respondents' perceptions of corruption is, however, the same across those with and without connection to rural communities.

> "I'm positive, I'm not seeing a worsening trend. Most people are getting educated, and have access to technology, and they know about the whole country, and about the world. So they can raise questions about corruption issues - if a leader has a high standard of life, or a very unexpected lifestyle - they can question that." 2(42) Factory owner

[264] 2(48) Dairy products business owner; 2(81) NGO Representative; 2(84) Legal professional
[265] 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(23) Magar community representative; 2(36) Tharu community representative
[266] 2(15) Tharu community representative; 2(35) Tharu community representative; 2(36) Tharu community representative
[267] 2(06) Senior Business Representative; 2(07) Journalist; 2(42) Factory Owner
[268] 2(09) Journalist & Gender Rights Activist; 2(16) Journalist; 2(41) Senior Business Representative

Combined with growing access to education and the expansion of the media since the end of the closed environment of the conflict, respondents across backgrounds thus describe a decreasing vulnerability of rural populations to common forms of corruption. Whilst outside of the direct experience of the majority of the respondents, this informs perceptions of the direction of change in corruption since and as a result of changes in the conflict, and their optimism for future change. However, while the respondents are often optimistic about future change, the changes they describe are not always linked to declines in corruption in a straightforward manner. Indeed, for some, these changes are also seen to have influenced the manner in which routine forms of corruption are performed.

Consistent with the broader picture of change in the awareness and empowerment of rural peoples, a subset of the respondents describe a growing secrecy of demands for bribes in local government contexts.[269] This includes reference to bureaucrats being increasingly unable to present demands outright, given the growing confidence of rural peoples to challenge the demand for bribes. However, rather than reducing the overall scope of the problem, this pressure is associated with the perceived growth of brokers (*dalal*) as a means of delivering the demand for bribes in local government services, one of the many functions of brokers which I set out in Chapter Five. Both the corrupt nature of the demand for bribes and the exploitation linked to this are seen to have remained constant, however the performance of corruption has changed.

> "The awareness of the people must have affected those who are involved in corruption. They are aware of the complaints, so they try to do corruption more secretly … Before the conflict time people could openly carry out these corrupt activities and the people could not complain, but now they are having to do corruption in a more secret way." 2(07) Journalist

As I discuss next, the growing role for brokers as a means of delivering demands for bribes in a context in which open demands are increasingly difficult is not the only limit that some respondents place on the effects of empowerment on corruption. Rather, some also see the conflict as leading to the growth of a mindset of anarchy and exploitation in rural areas. However, this does not detract from the wider perception amongst the respondents of an increasing capacity to resist routine forms of corruption amongst those in rural areas. As I discuss in Chapter Nine, this demonstrates that conflict-induced

[269] 2(07) Journalist; 2(43) Hotel Owner; 2(50) Hotel Owner

change in corruption is not limited to the respondents' reflections on their own experiences, but also draws on perceptions of change in areas outside of their direct experiences.

8.3.3. Anarchy, exploitation and corruption

Amongst the political opponents of the Maoists, particularly those who were victims of displacement and violence by the PLA, there is a common emphasis on the rise of anarchy in the rural areas during the conflict.[270] The logic underlying this is straightforward - these respondents see the Maoists as having displaced the traditional sources of authority in the villages, leading to anarchy. Like 2(19) below, they also see the conditions of the conflict as leading some villages to align with the Maoists for corrupt financial gain, rather than principally as a reaction to discrimination and the structure of power which supported it. The connection to the Maoists is seen to be significant to this because of the protection it provided amid the lack of presence of the state.

> "[T]he common people saw that they could join with the Maoist party and get access to the crops, and maybe also get access to the money as well. They became greedy, they wanted to capture the property of others. This mindset spread throughout the people - the mindset to get property freely." 2(19) UML District Representative

Unlike the effects of rural empowerment, the corruption that is seen to have resulted from an ascendant mindset of anarchy in the conflict is not predominantly tied to bribery. Rather, the anarchy in the rural areas is seen to have led to the illicit extraction of natural resources, impunity for a range of crimes and the abuse of any development funds which managed to reach these areas.[271] Comparable to the factors underlying the broker (*dalal*) and black market (*kalo bazaar*) concepts which I set out in Chapter Five, what ties this to corruption is the sense of exploitation of the conditions of the conflict, particularly connections to the Maoists, and gains beyond that reasonably obtained through work.

The political opponents of the Maoists and others critical of them do not see the mindset of exploitation as something solely confined to the conflict period. Rather, they view the exploitation of

[270] 2(13) UML District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(19) UML District representative
[271] 2(13) UML District Representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District Representative; 2(19) UML District Representative

the conflict by a minority as leading to the long term growth of a mindset focused on wealth and accumulation. Whilst present in various guises amongst these respondents, the most common expression of this is in characterisations of the attitudes of rural peoples towards development projects.[272] As with 2(18) below, 'ordinary' people are characterised as focusing only on the outcomes of development and on what they can gain through bargaining. This notion of illegitimate gain and its roots in the rejection of traditional power structures links such attitudes to corruption (*bhrastachar*).

> "[N]ow there is a mindset amongst the people. If any project is going to be launched, or any budget becomes available for a road or a project … [t]hey will say we have been affected by the project, and want some money as compensation. They bargain like this. This is the same mindset that was in the conflict time. But there is not blocking like there was before. People want to bargain now." 2(18) Nepali Congress District Representative

Critiques of the legacies of the conflict in rural areas from District-level elites of the Nepali Congress and UML are unsurprising. Broadly speaking, these elites had benefitted from the pre-conflict structure of local power, and were disempowered through the conflict. However, they are not the only respondents who qualify the theme of awareness with references to the growth of a mindset focused on wealth. Rather, several of the journalists and small business owners I interviewed also describe the growth of such a mindset.[273] This is not linked to an idea of anarchy in the rural areas because of the displacement of the state by the Maoists, but is instead described as an overspill from otherwise positive changes occurring because of the conflict and transition.

For those not connected to the political parties opposed by the Maoists, concern over a growing materialistic mindset is linked to growth of access to education and non-agricultural employment across Nepal.[274] As 2(51) describes, this mindset is seen as providing incentives for financial forms of corruption motived by increasingly complex and aspirational lifestyles, but also shares a more direct connection to corruption. This direct connection is rooted in the idea that people across Nepal increasingly prioritise wealth and lifestyle above family and kin.[275] Whilst relevant to the urban setting,

[272] 1(22) Nepali Congress District representative; 2(14) Nepali Congress District Representative; 2(19) UML District Representative
[273] 2(03) Journalist and academic; 2(21) Journalist; 2(51) Bookshop owner
[274] 2(42) Factory owner; 2(43) Business community representative; 2(47) Furniture business owner
[275] 2(09) Journalist and gender rights activist; 2(20) Journalist; 2(38) Agricultural business owner

many particularly lament the loss of an imagined ideal of rural life through this emergent materialism.[276] This is not to say that the respondents object to these changes in the conditions of rural communities, but rather that they observe these changes as a dark side of overall positive shift.

> "Our lifestyles are getting more expensive and we're spending more in daily life. We are celebrating festivals with more and more money. The common people and the bureaucrats need more money these days. So this has created more of a problem for corruption. Everyone is trying to get more and more to be comfortable in their everyday lives". 2(51) Bookshop owner

The account of anarchy and exploitation given by those outside of the political parties is not a direct dismissal of the theme of awareness and empowerment I discussed in the previous section. Indeed, many of those in this group also stressed the positive dimensions of change in rural communities, and the roots of this in the actions of the Maoists and the transformation of the political system since the end of the conflict. Rather, they engage the idea of anarchy and exploitation to explain the lack of radical change in the exposure of rural populations to corruption in the post-conflict period. This is in some respects self-limiting, with the growth of education and empowerment limiting the vulnerability to corruption, but also supporting a mindset increasingly focused on wealth.

### 8.4 Conclusions

In Chapters Six and Seven, I discussed the impacts of the conflict on the respondents' perceptions of corruption among two relatively elite sets of actors – the mid-level Maoist elite who relocated to Ghorahi during the transition, and the set of political, local government and business elites who are seen to have benefitted from instability and politicisation in the governance system. In this chapter, I completed this picture by setting out conflict-induced change in the respondents' perceptions of corruption among 'ordinary' people in Ghorahi and the rural areas which surround the city. I have done so with a focus on two contested themes: First, I discussed clandestine trade as a means of coping with the pressures of the conflict, and the contrasting framing of this activity as a corrupt black market. Second, I discussed the widespread perception that the actions of the Maoists and changes to the

[276] 1(26) Civil society organisation leader; 2(03) Journalist and academic; 2(09) Journalist and gender rights activist

governance system have led to the increasing resilience of rural peoples to corruption, and the critique that challenges to the traditional power structure have led to a mindset of anarchy and exploitation.

The discussion of clandestine trade demonstrated how the exceptional pressures on the respondents' livelihoods led some to engage in otherwise unacceptable acts. The most direct of these pressures were the restrictions the security forces placed on trade during the emergency period, however other reflections were also significant to engagement in this means of coping. These included reflections on the needs of those in rural areas, who the respondents saw as cut off from basic necessities, and on the lack of exceptional profits obtained through this. These pressures and reflections served to legitimise acts including the use of connections to the security forces to bypass checkpoints, and the smuggling of goods where connections failed. I also demonstrated that the fear of the security forces and the role of connections served to limit the use of bribes (*ghus*) to facilitate clandestine trade, despite its prevalence as a means of overcoming barriers posed by officials.

Clandestine trade provided a minority of respondents with an additional means of coping with the challenges they faced during the height of the conflict. However, the bypassing of restrictions imposed by the security forces to facilitate trade to rural areas was also framed by many as corrupt black market (*kalo bazaar*). This framing reflects perceptions that such activity was the domain of a well-connected elite group of businessmen, able to influence both the security forces and the Maoists, that doing so led to profits beyond that legitimately arising from the work involved, and that it included the sale of banned military goods. The competing framing of acts as clandestine trade and as black markets highlights the extent to which conflict-induced change in corruption is contested in similarly affected populations, and amongst those of similar backgrounds. As I discuss in Chapter Nine, this offers a significant nuance to how this relationship has been approached in the literature.

The second link I developed in this chapter focused on the respondents' perceptions of change amongst rural populations in Dang District and elsewhere in Nepal. Rural-urban separation was one of the defining features of the conflict after 2001, but the construction of corruption in Ghorahi is nonetheless influenced by perceptions of change in these areas. Here, I linked the focus of the Maoists on historically marginalised rural populations and political reforms of the transition with perceptions of the empowerment of rural populations. I demonstrated how this has informed perceptions of an

increasing ability of rural peoples to challenge routine forms of corruption, and with this expectations of the future direction of change in corruption across Nepal. These perceptions are consistent with those of respondents directly connected to historically marginalised communities, who describe the conflict as an acceleration of incremental improvements in the capacity of rural peoples to challenge corruption.

As with clandestine trade, I demonstrated how conflict-induced change in corruption through rural empowerment is contested by a minority of the respondent group. For those politically opposed to the Maoists, the displacement of the pre-conflict structure of rural power is instead seen to have generated anarchy in rural areas, and a mindset focused on wealth. Whilst the extremes of this critique are clearly motivated by party-political divides, I also showed how the theme of rural empowerment is qualified across the respondent group. This included perceptions of the growing secrecy of routine forms of corruption as rural peoples have becoming increasingly willing to speak out, and the growing role of brokers as a means of facilitating corruption. In Chapter Nine, I further discuss the complex influence of perceptions of rural change on the construction of corruption in urban Ghorahi, and integrate this with the elements of conflict-induced change in corruption I set out in Chapters Six and Seven.

# Chapter Nine: Discussion

## 9.1 Introduction

In Chapters Six to Eight, I set out the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption evident from those I interviewed in Ghorahi. I focused first on the transformation of the mid-level Maoist elite, second on instability and politicisation in the governance system, and third on coping and social change. Reflecting the constructivist grounded theory approach at the centre of my analysis, I did so without imposing the theories of conflict-induced change in corruption evident in the literature, and instead focused on developing each element of this relationship in context. To complete this process, in this penultimate chapter I integrate the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption into a single account of this relationship, and discuss the contribution of this to the literature.

This chapter has two main parts: In Section 9.2, I discuss the relative prominence of the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption which I developed over Chapters Six to Eight, and compare this to the broader nature of corruption in Ghorahi which I set out in Chapter Five. Following this, in Section 9.3, I compare the nature of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi to the outcomes of the literature review in Chapter Two. Here, I discuss the implications of my analysis for both the four theories of this relationship in the literature, and the broader study of this relationship. In Chapter Ten, I use this discussion as the basis of a number of recommendations for further research, and reflect on the transferability and limits of my analysis.

## 9.2 Conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi

The research question I posed in Chapter One asked "how has armed conflict in Nepal affected corruption at the sub-national level and in the long term?". Over chapters Six to Eight, I argued that there are three areas in which conflict impacts corruption amongst those I interviewed in Ghorahi. In this section, I summarise these three elements and set out how conflict-induced change relates to the broader construction of corruption in this context. Following this, I discuss the relative prominence of each of these elements in the period in which I undertook fieldwork and over time. Through this, I set out the combined and contextualised account of this relationship in Ghorahi.

9.2.1 The three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi

Chapter Six demonstrated that the transformation of the mid-level Maoist elites who relocated to Ghorahi following their exit from the PLA influenced the respondents' perceptions corruption across the transition. Underlying this are experiences of forced donations to the Maoists during the conflict, the respondents' comparisons of the fortunes of these elites to those of ordinary people and rank and file ex-combatants and the sense that the Maoists abandoned their focus on social change. These comparisons provide a socially contingent standard of fairness, rooted in reflections on the conflict and transition, which this transformation is judged to have violated. For a minority, this sense of corrupt transformation is exacerbated by the involvement of Maoist elites in brokering the sale of captured lands.

Broadening from the focus on the Maoists, Chapter Seven linked instability and politicisation in the governance system during the conflict and transition to the respondents' perceptions of corruption. Across respondents of all backgrounds, the lack of local electoral accountability and the chaotic nature of coalition politics in the transition are seen to have entrenched corruption in the local governance system. This includes perceptions of budgetary abuses, the failure of infrastructure projects and the formation of elite networks which undermine electoral processes. For those not directly involved in politics, the political parties have been a central beneficiary of this, and have orchestrated corrupt elite networks between business and state-appointed officials. This contrasts to the perception of those involved in party politics, who see themselves as having been disempowered by the transitional structure of local governance, and as attempting to limit corruption amongst state-appointed officials.

Finally, Chapter Eight demonstrated how pressures on everyday life during the conflict led some in Ghorahi to resort to clandestine trade. Whilst a justifiable means of coping with the effects of the conflict for some, many of those not involved frame this as part of a corrupt black market during the conflict. These perceptions are differentiated by reflections on the connections necessary to facilitate trade, the profits obtained, and nature of the goods traded. Broadening from the focus on the urban experience alone, Chapter Eight also linked the actions of the Maoists during the conflict to the perceived capacity of rural populations to challenge routine forms of corruption. This contrasts with the perceptions of a politically-engaged minority, who see the conflict as leading to an anarchic and wealth-

focused mindset. Whilst outside of the direct experiences of those in the city, these changes impact the respondents' expectations for future change in corruption.

### 9.2.2 Conflict-induced change in the broader context of corruption in Ghorahi

In Chapter Five, I argued that corruption in Ghorahi is constructed by a complex set of judgements across different actors and contexts, and is expressed through a diverse set of concepts. Whilst significant, the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption which I summarised above are far from the sole drivers of corruption, and should be seen in this broader context. Reflecting this, here I compare conflict-induced change in corruption to the broader nature of corruption in Ghorahi.

Of the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, the transformation of the Maoist elite is unique in that it has introduced a distinct set of beneficiaries into the forefront of the respondents' perceptions of corruption. While now part of the political class which the respondents associate with corruption in general, these elites are distinct because they are seen as having come from backgrounds of rural poverty which are entirely apart from the urban experience. Further, they are seen as rapidly transforming into among the wealthiest elites in the city. These reflections on the background and scope of transformation of these elites sets them apart from the broader set of beneficiaries from corruption in politics and local government who, while engaged in comparable patterns of behaviour, are perceived to have historically benefited from the structure of local power.

In contrast to Maoist transformation, the second and third elements of conflict-induced change in corruption relate to actors that the respondents associate with corruption more generally. In the second element, the principal beneficiaries of instability and politicisation in the governance system are perceived to be those elites who are long seen to have benefitted from corruption. This is principally the local representatives of major political parties, and the brokers and business elites with which they are connected. It is also these elites who are seen as exploiting historically marginalised rural communities in element three. Similarly, the framing of clandestine trade as a corrupt black market focuses on a sub-group of the business community who are generally seen as beneficiaries of black markets. These two elements of conflict-induced change in corruption thus centre on the changing capacity of existing beneficiaries to engage in corruption, rather than the growth of a new set of beneficiaries.

Turning from the beneficiaries of corruption to standards and judgements underlying it, the nature of Maoist transformation reflects many of the broader judgments central to the respondents' perceptions of corruption in Ghorahi. As I discussed in Chapter Five, the construction of corruption in Ghorahi draws on expectations of legitimate gain, underlying which are comparisons between the fortunes of elites and ordinary people. The gap between this standard of legitimate gain and the perceived reality of elite wealth is acute in the case of the Maoist elites, given how the respondents reflect on the background of these elites. However, the judgements which link this transformation to corruption are comparable to those applied to corrupt political elites and local bureaucrats in general.

The widespread perception that Maoist elites have engaged in the same corrupt practices as other elites in Ghorahi is, however, also distinct from the broader construction of corruption because of the expectations for change which were associated with these elites. Despite the political diversity of the respondent group, there was widespread optimism for positive change in the governance system as the Maoists transitioned into party politics. These expectations have not been fulfilled, and indeed have been directly contradicted by the transformation of Maoist elites in the city. The framing of Maoist transformation as corruption in part reflects this gap between the expectations and reality which have emerged in the transition. These judgements are less significant to the broader construction of corruption because of the lack of expectations for radical change associated with other elite groups.

By contrast, conflict-induced change through instability and politicisation more closely reflects the broader nature of corruption in Ghorahi that the respondents describe. The respondents see the compromises over local government during and after the conflict – and the dominance of state-appointed officials in particular – as having exacerbated the imbalance of power between local government elites and ordinary people. This imbalance is central to the broader construction of corruption, particularly in their exposure to bribery (*ghus*) to access local government services. The role of political connections, and in particular the link between access to corrupt benefits locally and political power centrally, similarly resemble the political impunity that the respondents associate with corruption generally. In this regard, the conflict has exacerbated corruption, but not fundamentally transformed it.

The accounts of the engagement of businesses in black markets during the conflict is similarly aligned with the broader construction of corruption. As I set out in Chapter Five, the black market (*kalo*

*bazaar*) concept is one which is broadly used to describe what are seen as the corrupt acts of those in the private sector, and is based on perceptions of a well-connected sub-group of the business community exploiting conditions of scarcity and the lack of access to markets. The conflict exacerbated the value of these connections and generated new scarcities, particularly in rural areas, but did not fundamentally transform this category of corrupt activity. Indeed, there are close parallels between perceptions of black market activity during the conflict and that during other periods of crisis, such as during the scarcities caused by the 2016 blockade on the India-Nepal border.

The nature of clandestine trade as a means of coping is also one which is closely comparable to the broader construction of corruption. Whilst engagement in this type of activity was confined to the period of crisis in the conflict, the justifications presented by those who engaged in clandestine trade resemble those which legitimise engagement in bribery (*ghus*). Specifically, these respondents see themselves as exposed to conditions outside of their control, and as reacting only to the extent necessary to conduct an activity without which they would suffer significant hardship. As with the payment of bribes to access government services, the combination of a reasonable entitlement and an imbalance of power legitimise engagement in an activity which is otherwise deemed corrupt. This is more disputed in the case of clandestine trade than bribery, but reflects the same underlying nature of corruption.

Finally, the respondents' focus on the changing levels of empowerment of historically marginalised rural peoples is also one which reflects the broader nature of corruption in Ghorahi, rather than a fundamental transformation of the nature of corruption. Whilst a significant part of the changing environment of Nepali society, the changing vulnerability of rural populations to corruption is part of a historical process of empowerment for marginalised populations in rural areas. These changes are significant to perceptions of corruption because of their effects on the imbalance of power between officials and service seekers, and on impunity with which demands can be made. The growth of brokers (*dalal*) to facilitate demands for bribes is similarly aligned with the characteristics of this role in general, with rural empowerment exacerbating rather than causing the emergence of this role.

Through the combination of these three elements, the conflict has thus been central to changes in the extent of corruption. However, the conflict has primarily affected factors already relevant to the broader nature and determinants of corruption, rather than being fundamentally transformative of how

corruption is constructed in all cases. The primary exception to this is the transformation of the Maoist elite, in which a new set of actors were introduced as the principal beneficiary of corruption, and around whom there were significant positive expectations for change. As I discuss next, the distinct nature of Maoist transformation amongst the broader corruption dynamics in Ghorahi has meant that this impact of the conflict is particularly prominent, and has remained so across the transition.

Table 9.2A – Conflict-induced change and the broader context of corruption

| **The transformation of the mid-level Maoist elites** |
|---|
| New beneficiaries: The Maoist elites are a new group of beneficiaries of corruption, and are distinct from the broader set of elite beneficiaries because they are seen to have come from backgrounds of rural poverty and to have rapidly transformed their lifestyles. |
| New elements of the construction of corruption: A clash between the principles associated with the Maoists in initiating the conflict and the reality after the conflict, in a context where corruption is otherwise part of the expected behaviour of elites. |
| Existing elements of the construction of corruption: Corruption amongst the Maoist elites is related to the unexplainable scope and speed of the transformation of wealth, and to the comparison between an elite group and the lives of ordinary people. |
| **Instability and politicisation in the governance system** |
| Existing actors: Local political party representatives, local government officials and wealthy elements of the business community are seen as the primary beneficiaries of corruption, as has historically been the case in Nepal. |
| Existing elements of the construction of corruption: Local elites as unaccountable to the people and separate from them, exacerbated by conflict and instability in the transition. Political empowerment in the centre protecting cadres on the periphery. |
| **Coping and social change** |
| Existing actors: The involvement of elements of the business community in black market activity, and perception of historically marginalised rural communities as particularly vulnerable to corruption perpetrated by political leaders and government officials. |
| Existing elements of the construction of corruption: The acceleration of a historical process of empowerment amongst rural peoples, and the worsening of opportunities for exploitation by businesses involved in black markets during the conflict. |

### 9.2.3 The prominence of the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption

Of the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, the transformation of the Maoist elite is the most prominent in the responses. This is evident in the frequency and depth of comment on Maoist transformation across the respondent group, and in the relative lack of contestation over this effect across respondents of different backgrounds. Indeed, only those connected to the Maoist

party directly dispute this link, and it appears even amongst those who are otherwise sympathetic to the aims of the Maoists. The prominence of this element reflects three factors.

First, while the respondents now see the Maoists as a transformed political force, the conflict is synonymous with their actions in an armed insurgency. In addition to holding the Maoists responsible for starting the conflict, this reflects the fact that many of the respondents were only directly exposed to large scale violence during the 2001 PLA attack on Ghorahi, and did not experience the level of violence from the security forces common in rural areas (OHCHR, 2014). Given this, my questions regarding the conflict were widely interpreted with reference to the actions of the Maoists, rather than those of the security forces. The early phases of the post-conflict transition are also most immediately associated with the influx of former PLA combatants, and with concerns over the threat of further escalations of violence by the Maoists. The respondents' memories of the conflict and transition are therefore first associated with the actions of the Maoists, which influences their perceptions of corruption.

The relative prominence of Maoist transformation over the other two elements of conflict-induced change in corruption also reflects the extent and visibility of corrupt benefits that the respondents associate with this group. The mid-level Maoist elite in Ghorahi are seen to have rapidly emerged as a central beneficiary of corruption, the gains from which are seen as concentrated in a short period of time, and which are publicly displayed through houses, businesses and vehicles. This stands in contrast to the respondents' perceptions of corruption in local government which, whilst also affected by the conflict, is also where corruption is historically seen to be concentrated. The contemporary prominence of Maoist transformation over the other two elements therefore also reflects the rapid and public gains which are seen to have emerged among this new beneficiary group.

The final factor underlying the prominence of Maoist transformation is the contradiction that corruption by this group offers to the respondents' expectations of the Maoists from the conflict period. With the exception of those from rival political parties, the majority of the respondents do not view the Maoist leadership as motivated by corrupt ends. Indeed, the respondents' views of the Maoists' motives are broadly aligned with how the leadership presented itself - focusing on the empowerment of rural communities. The fact that the experience of the Maoist elites since the conflict is dominated by the transformation of wealth, alongside the perception that corruption has gone unchallenged by Maoist-led

governments, contradicts these expectations. This contradiction is not evident with corruption perceptions in local government. Indeed, the respondents see corruption as intrinsic in this domain.

Of the two other elements of conflict-induced change in corruption, the effects of the conflict on the governance system has a comparatively larger role than the effects of coping and social change. In part, this reflects the concentration of experiences of clandestine trade during the height of the conflict. Indeed, both those who engaged in clandestine trade as a means of coping and those who frame this as a corrupt exploitation of instability see this effect as tied to a period of crisis, something which is seen as entirely apart from the current conditions. As I discussed above, these behaviours also align with the respondents' expectations regarding the well-connected subset of the business community. As such, whilst significant to the respondents' accounts of corruption during the conflict, this has little impact on the contemporary perception of corruption in Ghorahi.

In addition to the link between clandestine trade and crisis, the prominence of instability and politicisation in governance system over conflict-induced social change reflects the directness of the impacts of each on everyday life. Whilst the empowerment of rural communities is widely discussed, the effects of the conflict and transition on local government have a comparatively direct impact on the respondents' everyday experiences of corruption. This reflects the general context of corruption in Ghorahi, which is closely tied to routine experiences of bribery in local government services. By contrast, reflections on social change amongst rural populations are peripheral to the everyday reality of the respondents, and are part of the broader pattern of change occurring in Nepal over time.

Finally, the relative significance of changes in the governance system over social change amongst marginalised populations also reflects the proximity of my fieldwork to the 2017 local elections and the build-up to the federal elections in 2017/18. Because of this context, issues relating to the structure and effectiveness of government at all levels were particularly salient in media and public discourse. As such, this was a period in which the flaws of the system of local government which emerged through the conflict and which persisted for a decade of the transition were widely debated. These debates were not confined to the political and media class, but were a widespread feature of everyday conversation – something which inevitably influenced the prominence of this element.

The contemporary picture of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi is thus influenced first by Maoist transformation, second by changes in the governance system, and finally by coping and social change. Underlying the relative prominence of these three elements are: [1] the nature of the respondents' experiences of the parties to the conflict, [2] the pace and scope of change in corrupt benefits associated with different groups, [3] reflections about where corruption has historically been concentrated, [4] the extent to which different corruption dynamics impact everyday life, and [5] the political context. The combined picture of this relationship does, however, vary based on the period under consideration. To close this discussion, I now summarise the prominence of these elements during the conflict itself, and their influence on the respondents' expectations for future change.

For those outside of party politics and the media, the nature of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi was dominated by the pressure that conflict placed on livelihoods. The growth of clandestine trade and black market activity was a direct consequence of these pressures, and it is this element of corruption which is most prominent in the conflict itself. However, the combination of threats to livelihoods with the closure of political space also meant that the respondents were disconnected from local government, one of the key sites of corruption subsequently. These conditions also legitimised the payment of donations to the Maoists as a means of avoiding violence, and isolated those in Ghorahi from the change in rural areas. As such, whilst creating the conditions for change in the respondents' perceptions of corruption, the conflict is not itself the period in which these changes were most evident.

The three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption come to the fore in the period after 2006. Rather than as an escape from violence, donations to the Maoists became part of a wider perception of an illegitimate transformation of wealth which has left former combatants and ordinary people behind, and which represents a betrayal of the movements' principles. Concurrently, instability in local governance and the re-opening of political space led to perceptions of a corrupt elite bargain at the local level, bolstered by the nature of central coalition politics and the weaknesses of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA). The result is a reconnection with corruption in local government, an area in which it has historically been concentrated, but which has been exacerbated by the conflict and transition. The conflict has thus introduced a new corruption dynamic in the form of Maoist exploitation, and heightened perceptions of existing corruption in local government.

Whilst Maoist transformation and the effects through the governance system are the most prominent elements of conflict-induced change in the respondents' perceptions of corruption in the current period, the conflict has also generated expectations for future change in corruption. In addition to the expectations for change evident from the 2017 elections, the respondents are optimistic about the growing resilience of rural communities to corruption. This reflects expectations over the capacity of marginalised communities to challenge elite abuses and the routine forms of corruption which affect everyday life. In this regard, the conflict is seen to have accelerated the incremental empowerment of marginalised communities over time, the effects of which on corruption are only beginning to be realised. The combined picture of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi is therefore a three-stage effect across the conflict itself, the transition and the future direction of change.

Table 9.2B – Conflict-induced change in corruption over time

| **The conflict (2001 to 2006)** |
| --- |
| The majority of respondents were separated from corruption in local government as a result of the pressures on everyday life and the closure of political space. |
| Clandestine trade was a means of coping with the effects of the conflict on livelihoods for a minority, interpreted by many as the growth of black market exploitation. |
| Payments to the Maoists were a legitimate means of avoiding PLA violence, and the respondents lacked knowledge and concern over the use of these donations. |
| **The transition (2006 to 2017)** |
| The emergence of a corrupt transformation of the mid-level Maoist elite, drawing on comparisons to everyday life, political principles, forced donations and land control. |
| A corrupt local elite bargain involving political parties, bureaucrats and contractors, which emerged through local and central instability and politicisation. |
| The beginnings of change in the vulnerability of historically marginalised rural peoples to corruption, because of the actions of the Maoists during the conflict. |
| **Future change (after 2017)** |
| Expectations for newly elected local officials to improve the quality of governance – both formally through the electoral process and through their relations to the people. |
| Expectations over the growing capacity of historically marginalised rural peoples to challenge everyday manifestations of corruption. |

9.2.4 Summary

In this section, I integrated the three elements of conflict-induced change in the respondents' perceptions of corruption, and compared conflict-induced change in corruption to the general nature of this socially constructed phenomenon in context. Through this, I argued that the transformation of the wealth of the Maoist elite is both the most prominent of the three forms of conflict-induced change in corruption in the period in which I conducted interviews, and is also the most distinct from the general nature of corruption experienced by those I interviewed. By contrast, the effects of the conflict on corruption through local government and through coping and social change align more closely with the areas in which corruption has historically been located, and have acted through the broader set of determinants of corruption. Based on this integrated account, in the section to follow I compare the nature of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi to the literature on this relationship.

## 9.3 The literature on conflict-induced change in corruption

Here I discuss the implications of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi for the literature on this relationship. I do so in two parts. First, I discuss the contribution of my analysis to four under-explored dimensions of this relationship: [1] the duration and level of conflict-induced change in corruption, [2] the extent to which conflict represents an entirely distinct set of determinants of corruption, [3] the relative prominence given to effects at the central and local levels, and [4] the limits to how corruption has been conceptualised in studies of conflict-induced change. Following this, I discuss how conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi compares to the four theories of this relationship in the literature. Here, I argue that whilst this case does not provide a new category of conflict-induced change in corruption, it expands and refines elements of each of the four theories of this relationship, and demonstrates concurrent effects across these categories.

9.3.1 The multiple elements of long-term change at the sub-national level

One of the primary limitations of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption which I set out in Chapter Two is the lack of attention to the long term dynamics of this relationship. I further argued that, owing to the influence of the peacebuilding literature and approaches to corruption focused on the public sector, this deficit is particularly acute at the sub-national level. Indeed, whilst the

expectations of long term change at this level are widely suggested (see, for example, Cheng & Zaum, 2008; Goodhand, 2008; Looney, 2008), only Smith's (2014a) study of the ethnicisation of corruption in Nigeria is based on empirical material drawn from populations during a period of post-conflict stability.

The lack of direct empirical examination of the long term effects of conflict on corruption at the sub-national exacerbates the issues that are more widely present in the literature on this relationship. As I set out in Chapter Two, the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption is fragmented, with studies typically focusing on only one of the four theories of change, rather than the more holistic assessment of changes in corruption. Indeed, whilst the sole example of a study of long term change in corruption through conflict directly through the experiences of a conflict-affected population, Smith's (2014a) study purely considers identity-based change. The question of the multiple dynamics of this relationship in the long term and at the sub-national level therefore remains open, and was one of the main influences on the design of this thesis.

Consistent with Smith's (2014a) study and the largely unexplored expectations of the group of recent studies of this relationship cited above, my analysis of Ghorahi demonstrates that conflict has long term consequences for corruption at the sub-national level. Eleven years after the end of the conflict, its impacts remain evident in perceptions of corruption relating to the Maoists, the instability and politicisation of the governance system and the perceived empowerment of rural communities. These effects persist despite the fact that the current context is entirely apart from the pressures the respondents faced during the conflict, and the extent to which the successes of the peacebuilding process resonate with the experiences of this peripheral population. This leads to the first implication of this thesis for the literature – that there are long term consequences of conflict for corruption at the sub-national level, even with conditions of stability and a lack of ethnic polarisation.

> **Finding One:** Conflict has long term impacts on corruption at the sub-national level, as analysed through the perceptions and experiences of an affected population. This effect exists even where stability has been achieved and where the conflict was not stratified along ethnic or communal lines. This confirms a commonly assumed but rarely explored expectation of the literature on this relationship.

In addition to the general lack of direct inquiry into long-term change in corruption at the sub-national level, in Chapter Two I argued that the literature is fragmented between four theories – the exploitation of fragility, illiberal responses to conflict, conflict economies and social change. Within studies of the sub-national level in particular, there is a tendency to focus only one of these theories, such as the ethnicisation of corruption (Orjuela et al 2016; Smith, 2014a) and conflict economies (Goodhand, 2008; Looney, 2008). I responded to this fragmentation by engaging a grounded theory approach to investigating this relationship, such that I could compare the prominence of different elements of this relationship in context. Through this, my analysis demonstrates multiple concurrent long-term effects that conflict has on corruption at the sub-national level.

The contemporary picture of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi is comprised of three concurrent elements. As I discuss in Section 9.3.2 below, these elements span the four theories of this relationship in the literature, with elements of Maoist transformation aligned with the conflict economies literature, the empowerment of historically marginalised communities aligning with accounts of social change through conflict, and elements of the instability and politicisation of local governance aligning with the illiberal response to conflict and the exploitation of fragility. As such, my analysis demonstrates that no single one of the four existing theories is a complete explanation of conflict-induced change in corruption. Instead, these four theories should be viewed as overlapping components of a diverse set of interactions between conflict and corruption.

> **Finding Two:** Long-term change in corruption at the sub-national level can consist of multiple concurrent effects. These effects include elements from across the four theories of this relationship in the literature, none of which provide a comprehensive account of this relationship at this level and time period.

As well as demonstrating the multiple concurrent dynamics of conflict-induced change in corruption at the sub-national level and in the long term, the experiences of those in Ghorahi shows that these effects have differing levels of prominence over time. As I set out in Section 9.2, whilst the experience of Maoist transformation and politicisation of local government impact the contemporary experience of corruption amongst those in Ghorahi, the effects of black market activity and clandestine trade are confined to the period of ongoing conflict. Further, the impacts of the empowerment of rural

peoples are only beginning to be felt, and is expected to become a more significant limit on corruption over time. My analysis thus shows that the multiple effects of conflict-induced change in corruption are variable over time, and that some may come to prominence over a decade after the end to violence.

> **Finding Three:** The multiple elements of conflict-induced change in corruption at the sub-national level vary in prominence over time. Effects such as those relating to social change may only become evident in perceptions of corruption long after the end to conflict, whilst those relating to coping are confined to the period of crisis.

Demonstrating the existence of multiple, simultaneous dynamics of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi in the long term is the central contribution of this thesis to the literature. However, my analysis also has implications for how conflict should be understood relative to other determinants of corruption. Given that much of the literature on this link draws on empirical findings from the height of conflict, or at least from a period of ongoing crisis during transition, comparatively little has been said about how conflict compares to the other determinants of corruption in the contexts studied. This is particularly evident with regard to long term changes which, as discussed above, have received comparatively less attention across the literature as a whole.

As I summarised in Section 9.2, the exposure of those in Ghorahi to conflict and their perceptions of change during and after the conflict has led to fundamental change in how corruption is constructed. This is most evident in the ascendance of a new set of elite beneficiaries from corruption in the form of the mid-level Maoist elite. However, the conflict has not been transformative of all elements of corruption. Indeed, the single most common experience of corruption – bribes (*ghus*) to access local government services - has remained relatively unchanged as a result of the conflict in the urban setting. This is despite the changes in the perceived vulnerability of rural communities to routine forms of corruption and the context of instability and politicisation in the local governance system.

The fact that conflict may lead to long term changes in some but not necessarily all of the forms and determinants of corruption perceived by those in a given context links to a broader reflection on the nature of this relationship. Whilst a major driver of change, conflict can exacerbate existing elements of corruption, as well as providing new elements of how corruption is perceived. The case of change in corruption through the empowerment of historically marginalised rural communities in Ghorahi show

this, with the conflict increasing the pace of change in this determinant of corruption, but far from being the sole cause of this change when considered in historical perspective. This shows that conflict-induced change in corruption can be part of the long term evolutionary change, as well as radical transformation.

> **Finding Four:** In the long term and at the sub-national level, conflict may accentuate existing determinants of corruption, as well as fundamentally transforming elements of how corruption is constructed. Conflict-induced change in corruption should thus be seen amongst the broader construction of corruption in context.

The final implication of my analysis for the literature as a whole concerns the balance between influences on corruption at the central and the local levels. Despite the increasing number of studies which explicitly examine the sub-national dynamics of corruption after conflict (Goodhand, 2008; Looney, 2008; Orjuela et al, 2016), analysis of change at the central level has been the primary influence on the development of the body of theory around this relationship. This is particularly evident in the focus on government actors in the literature on illiberal transition and on the systems of informal economic activity across territories. This reflects the focus of the peacebuilding literature on the stability of central states in transition, to which corruption is seen as necessarily detrimental, and the legacy of prescriptive approaches to corruption focused on abuse in the public sector.

The case of Ghorahi shows that there is a role for central level factors in conflict-induced change in perceptions of corruption at the local level, but that these are far from the primary determinant. My analysis of Maoist transformation, for example, linked elements of this change to the respondents' reflections on the Maoist party in government and the political protection offered to mid-level elites by the changing structure of power in the centre. Similarly, my analysis of instability and politicisation in the governance system included the remoteness of the CIAA, the impacts of unstable central coalition politics and the compromises made over the structure of local government during the transition. However, these central level effects acted only as complementary factors to local level dynamics.

Rather than principally through changes at the central level, the case of Ghorahi demonstrates the primary role of changes in everyday standards of living and lifestyles in determining conflict-induced change in corruption. This is particularly evident in the case of Maoist transformation, in which the comparison between the lives of ordinary people and those of an empowered elite underpins

perceptions of an illegitimate transformation. The actions of the Maoist party in the centre complement this, but are peripheral. Similarly, the corrupt consequences of changes in the central-level governance system through the conflict and transition are interpreted primarily through their effects on the local elite corruption. As such, even where influenced through change in the centre, changes in lifestyles and the everyday experience are central to conflict-induced change in corruption.

> **Finding Five:** The role of central-level fragility has been overstated in the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption. For those in Ghorahi, reflections about changes in their immediate conditions, and in the institutions of local government to which they are directly exposed, are more significant.

By adopting a different level of analysis and theoretical and methodological approach to those common in the literature, the case of Ghorahi shows the significance of conflict for the long term nature and extent of corruption at the sub-national level, and that this effect is variable over time. This builds on the findings of the subset of the literature focused on the ethnicisation of corruption perceptions and the local dimensions of conflict economies by demonstrating the multiple diverse elements of conflict-induced change which can simultaneously impact the nature and extent of corruption at this level. These findings also challenge the dominance of central level factors across the literature, showing how central level changes are mediated by local experiences.

### 9.3.2 Ghorahi and the four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption

In Chapter Two, I argued that the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption has undergone significant development in the last decade, but that this has led to the fragmentation of the literature. Within this fragmented literature, I argued that there exists four main theories: [1] the exploitation of fragility, [2] illiberal responses to conflict, [3] conflict economies, and [4] social change. These four theories are distinguished by their underlying assumptions around the determinants of corruption and the nature of conflict and, as I set out in Chapter Two, are mid-level theoretical explanations rather than fully abstracted theories of change. Here, I discuss how conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi relates to these theories, and discuss what my analysis adds to each.

As I argued in Chapter Two, the expansion of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption has been driven in part by critiques of the focus on the exploitation of fragility. Rooted in liberal assumptions (Smith, 2014; Soares De Oliveira, 2011), this theory sees conflict as undermining the capacity of the public sector to prevent corruption, and more broadly as producing a fragile environment open to exploitation. Consistent with the last decade of developments in the literature on this relationship (Day & Reno, 2014; De Waal, 2009; Lindberg & Orjuela, 2014), in Chapter Two I did not argue that the exploitation of fragility is not present in conflict-affected and transitional environments, but rather that this theory reflects a narrow and prescriptive framing of conflict-affected environments and the determinants of corruption. Whilst analytically inductive, I situated my analysis in the broad set of works which challenge these narrow assumptions.

On the surface, the nature of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi may be seen to conform to the framing of this relationship as the exploitation of fragility. The transformation of the wealth of the Maoist elite could, for example, be seen simply in terms of the rational exploitation of the fragility of the conflict, and in particular of the vulnerability of those in Ghorahi to pressure for donations, by an elite who were empowered by the strength of the PLA. However, given the many factors underlying this and the other components of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, it would be an error to characterise this relationship in these terms. Rather, how these aspects of the conflict influence corruption is socially contingent, and dependent on more than public sector fragility.

The social contingency of what may otherwise be seen as the exploitation of fragility in the three elements of conflict-induced change in Ghorahi is particularly evident in the case of Maoist transformation. As I discussed in Section 9.2, the perception that mid-level Maoist elites have benefitted from forced donations during the conflict and from the displacement of landlords, is seen as corruption not only because of the financial benefits obtained, but also because of standards that this is seen to have violated. These standards include the principles that the respondents associate with the Maoists, the comparison to everyday life, and the relative fortunes of the elite and the rank and file of the PLA. Framing these dynamics purely in terms of the weakness of the public sector and the balance of payoffs and risk thus neglects the role of socially-contingent judgements in the construction of corruption.

The limits of the exploitation of fragility as an explanation of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi is also evident when the time dimension of the three components of this relationship are considered. With the exception of the construction of clandestine trade as black market activity, which I discuss further below, my analysis shows that there is a significant lag between the period in which public sector fragility is at its peak, and the period in which perceptions of corruption peak. This is particularly evident in the case of corruption in local government, with perceptions of corruption peaking as the respondents were reconnected with these institutions and as political space re-opened during the transition. This, along with similar dynamics of Maoist transformation, means that the peak of fragility is not the period in which corruption was at its height.

Both the significance of social value judgements and the mismatch between the peak of fragility and the perceived peak of corruption shows the limits of framing this relationship as the exploitation of fragility. Of the three components of this relationship in Ghorahi, the one which most closely aligns to this theory of conflict-induced change in corruption is the discussion of black markets. Unlike the other effects discussed, this effect is concentrated in the period of highest fragility, relates specifically to the lack of oversight, and in part reflects the profits available to those engaged in clandestine trade. However, as I showed in the discussion of clandestine trade in the conflict, these acts were also described in terms of coping with the effects of the conflict. The barrier between these is rooted in value judgements in context, particularly the needs of rural populations and the motives of those involved.

The case of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi therefore adds further weight to the literature critical of the framing of this relationship as one primarily of the exploitation of fragility. As I have argued here, conflict-induced change in corruption at the sub-national level is fundamentally dependent on social value judgements in context, which go beyond the extent of oversight and the benefits obtained. The lag between the period of greatest fragility in the public sector during the conflict and the perceived concentration of corruption well into the transition also shows the limits of this theory of conflict-induced change in this case. As I discuss next, the dynamics of this relationship in Ghorahi better conform to the three alternative theories of conflict-induced change in the literature.

**Finding Six:** The exploitation of fragility is an inadequate explanation of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi. This case provides further weight to the argument set out in the emergent literature on this relationship in a number of cases.

**Finding Seven:** The barrier between exploitative corrupt activity and legitimate acts of coping with the effects of conflict is contingent on social value judgements in context, rather than focused on the fragility of the state alone.

The second theory of conflict-induced change in corruption in the literature, which I termed 'illiberal responses to conflict', focuses on the deliberate use of corruption as a tool of stability. The majority of works which invoke this link do so from the perspective of existing or emerging state actors attempting to impose order (De Waal, 2009; Reno, 2008; Soares De Oliveira, 2011) but is also present in cases of rebel governance (Baaz & Verweijen, 2014; Mac Ginty, 2010; Mukhopadhyay, 2014). As I set out in Chapter Two, this theory reflects a direct critique of the assumptions underlying the framing of this relationship as the exploitation of fragility, namely the framing of conflict-affected states as fragile, and the assumption that corruption is necessarily destabilising (Boege et al, 2009; Smith, 2014).

In Chapter Five, I argued that the nature of conflict and recovery in Nepal, and the experience of this in Ghorahi, contrasted the type of case in which illiberal dynamics are commonly analysed. Specifically, Nepal has pursued domestically-led peacebuilding through democratisation and security sector reform (Whitfield, 2012), in contrast to the conventional case of illiberal peacebuilding through a combination of democratic and authoritarian mechanisms (Smith, 2014; Soares De Oliveira, 2011; Van Klinken & Aspinall, 2011). Reflecting this and the focus of my analysis on corruption at the sub-national level, conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi largely falls outside of the bounds of this theory. Indeed, the patronage dynamics most associated with illiberal responses to conflict (Day & Reno, 2014) are absent from conflict-induced change in corruption in this case.

Whilst the purposeful use of patronage and similar networked forms of corruption as a means of attempting to impose order does not resonate with conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, my analysis does have implications for this theory. Specifically, Maoist transformation and the instability in the governance system indicate the capacity of corruption to have stabilising consequences, even where these effects are inadvertent. Whilst the focus of this thesis is on conflict-induced change in

corruption, rather than on the capacity of corruption to impact the dynamics of conflict, this case therefore offers the following implications for this broader aspect of the corruption-conflict nexus.

Amongst the factors which informed the respondents' perceptions of a corrupt elite transformation within the Maoists is the comparison to the rank and file of the PLA. In addition to the comparisons drawn between the fortunes of these elites and their own lifestyles, the 'ordinary' lives of the former PLA since the conflict reinforce the sense that access to lands, donated funds and political protection provided corrupt benefits to these elites. Whilst far from the sole factor responsible for the social reintegration of the former rank and file of the PLA (Subedi, 2018), one side effect of this comparison is that it reinforces the sense that the former PLA rank and file have integrated into the city. Indeed, in some instances, the comparison of the elite and former rank and file of the PLA is a cause of sympathy amongst the respondents and, more broadly, is a symbol of their separation from the Maoist movement. This separation and reintegration was amongst the central aims of the DDR process.

In addition to the stabilising overspills of the corruption dynamics concerning Maoist transformation, a similar dynamic is evident with the effects of instability in the governance system on demands for elections. Rather than undermining faith in emergent democratic institutions, as is commonly argued in accounts of corruption and peacebuilding within a liberal perspective (Le Billon, 2008), instability and politicisation in Nepal's governance system have increased the respondents' demands for local elections. Indeed, when combined with reflections on changes amongst historically marginalised rural communities, future democratic participation is widely seen as central to the future management of corruption. As above, this is far from the sole or primary explanation for widespread acceptance of the emergent democratic system, and in part also reflects the nature of the respondent group. However, it represents a further inadvertent stabilising consequence of corruption.

The focus of this thesis on conflict-induced change in corruption rather than on the capacity of corruption to influence the outbreak and duration of conflict means that these factors are a minor point in my analysis. However, the factors which have nonetheless emerged from the study of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi demonstrate that corruption can have stabilising overspills. These overspills are in addition to the support that clandestine trade offers to those affected by conflict, which I discuss below in relation to conflict economies. As I discuss in Chapter Ten, the inadvertent stabilising

effects of corruption, as well as the deliberate engagement of corruption as an elite response to instability, is a theme requiring further investigation.

> **Finding Eight:** The deliberate use of corruption as a means of achieving stability, particularly through the use of patronage networks, was not an aspect of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi perceived by the respondent group. This may have been significant at the elite level, but does not appear in the construction of corruption amongst those I interviewed.

> **Finding Nine:** Conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, particularly elements of Maoist transformation and corruption in local government perceived by the respondents, have had inadvertent stabilising effects. However, more research is required into the scope of these effects, the details of which I set out in Chapter Ten.

The third theory of conflict-induced change in corruption in the literature focus on the inter-related set of informal economic relations which constitute the conflict economy. This is typically broken down into the coping, informal and conflict economies; relating respectively to the efforts of populations to adjust to the impacts of conflict, to economic activity outside of the formal economy but not directly dependent on conflict, and to economic activity supporting or benefitting directly from conflict (Goodhand, 2004). These domains of activity are widely argued in the literature to be inter-connected – creating mutual dependency between actors with vastly different motives (Baaz & Verweijen, 2014; Goodhand, 2008; Looney, 2008). As I argued in Chapter Two, this focus has meant that comparatively less is known about the experiences of those in these systems, and that the barrier between corruption and informal economic activity has often been poorly conceptualised.

The three forms of conflict-induced change in corruption evident in Ghorahi all contain elements which resonate with the framing of this relationship as part of a conflict economy. Maoist transformation includes the involvement of elites in the land business, politicisation and instability in the governance system includes the nexus of business, political elite and bureaucrats, and the focus on social change includes clandestine trade as a means of coping. Reflecting the critique of this segment of the literature which I set out in Chapter Two, I have not focused primarily on the systems of economic relations emerging through conflict, but rather on the experiences of these and other effects by a conflict-affected population. Through this, I offer three findings to the conflict economies literature.

First, the dynamics of clandestine trade during the conflict in Ghorahi demonstrate the extent of contestation possible over conflict-era corruption, even amongst a similarly affected population. Those in Ghorahi widely suffered the effects of security force restrictions on movement, the pressure for donations from the Maoists and the risk of Maoist violence in rural areas - the combination of which had a significant impact on everyday life. However, the resort to clandestine trade as a means of coping with this was far from universal, even amongst the business community. Indeed, many instead viewed clandestine trade as a form of black market activity, and condemned those involved as exploiting the conditions of the conflict. Conflict-era clandestine trade is thus subject to two competing constructions amongst a similarly-affected population; both a means of survival and of exploitation.

Second, my analysis shows that different elements of the conflict economy exhibit differing levels of significance for the experience of corruption in the long term. As I discussed in Section 9.2, engagement in the coping economy did not have long term effects on corruption after the period of crisis. Rather, clandestine trade is seen both by those involved in this activity as a form of coping and by those who saw this as a corrupt black market to have been concentrated to the period of crisis, particularly the post-2001 emergency period. By contrast, the informal economic activity surrounding Maoist elites, particularly with regard to land capture, has led to long term changes in the nature of corruption. As set out in Section 9.2, these long term changes include the actors which are seen to be the main beneficiaries from corruption, and the level of benefit obtained.

In combination, the concentration of the effects of clandestine trade during the conflict and the extent of division amongst the respondents over the 'corrupt' nature of clandestine trade means that the experience of those in Ghorahi contradicts elements of the conflict economies literature. Specifically, it contrasts the expectation from Looney's (2008) study that engagement in the coping economy has long term impacts for the nature of economic activity in conflict-affected contexts. As I set out in Chapter Two, this is argued to occur through the effects of engaging in coping activity on the generalised trust necessary for conventional economic relations, and is one of a few studies to explicitly consider the long term consequences of conflict-era corruption dynamics at the sub-national level. My analysis contradicts these expectations, showing that in a comparatively less extreme case of the breakdown of economic relations, the effects of clandestine trade can be confined to the period of crisis.

Third, Maoist transformation in particular shows how judgements regarding the conflict economy may shift over time. As I argued in Chapter Six, for many of those interviewed, informal payments to the Maoists during the conflict were legitimised by the protection from violence that these offered. It is only in the post-conflict period, in which the benefits that the Maoist elite gained from these payments becomes clear, that the respondents draw a link to corruption. The stability of the post-conflict period distanced the respondents from the benefits obtained by the payments made to the Maoists, and increasingly exposed the extent of gain amongst the Maoist elite. This, along with comparisons made to everyday life and the fortunes of the former rank and file PLA over the post-conflict period, led to changes in how this aspect of the conflict economy was understood.

The nature of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi therefore has the following three implications for the framing of the relationship as a conflict economy. These implications reflect the differing level of analysis I have undertaken compared to that common in this segment of the literature, the time period in which this has been considered, and the contrasting nature of Nepal's conflict to those in which conflict economies have been widely studied. I reflect further on the impact of case selection on the transferability of my analysis in Chapter Ten.

> **Finding Ten:** Even amongst similarly conflict-affected populations, there can be significant contestation over the legitimacy of engagement in the coping economy. This contestation is bound in judgements of the motives of those involved, their connections and the level of benefits obtained.
>
> **Finding Eleven:** The different elements of a conflict economy can exhibit different prominence in the long term. In Ghorahi, the corrupt consequences of the coping economy are seen to have been confined to the period of crisis, whilst the informal and combat economies continue to shape perceptions of corruption over a decade after the end to violence.
>
> **Finding Twelve:** Judgements around the legitimate or corrupt nature of those involved in the conflict and informal economies are not static, but rather depend on changing assessments over time, and may be most evident in periods of stability.

The final theory of conflict-induced change in corruption in the literature is social change. As I set out in Chapter Two, much of this literature focuses on cases of ethnic conflict, in which the principal dynamic of conflict-induced change in corruption is the salience of ethnic identity. In addition to changes

in the manner in which corruption is perceived, in particular through the increasing stratification of corruption perceptions along ethnic lines, the literature shows that conflict has the potential to change the manner in which corruption is justified and performed (Nystrand, 2014; Orjuela, 2014; Orjuela et al, 2016). Unlike much of the literature on the other three theories of conflict-induced change in corruption, elements of this literature have explicitly considered the long-term change, indicating the potential for stratification to exist decades after the end to violence (Smith, 2014a).

As I set out in Chapters Two and Four, amongst the influences on the research design for this thesis was the selection of a country and sub-national context in which the conflict was not stratified along ethnic lines. I made this decision in order to explore the potential for social dynamics of conflict-induced change in corruption not principally focused on the salience of ethnic identity. I have also engaged a constructivist approach to corruption, which locates the definition and determinants of corruption in the social domain. Given this, social determinants play a central role across the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi.

Of the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, the perceptions of change in the empowerment of rural communities are most apart from the literature on this relationship. Whilst the conflict is in many ways seen to have made the corruption in Ghorahi worse, particularly through its impacts on local government and the Maoist elite, the respondents were also optimistic about future change in the level and nature of corruption. In addition to the gains to be had from institutional reform, including from the local elections held proximate to the period in which I conducted fieldwork, much of this optimism is driven by the sense that the conflict led to the empowerment of historically marginalised rural communities. These expectations reflect the efforts of the Maoists during the conflict, who are seen to have accelerated incremental improvements in rural life.

The fact that the respondents link the conflict to the prospect for positive change in the vulnerability of rural populations to routine forms of corruption is a significant addition to the literature on social change in corruption in itself. Rather than division, it shows the potential for conflict to lead to the increasing alignment of experiences of corruption between diversely affected populations. As I discuss in Section 9.4, the fact that this observation is based only on the perceptions of the urban population places some limits on the scope of this effect, and further research is required in this area.

However, there is a clear impact on the construction of corruption amongst the urban population, both with regards to expectations on the future change in corruption through the awareness and confidence of the rural population, and on how routine forms of corruption are performed.

The case of Ghorahi also demonstrates the long term potential of conflict-induced change in corruption through social effects, outside of conditions of ethnic polarisation. Whilst effects such as those of the coping economy are bound to the period of crisis, the empowerment of the rural populations through the effects of the conflict is significant over a decade after the end to violence, and has continued despite the corruption dynamics linked to the Maoists in the transition. Indeed, it may be expected that these effects of conflict on corruption become more significant over time, with the empowered rural population acting through an increasingly stable system of local and central governance. This further contradicts the implications of the literature on conflict-induced change in corruption through ethnicisation, in which these effects are shown to have become diluted over time.

> **Finding Thirteen:** Through social change, conflict can lead experiences of corruption amongst diverse populations to be increasingly aligned, rather than polarising how corruption is experienced.
>
> **Finding Fourteen:** In addition to remaining significant over a decade after the end to violence, the effects of conflict on the social determinants of corruption may become increasingly significant over the long term.

As I argued in setting out the implications of my analysis for the literature in general, the case of Ghorahi demonstrates that none of the four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption in the literature provides a complete explanation of this relationship. Rather, this relationship is comprised of multiple concurrent effects, the prominence of which vary over time. As I have discussed here, this case also offers a number of refinements to each of the theories of this relationship in the literature. This includes the potential for corruption to have inadvertent stabilising consequences, to be contested amongst similarly conflict-affected populations, and to lead to the alignment of experiences of corruption across diversely affected populations. This case also adds further weight to the criticism of framing of this relationship as the exploitation of fragility, and to the assumptions which underpin this.

The comparison of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi to the theoretical landscape in the literature, however, also demonstrates the broad utility of these four theories in explaining elements of this relationship. Indeed, whilst I have shown that no single theory is an adequate explanation of this relationship as a whole, the case of Ghorahi does not pose a new theory on the level of those common in the literature. This is despite the contrasts between the nature of conflict in Ghorahi and those common in the literature, and my use of an analytical approach which prioritises the inductive development of new theory. This provides the final implication of my analysis for the literature.

> **Finding Fifteen:** Whilst no single one of the four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption evident in the literature provides a complete explanation of this relationship, these theories provide a useful basis by which to approach elements of this relationship in a diverse and contrasting case.

### 9.4 Summary

In this chapter, I set out the combined picture of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi and discussed the implications of this case for the literature. I began by comparing conflict-induced change in corruption to the broader nature of corruption in this case. Here, I demonstrated that Maoist transformation is distinct from the broader construction of corruption in that it has introduced a new set of elite beneficiaries into the forefront of corruption, and that the corruption amongst this group contrasts with the principles which had been associated with this group during the conflict. By contrast, whilst politicisation and instability in the governance system and coping and social change are significant elements of conflict-induced change in corruption, these elements more closely resemble the broader nature of corruption in this context. This demonstrates the capacity of conflict to accentuate existing determinants of corruption, and to transform elements of this phenomenon.

Building from the comparison of Maoist transformation, instability and politicisation and coping and social change to the general nature of corruption in Ghorahi, I then discussed the relative prominence of these elements. Here, I showed that Maoist transformation is the single most prominent element of this relationship in the period in which I conducted fieldwork. I argued that this prominence is a reflection of the respondents' experiences of the PLA during conflict, the scope and concentration of corrupt benefits associated with this group and the sense of failed expectations associated with the Maoists after the conflict. This contrasts against changes in the governance system and social domain

which, whilst often involving comparable forms of corruption to those associated with the Maoist elite, closely align with established patterns of concentration and change in corruption.

In addition to demonstrating the differing prominence of the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in the contemporary context, I also explored the changing prominence of these elements over time. During the period of ongoing conflict, I argued that the effects of the conflict on livelihoods served to highlight corrupt black market activity amongst those able to escape restrictions on trade, but that these same dynamics also limited exposure to corruption in other areas. This includes the separation of all but those involved in the political parties and the media from corruption in local government, which is otherwise seen as a key site of corruption. I further showed that, despite the lesser prominence of social change in the contemporary experience of corruption, the effects of the conflict on marginalised communities drives widespread optimism about change in corruption. In combination, this demonstrates the dynamism of conflict-induced change in corruption over time.

Based on the combined account of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi, I then set out the implications of this case for the literature on this subject as a whole. Here, I argued that this thesis demonstrates the long term impacts of conflict on corruption at the sub-national level in a case which has transitioned to stability, that the elements of conflict-induced change in corruption can vary in prominence over time, that the effects of conflict can accentuate existing forms of change in corruption as well as providing new determinants, and that the role of central-level fragility is overstated in how this relationship is constructed. Given the limitations of the literature which I set out in Chapter Two, this represents a significant evolution in the empirical examination of this relationship.

Finally, I set out the implications of the changes evident in Ghorahi for the four theories common in the literature. Here, I showed that the elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi align with these theories, but that none provides a comprehensive account of the changes in this case. I then used the outcomes of my analysis to expand and nuance this fragmented body of theory. In addition to providing further weight to the argument that the exploitation of fragility is an inadequate explanation of this relationship, this included the social and temporal contingency of judgements over exploitative activity, the inadvertent stabilising consequences of corruption, and the divisions over coping activity

which can exist in an otherwise similarly affected population. In the chapter to follow, I use these findings and the reflections made across this thesis to provide recommendations for future research.

# Chapter Ten: Conclusions and recommendations for further research

This thesis has explored the long term impacts of Nepal's decade of armed conflict on corruption at the sub-national level. Through a constructivist grounded theory study of a heavily conflict-affected Terai city, I have demonstrated three areas in which the conflict has and continues to impact the corruption perceived and experienced by an affected population. I then used this case to refine the limited body of theory which exists on this relationship. In this chapter, I summarise these empirical and theoretical contributions, reflect on the limitations and transferability of my analysis, and provide recommendations for further research into this relationship.

For those I studied in Ghorahi, the 1996-2006 Maoist conflict led a minority to engage in clandestine trade as a form of coping. The conflict legitimised this for some, but for the many who did not face these livelihood challenges so directly this was seen as part of an exploitative black market. Concurrently, these pressures on livelihoods and the closure of political space separated those in Ghorahi from corruption in local government. In the transition, these effects linked to threats to everyday life lessened, and were replaced by growing perceptions of a corrupt transformation of the mid-level Maoist elite. Alongside this, the population were reconnected with corruption in local government, with the instability of the transition and the re-opening of political space facilitating the rise of corruption in local development projects - to the benefit of political elites, local bureaucrats and elements of business.

In the period of 2017 in which I conducted fieldwork, the transformation of the Maoist elite was the most prominent element of conflict-induced change in corruption. The prominence of this element is driven in part by the concentration of experiences of demands for donations from the Maoists during the conflict amongst those I studied. Given the proximity of the security forces throughout the conflict, for many this was the defining direct experience of the Maoists. However, the prominence of this link is also driven by the contradiction that it provides to the respondents' expectations for positive change in the governance system through the conflict, and to their reflections on the impoverished backgrounds of these elites. Because of this, the newly acquired wealth of the Maoist elites is seen as particularly egregious, even where it is comparable to that of the broader set of elite beneficiaries of corruption.

In addition to changes in corruption during the period of ongoing conflict and throughout the post-conflict transition, the conflict also shapes expectations for future change in corruption. Most directly, the conflict has shaped how those in Ghorahi view the vulnerability of the rural population to corruption. In the eyes of those in the city, the actions of the Maoists against traditional powerholders and their focus on the plight of rural areas accelerated the empowerment of historically marginalised communities. This perceived empowerment has imparted optimism around the capacity of rural populations to resist routine forms of corruption, to which power-differentials are critical. The effect of these conflict-era changes on corruption are yet to be fully realised and are peripheral to the urban population I studied, but nonetheless shape the construction of corruption in Ghorahi.

The empirical findings I have set out in this thesis build upon the small group of studies which have considered conflict-induced change in corruption at the sub-national level (Baaz & Verweijen, 2014; Goodhand, 2008; Looney, 2006), and under conditions of relative stability after conflict (Orjuela 2014; Orjuela et al, 2016; Smith, 2014a). As I set out in Chapter Nine, to this I have added a case in which conflict was not principally fought along ethnic lines, and in which stability has been achieved through a domestically-led process of democratisation. This thesis represents a first empirical examination of conflict-induced change in corruption under these conditions, and thus expands the empirical base of the literature on this relationship. It also adds conflict dynamics at the sub-national level to the literatures on corruption in Nepal, which have been given little consideration beyond central government and PLA corruption scandals (ADB, 2013; Dix, 2011; Sharma, 2012; Subedi, 2014).

Through comparing conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi to the literature on this relationship, my analysis confirms the utility of the four broad theories present in the literature, and the transferability of these theories outside of the narrow set of empirical case on which they are based. This is despite the low level of development of these explanations and of the literature as a whole. Further, I have shown that long term change in corruption at the sub-national level can consist of multiple concurrent elements of change, acting through both new and existing determinants of corruption. These elements can vary across the period of ongoing conflict, transition and expectations for future change, with effects such as those relating to Maoist transformation becoming most evident years after the end to violence.

This case also offers a number of implications of each of the four theories of conflict-induced change in corruption evident in the literature on this relationship. First, it adds further weight to the argument that this relationship cannot be reduced down to the exploitation of fragility, and that the theoretical underpinnings of this account are narrow and prescriptive. Second, while not directly affected by the illiberal responses to conflict seen elsewhere, this case indicates the potential for corruption to have stabilising overspills, including driving demands for local elections and aiding PLA reintegration. Third, it shows the potential for contestation over corruption as a form of coping, even amongst a similarly conflict-affected population, and the capacity of such effects to be confined to the period of ongoing crisis. Finally, it demonstrates alternative dynamics of social change, outside of the bounds of ethnicisation, including the capacity for conflict to generate positive expectations for future change in the exposure of vulnerable populations to corruption.

The new empirical evidence and the theoretical contributions which I have set out in this thesis represent an incremental step forwards in knowledge on this relationship. At the centre of this, I have shown the long term transformation of corruption which can occur through armed conflict in a case not polarised by ethnic divisions and which has transitioned to stability. I have further shown that this relationship is comprised of multiple concurrent elements, the nature of prominence of which vary over time. To close this thesis, I next reflect on the transferability and limits of my analysis, and use these reflections and the developments in the literature to set out recommendations for further research.

### 10.1 Reflections on conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi

My focus on Nepal reflected a desire to study conflict-induced change in corruption in a context different from those which underpin the current theoretical landscape on this relationship. I chose Nepal as an example in which the central state did not collapse as a result of the conflict, in which the conflict was not principally fought across ethnic divides, and in which stability has been achieved through domestically-led peacebuilding and democratisation. I subsequently selected Ghorahi as a sub-national city context which was heavily affected by conflict, but which was not exposed to violent disputes over federal boundaries during the transition, and which saw the influx of ex-combatants during the DDR

process. This focus has had several consequences for the type of relationship between conflict and corruption which emerged from my analysis.

Most significantly, the fact that Ghorahi saw the influx of a large number of former PLA combatants, including many of the mid-level elite of the post-conflict Maoist party, is reflected in the prominence of Maoist transformation in conflict-induced change in corruption in this case. The extent of media attention given to issues such as the abuse of funds during the cantonment period means that Maoist transformation may form part of accounts of conflict-induced change in corruption for many educated urban populations. However, the specific exposure of those in Ghorahi to PLA resettlement is central to the prominence of this component of conflict-induced change in corruption. With the exception of a small number of other Terai cities, including those which neighbour Ghorahi (Robins & Bhandari, 2016), this is unlikely to resonate to the same extent elsewhere.

The prominence of conflict-induced change in corruption specific to local government, and elements of the exposure to clandestine trade, is also in part a factor of the specific position of Ghorahi. The fact that I engaged with an urban population meant that the respondents were necessarily more exposed to corruption dynamics around local government than those in rural areas, from which the presence of local government is more remote. In addition to the prominence of experiences of bribery in bureaucratic settings and knowledge of the fragility of local government during and after conflict, this is reflected in the respondents' exposure to political campaigning in the period in which I undertook fieldwork. This exposure influenced the respondents' optimism about the outcomes of the electoral process, but also in their focus on corrupt networks between parties, bureaucrats and business. These dynamics are unlikely to be as prevalent for rural and semi-urban populations.

The final consequence of my focus on Ghorahi relates to the lack of exposure of the population I studied to post-conflict communal violence. Whilst containing a population diverse in language, ethnicity and caste, including many from historically marginalised communities (Nepal Map, 2017), I selected Ghorahi in part because it was not exposed to the communal violence seen in the Eastern Terai. Whilst not escalating into armed group conflict, the repressive actions of the security forces in these areas and efforts by political parties to mobilise support undoubtedly lead to the increasing salience of ethnic identity in these areas during key stages of the transition (Paudel, 2016). The focus of my analysis

on social changes outside of the realm of ethnic identity is therefore also something which is not universal to the Nepali experience, but rather represents the specific experience of Ghorahi.

The combination of these three factors reinforce the requirement that the specific outcomes of my analysis of conflict-induced change in Ghorahi be seen in relation to the context in which they were produced, rather than representative of the broader Nepali experience. This does not diminish the theoretical implications of this case for the literature on this relationship, which are based on the interface between this specific case and the many specific cases in the literature, but rather defines part of the boundaries of my empirical analysis. As I now discuss, the nature of the respondent group with which I engaged also poses limits on the transferability of my empirical findings to the broader experience of Nepal, or indeed the population of Ghorahi as a whole.

As I set out in Chapter Four, I selected the respondent group for my analysis via theoretical sampling, the use of which is one of the defining elements of grounded theory. This process is guided by the concurrent analysis and collection of information, so that sampling reflects the emergent themes of interviews and gaps in the researcher's knowledge as these are identified. The sample population which I developed through this process spanned a variety of occupational, communal and caste backgrounds amongst the population in Ghorahi. However, this respondent group is not, nor intended to be, a representative sample of this population in the statistical sense. The nature of the sample produced through this process has three main implications for the relationship between corruption and conflict I have set out, and the nature of the analysis more broadly.

First, relative to the population of Ghorahi in general, my respondent group is relatively well educated and comparatively more exposed to party politics and local government. In addition to exacerbating the consequences of the case selection for the prominence of links relating to local government corruption, this means that the respondent group often spoke of corruption and conflict in analytical terms, as well as in terms of their own direct experiences. Whilst in some respects this aided my analysis, this means that the view of corruption and conflict emerging from my respondent group may reflect a broader view of this concept than that of other elements of the population. In particular, this is likely to have influenced the prominence of financial elements in the construction of corruption

in this case which I discussed in Chapter Five, and may have provided additional prominence to the effects of Maoist transformation, given the coverage of this issue in the media.

Second, my respondent group is heavily male dominated, and the research was conducted by a man. Rather than a deliberate decision of the theoretical sampling process, this lack of gender balance was an unfortunate consequence of greater barriers to access to female participants, and the under-representation of women in those occupational categories which I deemed most informative whilst conducting theoretical sampling. This imbalance is particularly apparent with the media and political party representatives, but is also evident in business. Consequently, my analysis reflects the male experience of conflict-induced change in corruption more than it does the female. This is particularly significant for the segments of the analysis which drew on the idea of changing principles within the Maoist movement, given that female empowerment was central to this. This also limited the possibility of gendered comparisons, which is significant given that the corruption studies literature has widely highlighted gendered effects on corruption (Ionescu, 2014; Stensöta et al, 2015).

Third, compared with the general population of Ghorahi, the sample is comprised of a relatively wealthy group, amongst the middle class of those in the city, and who would likely rank amongst the upper middle class in Nepal in general in many cases. This is in part a reflection of the occupational groups that I prioritised through theoretical sampling, but also reflects my focus on the city's central bazaar area in which the middle class population is concentrated, rather than the comparatively poorer peripheral areas. As well as exacerbating the impacts of the relatively high educational status of the respondent group discussed above, the comparative wealth of this group is likely to have influenced the emphasis placed on corruption as a form of coping during the conflict. In addition to the effects discussed in Section 9.2, the lack of direct reliance on clandestine trade during the conflict is likely to have in part reflected the capacity of this population to survive without resorting to such tactics.

The account of conflict-induced change in corruption developed in this thesis must therefore be seen in the context of the respondent group with which it has been produced. Whilst far from the sole determinant of the relative prominence and broader set of components of conflict-induced change in corruption discussed, the nature of the sample is particularly significant in the prominence given to corruption dynamics around local government and corruption as a form of coping. As with the features

of the case in general, this does not diminish the implications of this case for the literature on this relationship discussed previously, but is significant to the transferability of these findings to other populations within Ghorahi or Nepal. Next, I set out a number of recommendations on how these limitations may be addressed through further research, including revisiting the potential for the type of comparative analysis between areas of Nepal which I discussed in Chapter Four.

### 10.2 Recommendations for further research

Here I set out two sets of recommendations for further research based on the findings and reflections set out throughout this thesis. First, I discuss how future research on conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal can address the limitations of this study. Here, I focus on the need for comparative analysis across multiple areas of Nepal, longitudinal comparison, and the expansion to the sample which I have considered. Second, I set out recommendations for research beyond the Nepali case. These focus on the need for further theoretical development through diversifying the empirical base of the literature, the utility of the constructivist grounded theory approach for examining this relationship, and the integration of conflict-related determinants into the broader corruption studies literature.

Of the modifications I made to the research design during my fieldwork, the single most consequential was having to abandon my study of Rolpa. This was the result of the challenging conditions I faced in this comparatively isolated area, and changes in the political conditions between my first and second stages of fieldwork. This change meant that I have been unable to undertake comparative analysis of two nearby but differently conflict-affected areas. Through this comparison, I had intended to develop theory around the causes of sub-national variations in conflict-induced change in corruption. To date, this has only been explored in cases of the ethnicisation of corruption through the comparison of different ethnic communities (Orjuela, 2014; Orjuela et al, 2016). Building on the outcomes of this thesis, future research should consider sub-national variations in other social dynamics of conflict-induced change in corruption, including the empowerment of rural communities.

As I discussed in Chapter Nine, timing is a key contextual influence on the outcomes of research into conflict-induced change in corruption. Within my analysis, this is particularly evident in the emphasis the respondents place on the corruption dynamics in local government and the prospects for

future change through local elections. Reflecting this, future comparative analysis should where possible examine conflict-induced change in corruption across multiple areas within a single research project, as was originally intended within each of my two stages of fieldwork. Whilst an additional case from a later time period could be compared to the empirical analysis in this thesis, the comparative element would necessarily be complicated by changes in the national and local political context. Comparisons to this case should also be mindful of the impact of positionality on the outcomes of the research, and the nature of the sample with which I engaged.

> **Recommendation One:** Comparative analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption between sub-national areas in Nepal would be likely to facilitate further theoretical development on this relationship, particularly on the alternative social dynamics beyond the ethnicisation of corruption perceptions.
>
> **Recommendation Two:** Any future comparative analysis should be conducted concurrently in order to minimise the impact of changes in the national political context on the comparison. Comparisons to the empirical material set out here should acknowledge the distinct political context in which information was gathered.

Amongst the key outcomes of this thesis has been to demonstrate the multiple long term impacts of conflict on corruption. These effects are evident eleven years after the end of the conflict, in a period of stability. In setting out this relationship, I discussed the respondents' reflections on corruption during the conflict time and their expectations for future change. However, whilst demonstrating the variability of this relationship over time, these reflections must be viewed from the perspective of the context in which they were gathered. As well as a period of relative stability, as I discussed above this was a period of public debate over the nature of local government, of unstable coalition politics, and of intense political campaigning. The stability of the relationship between conflict and corruption over time remains an open question, and one which future research in Ghorahi should address.

The stability of the relationship between conflict and corruption in Ghorahi set out in this thesis is one which could be assessed relatively rapidly. Additional fieldwork conducted a year after the local elections would, for example, allow the optimism many had about these new officials to have diminished or expanded, based on their experiences of local government over this time. However, from the perspective of expanding the theoretical contribution of further empirical work, it would be particularly

beneficial to reconsider this relationship at the next round of local elections – due to be held in 2022. As with the period I studied, this would also be a period of heightened political awareness and campaigning, but one in which changes in the system of local government are likely to be less pronounced. Comparisons over such a duration would also facilitate a reassessment of the prominence of Maoist transformation and the empowerment of historically marginalised rural communities, and for theoretical development around the long term determinants of conflict-induced change in corruption.

In addition to examining the stability of the three elements of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi and the theoretical developments which could be obtained from this, further research in this context should be mindful of the possibility of inter-generation transfer in these corruption dynamics. The possibility of the transfer of perceptions of conflict-induced change in corruption from those who experienced conflict to those who did not is demonstrated by Smith (2014a), but as yet has not been explored outside of the bounds of ethnic conflict. Whilst the link is likely to be less straightforward in the case of non-ethnic conflict, this would be useful in either demonstrating the boundaries of this particular effect, or in demonstrating the long term persistence of these changes in a different case. In either respect, there is potential for further theoretical development.

> **Recommendation Three:** The long term stability of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi should be considered through further empirical work in this context. This future work should be mindful of the changing political context, and would be particularly beneficial if conducted in the run up to and aftermath of local elections, as was the case with the empirical work for this thesis.
>
> **Recommendation Four:** Future research on conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi should consider the inter-generational transfer of this relationship to those who did not directly experience the conflict. This would complement or show the boundaries of effects demonstrated under conditions of ethnic conflict.

My final area of recommendations specific to conflict-induced change in corruption in Nepal relates to the respondent group with which I engaged. As I discussed in Section 10.1, the theoretical sampling process led me to engage with political, media and business representatives, as well as a number of 'ordinary' business owners and workers in the city. Compared with the population of the city as a whole, this group is comparatively wealthy, and often connected to the issues of conflict and

corruption through their occupation. Whilst the empirical and theoretical contributions of this thesis are not dependent on the representativeness of the sample to this wider population, future research in this context could benefit from engaging with a broader sample group. This should include those from the poorer and marginalised segments of society in Ghorahi, without elite connections.

Whilst it is difficult to speculate on the experiences of a comparatively less wealthy population, expanding the sample beyond the group considered in this thesis could be particularly useful in re-examining the dynamics of corruption as a form of coping during the conflict. Many in the respondent group did not engage in clandestine trade as a means of coping with the conflict, and instead viewed this as a part of a corrupt black market amongst a comparatively well connected elite. The experiences of a less wealthy population could challenge this perception, with the precocity of their livelihoods leading to greater exposure in these 'black market' activities. This would enable further theoretical development around the causes of intra-population variations in conflict-induced change in corruption, beyond what is possible from the sample engaged in this thesis.

In addition to expanding the sample group, future research in Ghorahi and other areas of Nepal should more closely consider the gender dimensions of this relationship. Aspects of my positionality and that of my translator and facilitator LD, as well as the lack of female representation in political and media positions in Ghorahi, limited the extent to which I could engage with female respondents. As a result of this, women were significantly under-represented in the sample group. Whilst I was not seeking a statistically representative sample, this means that the nature of conflict-induced change in corruption set out in this thesis must be seen as in part the product of this gender dimension. Future research should address this gender dimension absent from this study and the wider literature on this relationship, drawing on the increasing body of evidence of such effects within the broader corruption studies literature and the study of conflict (Ionescu, 2014; Stensöta et al, 2015).

> **Recommendation Five:** Further analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption in Ghorahi and other sub-national contexts in Nepal should consider a broader set of occupational groups and backgrounds than those considered in this thesis. This is particularly relevant to coping-related effects, which depend in part on the alternative coping strategies available to those affected by conflict.

**Recommendation Six:** Future analysis of this relationship should consider the gender-dimensions of corruption and conflict, highlighted separately in the literatures related to each. This is particularly important in Nepal, where gendered social structures are highly prevalent, and in which Maoist recruitment and ideology was focused on disempowered women.

Moving to recommendations for the literature in general, the contributions from this thesis have been driven in part by the distinct nature of the case I have considered. Whilst increasingly diverse, much of the literature is focused on the national level contexts, on the immediate conflict to post-conflict transition and on cases of state collapse or extensive international intervention. My focus on Ghorahi challenged this concentration in the literature, and through this has demonstrated conflict-induced change in corruption in diverse circumstances, and with elements spanning the four theories of this relationship present in the literature. To build on the findings and theoretical outcomes from this thesis, future research should engage with a greater diversity of sub-national contexts.

In addition to further comparative research in Nepal, as detailed in Recommendations One and Two, analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption in Indonesia could offer a particularly useful addition to the relationships discussed in this thesis. In contrast to the conflict in Nepal, the many instances of post-New Order conflict in Indonesia have been treated distinctly by the state, and have been driven by a blend of ethnic and territorial claims with economic grievances (Barron et al, 2009; Smith, 2014). Analysis across these instances of sub-national conflict would facilitate theoretical development around the impacts of state repression on long term trends in corruption, and allow the ethnic dimensions developed elsewhere in the literature on the sub-national level to be analysed alongside a broader array of factors. Doing so could further reduce the fragmentation of the four theories of conflict-induced change in the literature, building on the findings set out in this thesis.

**Recommendations Seven:** Theoretical development on conflict-induced change in corruption would benefit from further diversifying the types of empirical cases considered, beyond cases of state collapse and international intervention. A comparative analysis of the numerous instances of post-New Order conflict in Indonesia could offer a particularly useful extension to the analysis undertaken in this thesis, alongside further comparative work in Nepal.

As well as through a new and distinct case, the theoretical and empirical contributions of this thesis are a consequence of the constructivist grounded theory approach I adopted. This approach is particularly useful to the question of conflict-induced change in corruption because it allows for the simultaneous consideration of the multiple potential dynamics of this relationship evident in the literature, and remains open to the development of new theoretical categories. Further, as is increasingly common in the broader corruption studies literature (DeGraaf et al, 2010a), this approach focuses the researcher's attention on how corruption is understood and experienced in context. Given the complex and multiple links from conflict to corruption and the contingency of corruption on social factors evident in the case of Ghorahi, I recommend this theoretical and methodological approach.

Constructivist grounded theory also has a number of practical benefits highlighted by this thesis, which are likely to benefit future analysis of conflict-induced change in corruption. The flexibility of this approach, and in particular the role of theoretical sampling, is well suited to the sensitivity of discussing conflict and corruption in any context. As an external researcher and visible outsider to the context I studied, this ability to continually refine the sample group and the questions I engaged was instrumental to the empirical analysis. This approach also lessens the impact of the adaptations commonly necessitated in researching sensitive topics, such as those which required me to abandon my study of Rolpa. This approach is therefore well suited to further empirical analysis and theoretical development around this relationship, and to the practicalities of research around these topics.

> **Recommendation Eight:** Constructivist grounded theory is an ideal theoretical and methodological approach for future research on conflict-induced change in corruption at the local level. This approach is adaptable to the practicalities of research around this topic, and suited to the complex and multiple interaction between these phenomena.

My final recommendation relates to the broader corruption studies literature. As I argued in introducing this thesis, much of this broader literature does not explicitly consider conflict-related determinants of corruption. This is despite the concentration of corruption analysis in developing countries in which there is a history of conflict, albeit often many years before the period studied. This thesis demonstrates the changes which conflict can impart on corruption over a decade after the end to

conflict, even under conditions of stability and democratisation. These changes are not confined to the period of ongoing violence, but can impact corruption across a transition, and expectations for future change under conditions of stability. At a minimum, the legacies of conflict can therefore form an important aspect of the context to be considered in the analysis of other determinants of corruption.

> **Recommendation Nine:** The impacts and legacies of conflict should become a mainstream component of analysis of the determinants of corruption in contexts with any recent history of armed conflict, particularly within the growing body of analysis at the sub-national level.

Together, these nine recommendations provide an agenda for further research into conflict-induced change in corruption. Given the fragmented nature of the literature which has emerged from the recent growth of attention to this relationship, it is one which requires new and expanded empirical cases and approaches sensitive to multiple and contested links. Further research in this area not only has significant theoretical potential, but also holds relevance to populations across a multitude of developing country contexts. As my analysis of Ghorahi has shown, conflict can remain a key driver of the extent and nature of corruption at the sub-national level, even where the contemporary reality is entirely apart from life during conflict.

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# Appendixes

### Appendix 4.1 – A summary of the literature on the types of corruption in Nepal

| Political and Elite Capture |
|---|
| Use of development funds for political gain, and the capture of funds by political elites |
| Political interference in the public procurement processes |
| Government officials and political elites capturing the public procurement process |
| Political and elite capture of infrastructure projects and public procurement |
| Politically motivated appointments to key positions in the bureaucracy |
| Politically motivated appointments to rural healthcare positions |
| Capture and misuse of foreign aid by political party leaders at multiple levels |
| The promotion of under-qualified people due to political connections |
| Capture of awards and the status conferred through it by political parties in the education system |
| Personalised control of the political process to the benefit of the political elite |
| Capture of devolved power to forestry groups by local elites |
| Rampant political lobbying in forestry management |
| Politicised allocation of contracts for building and maintenance of infrastructure |
| Politicised appointments to key hospital positions following a change in political power |
| Collusions amongst contractors to extract development funds above costs |
| Capture and illicit control of the block grant system of funding to the DDC and VDC level |
| Channelling of aid money towards projects proximate to elites able to influence funds |
| Capture of development aid through elite channels and for political gain |
| Monopolisation of information at the local level to aid others in the capture of resources |
| Fixing the procurement procedure to benefit contacts, including through bribes |
| Reciprocal arrangements for financial extraction between officials and contractors |
| Direct payments, elite bias and political interface in local conflict resolution |
| Use of embezzlement as a means of expanding business interests and links with the state |

| Bribery |
|---|
| Bribery to access basic government services |
| Bribes necessary to access basic services |
| Daily experience of bribery across basic services, including customs, land revenue and judiciary |
| Leaking of exam questions for medical students through bribery |
| Informal payments required in receiving maternal care to access necessary services |
| Demands for bribes by bureaucrats |
| Bribery in the bureaucracy, but only as part of broader set of relations between parties |
| Expectations of gifts in exchange for services in the bureaucracy |
| Bribery internally as part of the recruitment and induction processes |
| Bribes required to senior officials in order to secure promotion |
| Allowing the release of suspects in exchange for bribes or favours |
| Payment of a fixed sum in exchange for a favour regarding an appointment in the bureaucracy |

| |
|---|
| Officials working in local public service demanding bribes |
| Bribing officials to cancel contracts where there is the potential for a loss to be made |
| Exchanging bribes for a better quality of water and electricity supply to a property |
| Giving priority access to water tanks and taps to elements of the urban poor who pay more |
| Gift taking as a common manifestation of corruption in the survey data |
| Bribery is widespread, particularly amongst representatives of local bodies |
| Bureaucratic bribery |
| Use of cash bribes as a means of gaining employment in the local bureaucracy |

| **Financial Extraction** |
|---|
| Capture or misuse of social security funds at the DDC and VDC levels |
| Capture of funds from development projects through the mismatch between contracts and realities |
| Misappropriation of wage surpluses in development projects through (illegal) use of heavy equipment |
| Misuse of maintenance funds for key local infrastructure, such as rural roads |
| Corruption in materials for road building and other development projects through extraction |
| Abuse of social security payments, including non-payment to beneficiaries |
| Development and other funds used to the political and financial benefit of elites |
| Capture of funds from development projects through the mismatch between contracts and realities |
| Extraction of development funds at multiple levels of procurement and expenditure |
| Capture and withdrawal of funds delivered to combatants in cantonment by the PLA leadership |
| Extraction from contracts for development work in the cantonment period |
| Pay for leadership being the extraction of funds at the local level |
| The 'tributary state', in which resources are diverted and siphoned off from the top at each layer |
| Capture of the first inflows of development aid in the 1950s by elites, little effect on poverty |
| Embezzlement as a key means of earning, particularly for political leaders and high level bureaucrats |
| Extraction of up to 40% of project budgets by the related ministry or authority |
| Manipulation of costs of waste management due to the amount of equipment involved |
| Artificially raising project cost estimates to facilitate extraction of funds and resources |
| Fake bills for maintenance and fuel for municipal vehicles |
| Setting of unrealistic budgets for extraction |
| Capture of funds transferred from the central to the local by political party channels |
| The need to pay a portion of budgets to local officials to conduct a development project |
| Rent extraction from development projects |

| **Abuse of Power** |
|---|
| Threats of wrongful arrest in order to extract payments or favours |
| Arresting of innocent or otherwise not charged individuals to extract payment |
| Protecting the sex industry in exchange for payments or access |
| Stealing from vendors and beggars under the threat of arrest |
| Corrupt examiners demanding bribes, forcing engagement in corruption to repay fees |
| Junior officers being used as slaves or servants for senior officers using state funds |

| |
|---|
| Manipulation of metering and billing in the water supply system |
| Demanding gifts from street and stall vendors during festival periods |
| Lack of action against vendors who sell low quality products, including in food supply |
| Misuse of authority as the dominant form of corruption in the survey data |
| The signing of loss making contracts which ensure benefit to actors linked to officials |
| Fixing of supply prices in the energy sector to benefit political connections |
| Undue negligence, delay and harassment in order to invite bribery in public service |
| Allowing smuggling in border areas through checkpoints and customs |

| **Patronage and Clientelism** |
|---|
| Clientelism in the land system due to the reliance on land in the highly agricultural economy |
| System of patronage rather than meritocratic recruitment at all levels of government |
| Patronage based recruitment and promotion processes |
| Patronage and clientelism involving politicians and bureaucrats as patrons and brokers of benefits |
| Political patronage, including the capture of aid funds to benefit elite-connected communities |
| Political patronage |
| Political patronage linking public and private sectors |
| Land based political clientelism in the rural areas |
| Transfer of elite patronage structures from the pre-1990 period into the post-1990 period |
| Bureaucratic positions requiring the support of a patron |
| Use of patronage as a means of giving lucrative jobs to contacts |
| Patron client relations within the bureaucracy, connecting bureaucrats to politicians |
| Political rent seeking |
| Political patronage in layers of local administration |
| The use of connections by the urban poor to gain access to basic services in response to corruption in other areas |

| **Favouritism** |
|---|
| Gift giving, favouritism, and solidarity networks |
| Promotion of doctors without the necessary qualifications / experience due to connections |
| Rigging of bids in procurement and contracting |
| Nepotism in the bureaucracy |
| Internal nepotism within political parties, rather than merit based selection |
| The need for favouritism and 'source force' when dealing with the bureaucracy |
| A government subsidised loan system designed for education only benefiting those with connections |
| Distribution of resources and favours through personal relations |
| Favouritism in the distribution of state resources |
| Illegitimate access to the university system and other elements of education through connection |
| Favouritism and 'Afno Manche' dominating across public and private everyday institutions |
| The need to use influential people in order to access VDC and DDC funding |
| Positions in the bureaucracy are allocated based on favouritism and connection not merit |
| Use of personal connections to gain employment in the bureaucracy |

| |
|---|
| Personal nature of appointments to the bureaucracy at the local level |
| Local development contracts awarded on the basis of connections rather than objective criteria |
| Allowing contractors to supply low quality food to officers in exchange for kickbacks |
| Contracts being awarded in order to expand partnerships between officials and private operators |

| **Traditional' or 'Cultural' Mechanisms** |
|---|
| The favouring of one's own people (Afno Manche) |
| Awarding of contracts and job positions through family ties over formal processes (Afno Manche) |
| Chakari - cultivating favours through gifts and services or visiting public officials |
| Creation of expectations for favours through the development of Chakari between unequal's |
| Flattery and favouritism as expressed through Chakari relations |
| Use of Chakari to gain positions in the bureaucracy |
| Jagir - in modern times this is a system of payment for job transfers in order to capture rents |
| Reciprocal and family-like relationships (kripabad) of exchange |
| Role of source force in contacts with local officials across sectors and levels |
| The use of contacts to navigate the bureaucracy and access to public services health, education) |
| Source-force - the exercise of power based on kinship, business and political affiliation |
| The need for favouritism when attempting to get promotion within the education service |
| Exchange in kind as well as through cash based on relational networks with the bureaucracy |
| Mass absenteeism amongst District officials during the Rana period |
| Mobilisation of relatives and other connected persons to elites in dispute resolution |

| **Other** |
|---|
| CDO office, electricity, transport and water offices in the survey had >70% corruption incidence |
| Concentration of corruption in the development contracting process |
| Spending on teacher's salaries comprising large amounts of VDC grants, without justification |
| Criminal groups exploiting lawlessness and identity based divisions |
| Political and administrative sectors seen as the most corrupt in the survey data |
| Ministers seen as the most corrupt of the central political agents in the survey |
| Land registration office seen as the most corrupt institution in the survey, consistent with TI data |
| Transport management office and the police department also seen to be major sites of bribery |
| Forging of documents to gain access to grants, funded by international donors |
| Fake certificates as amongst the most common forms of corruption reported to the CIAA |
| Providing fake documents, particularly driving licences |
| Forging of certificates dominant in the complaints handed to the CIAA |

**Appendix 4.2 – Example theoretical memo**

**2018.01.16 09:46 - Relations between the population and with ex-combatants**

The 'easy' relationship between ex-combatant business owners and the wider business community is an interesting dynamic because it appears to contradict the experiences of many other countries. There is a widespread consensus that the ex-combatants who settled into the city after exiting cantonment became 'ordinary', that no one obstructed them, and that there was only a limited degree of suspicion and fear. This is despite the extent of experiences of forced donation, violence, and the attack on the city.

051 provides a comprehensive explanation of why this has occurred, focusing on the contrast between the political nature of the conflict in Nepal against the ethnic or religious nature of conflict elsewhere. What this emphasises is the extent to which ex-combatants remained under a shared identity, despite their involvement in the Maoist movement. It also emphasises the relative closeness of the Maoist army to the wider population, even for those in the city.

> "There is a difference between conflict in other countries and in Nepal. Generally, in other countries there is conflict because of religion or ethnic discrimination, things like that. This type of conflict results in massacres, and damages the society. But in Nepal it was a political conflict. The Maoists targeted the government, not the public. So, there were not massacres of the people. The public thought they were fighting for changes to the governance system, and for political change, not against the ordinary people. In the conflict time as well the Maoists were not so far from the public. They used to come to the people to get shelter and food, so they were regularly linked with the common people. So the people didn't feel difficultly in accepting them, because they were regularly seeing them in the conflict. Seeing combatants was a normal thing." - 051

054 provides a very similar picture of this, focusing on the impact of the political nature of the conflict on the good relations with Maoist ex-combatants in the city. This wasn't immediate, but seems well established now. Slightly different in his emphasis in the importance of the political resolution of the conflict, as well as the political nature of the Maoists and their relations with the people.

> "The difference is that the conflict in Nepal was a totally political conflict. In other countries there is religious and ethnic conflict, but here it was not because of problems between different ethnic groups and different communities. It was also politically resolved. After political resolution, no one felt that it was an uncomfortable situation." - 054

**Appendix 4.3 – Full participant list**

| Stage One |
|---|
| 1(06) - Human rights activist |
| 1(07) - Journalist |
| 1(08) - Journalist and social activist |
| 1(09) - Journalist and social activist |
| 1(10) - Landlord |
| 1(11) - Former PLA combatant |
| 1(12) - Journalist |
| 1(13) - Journalist & former PLA combatant |
| 1(14) - Social activist and former PLA combatant |
| 1(14) - Social activist and former PLA combatant |
| 1(17) - Journalist |
| 1(18) - District Peace Committee member |
| 1(19) - District Peace Committee member |
| 1(21) - Journalist |
| 1(22) - Nepali Congress District representative |
| 1(23) - Rastriya Prajatantra Party District representative |
| 1(24) - Human rights activist |
| 1(25) - Former senior business representative |
| 1(26) - Civil society organisation leader |
| 1(27) - Journalist and former PLA combatant |
| 1(28) - Senior police officer |
| 1(29) - Journalist |
| 1(34) - Journalist |
| 1(35) - Journalist |
| 1(36) - Journalist |

| Stage Two |
|---|
| 2(02) - Journalist |
| 2(03) - Journalist and academic |
| 2(04) - Rastriya Janmorcha District representative |
| 2(06) - Senior business representative |

| |
|---|
| 2(07) - Journalist |
| 2(08) - Journalist |
| 2(09) - Journalist & gender rights activist |
| 2(10) - Nepal Communist Party District representative |
| 2(11) - Legal professional |
| 2(12) - Disability Rights Activist |
| 2(13) - Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist District representative |
| 2(14) - Nepali Congress District representative |
| 2(15) - Tharu community representative |
| 2(16) - Journalist |
| 2(17) - Landlessness activist |
| 2(18) - Nepali Congress District representative |
| 2(19) - Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist District representative |
| 2(20) - Journalist |
| 2(21) - Journalist |
| 2(22) - Legal professional |
| 2(23) - Magar community representative |
| 2(24) - Civil society organisation leader |
| 2(29) - Maoist Centre District representative |
| 2(31) – District government representative |
| 2(32) - Gender rights activist |
| 2(33) - Maoist Centre District representative |
| 2(35) - Tharu community representative |
| 2(36) - Tharu community representative |
| 2(37) - Tharu community representative |
| 2(38) - Agricultural business owner |
| 2(39) - Agricultural business owner |
| 2(40) - Agricultural business owner |
| 2(41) - Senior business representative |
| 2(42) - Factory owner |
| 2(43) – Hotel owner |
| 2(44) - Bookshop owner |
| 2(45) - Publisher |
| 2(46) - Auto business owner |

| |
|---|
| 2(47) - Furniture business owner |
| 2(48) - Dairy products business owner |
| 2(49) - Animal supplies business owner |
| 2(50) - Business community representative |
| 2(51) - Bookshop owner |
| 2(52) - Medical business owner |
| 2(53) - Electrical business owner |
| 2(54) - Senior business representative |
| 2(55) - Electronics business owner |
| 2(56) - Medical business owner |
| 2(57) - Grocer |
| 2(58) - Auto business owner |
| 2(59) - Auto business owner |
| 2(60) - Electronics business owner |
| 2(74) - Clothing business owner |
| 2(75) - Clothing business owner |
| 2(76) - Clothing business owner |
| 2(77) - Petrol station worker |
| 2(78) - Factory owner |
| 2(79) - Factory owner |
| 2(80) - Agricultural business owner |
| 2(81) - NGO representative |
| 2(82) - Bookshop owner |
| 2(83) - Bank clerk |
| 2(84) - Legal professional |
| 2(85) - Social activist |

**Appendix 4.4 – Example of an observational memo**

18th October 2017: Eastern Outskirts of Ghorahi (Towards Nawalpur)

Conversation with LD whilst in the area: the project is significantly delayed, the contractor has often been unresponsive, and there is a widespread suspicion amongst the public that corruption has occurred. The project has been ongoing for approximately five years. There are signs of progress now – workers are present and there are materials and heavy equipment all along this section – but clearly this has fallen well below the time scale expected by the public. Questions to follow up include the level of awareness of the project amongst the population, perceptions of who has benefited from the project being delayed, actions taken by local government / media / civil society etc., and political connections for the contractors.

**Appendix 4.5 – Extract from the ethical review provided to the University of Birmingham**

Risk analysis and mitigation strategy for fieldwork in Nepal, submitted to the University of Birmingham as part of the ethical review process.

**"Introductory Note**
The risk register given below is intended to cover the full scope of the foreseeable risks of the project. Inclusion in this risk register is not in any way indicative that such risks are likely to occur. At the time of writing, Nepal is not subject to any travel restrictions advised by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the researcher has conducted comparable projects in this context without incident. Any potential risks of the project have also been discussed with a network of contacts with substantial research experience in Nepal, who support the manner in which the project is proposed to be conducted.

**Research Staff**
Risk 1: Risk of Harm from Participants and Others – There is a remote possibility, due to raising the sensitive topics of corruption and conflict, that participants could seek to harm the researcher, or encourage others to do so. Whilst this is highly unlikely, this could extend to members of the community forcing the researcher and translators involved to leave an area, involving the threat or use of violence.
Minimisation - [1] The researcher will ensure that the difficult topics around which the research is centred are introduced in a manner which is appropriate for the person involved and the cultural context, as well as minimising the perceived risk the research is seen to pose to their position or status. This will include prior discussion with the translator and local experts.
Management – [1] The researcher will inform a Nepali and UK contact as to their location and planned travel, and maintain regular contact, such that support with additional travel and logistics can be provided if necessary [2] The researcher will leave an area in response to any threat of violence, or warning from others of possible violence.

Risk 2: Risk of Arrest – The Nepali police system is known to be affected by corruption and misuse by elites. If it is perceived by those in positions of power that the research is damaging to their interests, arrest (even where this does not result in charge) could be used as means of stopping or interrupting the research. Conditions in Nepali prisons and in police custody means that this poses a risk to the researcher, even if the likelihood is extremely low.
Minimisation – [1] In addition to obeying all applicable laws and adhering to visa restrictions, the researcher will ensure that elites with the potential to pose risks in this area are informed of the research, and that the research is explained in a manner which minimises the perceived risk to their interests. [2] The researcher will ensure that their access and entry into remote areas in particular will be with the consent of elites connected to the area, and on the guidance of local experts. [3] The researcher will leave a locality (or if necessary the country) in the event of a threat of arrest which is deemed credible following consultation with local experts.
Management - [1] Immediately seeking consular assistance and the support of Nepali contacts following arrest, and adhering to legal advice as provided.

Risk 3: Risk of Natural Disaster – There is the potential for further earthquakes on the scale of that of April 2015, which could affect the areas in which the research is to take place. The nature of the fault line in Nepal makes this nearly impossible to predict, both in terms of timing and location.
Minimisation – [1] To the extent that is possible given local conditions, the researcher will select accommodation which appears to be well built, and is not suffering from existing earthquake damage.

This is particularly significant in Kathmandu, where substantial numbers of earthquake damaged buildings remain standing. [2] The researcher will spend the minimum time necessary in the most remote areas, which are likely to be cut off from support in the event of a further major earthquake. [3] When in the most remote areas, the researcher will store a means of water purification and a small amount of food to minimise the other threats to life posed by earthquake. [4] Regularly informing local contacts of travel plans to ensure that, in the event of earthquake, support can be provided as effectively as possible.
Management – [1] In the event of a significant earthquake affecting the area in which the researcher is present, the researcher will seek the support of Nepali contacts, consular assistance and assistance from insurance providers as is necessary.

Risk 4: Additional Risks to the Translator – The above risks apply equally to any translators involved in the research, and are perhaps more significant due to the potentially lesser capacity of a translator to leave a locality in the case of threats of violence or arrest, and their continuing residence in Nepal following the termination of the project. Given that the translator is exposed to such risks as a result of the research, it is necessary to further manage this risk.
Minimisation – [1] To ensure that the translator fully understands the nature of the research and the mitigation steps taken under each of the risks above. [2] Frequently review and discuss the research with the translator, to ensure potential issues are dealt with before they escalate. This will also have benefits for the safe conduct of the project by the researcher.
Management – [1] Providing funds to the translator to allow them to flee an area if required, and to support themselves on a temporary basis following doing so. [2] Putting the translator in contact with those who have supported the project in Nepal who will be provide further advice.

Risk 5: Illness – Nepal is exposed to several tropical and other diseases which are not prevalent in the UK. This risk is exacerbated by the lack of modern healthcare facilities outside of the Kathmandu Valley and Pokhara cities, which could delay access to diagnosis and treatment.
Minimisation – [1] The researcher will have up to date vaccines as recommended by a health professional, [2] The researcher will have insurance which covers extraction from remote areas and the costs of treatment as required, [3] The researcher will maintain an awareness of outbreaks of illnesses which pose further risk (particularly cholera), and follow the advice of health professionals relating to this where applicable.
Management – [1] The researcher will inform insurance providers and local sources of assistance as necessary.

Risk 6: Political Instability – Since the termination of conflict in 2006, Nepal has suffered minor outbreaks of violence, particularly in the southern Terai area (although notably not affecting Dang District). These outbreaks have on occasion resulted in the death of bystanders, protestors and police officers. Whilst the risk of a full-scale return to conflict is very remote, there is therefore an outside risk that the researcher could be caught up in a lesser outbreak of violence.
Minimisation – [1] Maintain awareness of local political conditions through news sources and contacts in Nepal, [2] Ensure distance from political and protest gatherings, which have typically been the starting of point of episodes of violence in the past, [3] Following local advice regarding potential escalations in tension.
Management – [1] If possible, leave the area in which violence is taking place, entering neighbouring unaffected areas, [2] Maintain frequent contact with contacts in Nepal who will be able to provide advice and assistance in the event of emergency, [3] Following local advice regarding escalations in tension, including that provided by other members of research staff.

Risk 7: Crime – Whilst substantially safer for foreigners than many states of similar developmental conditions, both Kathmandu and the rural areas which the researcher is proposing to visit suffer from occasional crime. In addition to the risk of theft in urban areas, there have been a very isolated number of cases of violence targeted against foreigners in rural areas.
Minimisation – [1] The researcher will take everyday precautions regarding possessions and the avoidance of crime hotspots which would be implemented in any urban setting, [2] The researcher will take the precautions listed under Risk 1 regarding the minimisation of the risk of violence, [3] The researcher will, to the maximum extent possible, avoid travelling alone at night in both rural and urban areas. [4] The researcher will follow the guidance of translators and local contacts.
Management – [1] Appropriate insurance cover, [2] A network contacts which can be used for advice and assistance in case of emergency.

Risk 8: Road Traffic Incident and Other Transport Risks – Incidents on the road are amongst the leading cause of death in Nepal, owing to the poor quality of road infrastructure, poorly maintained vehicles and the lack of adherence to basic driving standards. Domestic flights also have a particularly poor safe record, an issue exacerbated by the complex terrain and poor infrastructure.
Minimisation – [1] The researcher will avoid travelling during periods of bad weather, particularly heavy rain, [2] The researcher will to the maximum extent that is practical favour the use of modern vehicles and those which appear well maintained, [3] The researcher will not travel by domestic plane services outside of emergency conditions in which no other option is available.
Management - [1] Appropriate insurance cover, [2] A network contacts which can be used for advice and assistance in case of emergency.

**Research Participants**
Risk 1: Risk of Harm from Others – The discussion of corruption issues with the research staff could lead to those involved being targeted out of suspicion that they are involved in corrupt activity, or that they have alleged others are involved in such activity.
Minimisation – [1] The researcher will ensure the maximum level of discretion around the topics of discussion, [2] The implementation of the conditions discussed under anonymity and confidentiality, such that the details of previous participants are not revealed by the researcher, [3] Maintaining the cooperation of elites connected to each community, such that the perceived threat is minimised.
Management – [1] Cooperating with police enquiries as necessary, whilst maintaining the minimisation strategy discussed in Risk 2.

Risk 2: Risk of Arrest – In a manner similar to that of Risk 2 above, involvement in the project poses an outside potential of participants being the subject of unwanted attention from the police. This is perhaps more significant than the risk posed to the researcher given that the management options offered could not be employed by the majority of likely participants.
Minimisation – [1] The researcher will ensure the maximum level of discretion around the topics of discussion, [2] The implementation of the conditions discussed under anonymity and confidentiality, such that the details of previous participants are not revealed by the researcher, [3] Maintaining the cooperation of elites connected to each community, such that the perceived threat is minimised.
Management - [1] Cooperating with police enquiries as necessary, whilst maintaining the minimisation strategy discussed in Risk 2 above.

Risk 3: Risk of Damage to Status – In addition to physical harm or arrest, there is also the small possibility that, through engagement in the research, suspicion of involvement in corruption by others leads to damage to the social status of those involved.
Minimisation – [1] The researcher will ensure the maximum level of discretion around the topics of discussion, [2] The implementation of the conditions discussed under anonymity and confidentiality, such that the details of previous participants are not revealed by the researcher, [3] Maintaining the cooperation of elites connected to each community, such that the perceived threat is minimised.
Management – [1] Discussing concerns with participants should they arise, and mutually agreeing action to be taken where this can be safely and suitably undertaken by the researcher.

Risk 4: Risk of Loss of Employment – Whilst highly unlikely, it is possible that if an individual is suspected of corruption or otherwise perceived to be linked to inappropriate behaviour through the conduct of the research, the participant could lose his or her job. This is applicable both to those who hold formal positions within local government, and those whose income is reliant on positions on informal influence and social connectedness.
Minimisation – [1] The researcher will ensure the maximum level of discretion around the topics of discussion, [2] The implementation of the conditions discussed under anonymity and confidentiality, such that the details of previous participants are not revealed by the researcher, [3] Maintaining the cooperation of elites connected to each community, such that the perceived threat is minimised.
Management – [1] Any intervention on behalf on the researcher is unlikely to remedy such a situation should it arise, but the researcher would seek advice from local contacts should a situation arise.

Risk 5: Risk of Uncovering Past Trauma – Whilst the research is not seeking information specific to the impacts of the conflict on the individuals interviewed, it is possible that through raising the topic of the impacts of conflict that memories of past trauma are triggered. Such
Minimisation – [1] The participant will be encouraged and reminded of their right to skip or avoid topics of conversation, [2] Topics around the impacts of conflict will be introduced in a manner which is sensitive, and not specific to impacts on the individual, [3] The researcher will discuss and develop the interview schedule with the translator and local experts.
Management – [1] Immediately suspending the interview if a participant appears distressed or in the event that they request the interview be suspended, [2] Signposting a participant to victim's advocacy organisations where these are available and such a recommendation would be appropriate.

**Others Not Involved in the Research**
Risk 1: Damage to the Reputation of a Community – It is remotely possible that corruption allegations by elites could result in the damage in the reputation of others outside of the research. This risk could develop in through a breach of confidentiality
Minimisation – [1] The researcher will ensure the maximum level of discretion around the topics of discussion, [2] The implementation of the conditions discussed under anonymity and confidentiality, such that the details of previous participants are not revealed by the researcher,
Management – [1] Any intervention on behalf on the researcher is unlikely to remedy such a situation should it arise, but the researcher would seek advice from local contacts should a situation arise."