

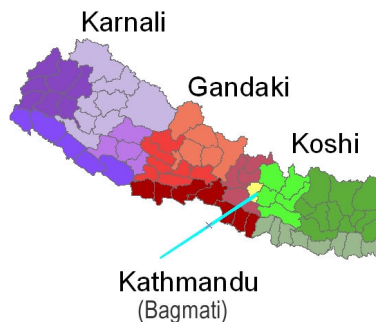
Press Release: Video-Conferencing (December 20, 2008)

”Cooperative Federal Structure: A Workable Political-economy Approach for a New Nepal” by Dr. Alok K. Bohara, Professor, University of New Mexico

Nepalis for Restructuring Nepal
December 21, 2008

Given the differing views on the issue of federalism --some arguing on a pure ethnic-based model, some on geographic/administrative model, and some against any such federal carving-- University of New Mexico professor Dr. Alok Bohara has put forward an alternative model of 'cooperative federalism' as a compromise. During a video-conferencing session on December 20th, moderated by retired UN assistant secretary general Kul Chandra Gautam and discussed by six panelists represented by various parties, Bohara proposed four cooperative federal states, 13 regions and 4000 village/urban centres. The region within the states will be created on the basis of ethnic demography as proposed by the CPN (M). Additionally, he said the states will be carefully created considering economic viability, ecological interdependence, and natural resources, and are named after river basins: Karnali, Gandaki, Bagmati and Kosi. In addition to these territorial prescriptions, he proposes other non-territorial aspect of federalism such as: properly defined ethnic rights & representations, and a proper division of power, resources and responsibility between the center and sub-regional entities. For a country with 100 ethnic groups, 70 languages, and spatially well-dispersed sizable Dalit and other ethnic populations, Bohara believes a pure ethno-based territorial federalism alone cannot address the ethnic, cultural and regional voices being raised, and is not socio-economically viable for the country.

Cooperative Federal States



Importantly, Bohara argues that his proposal of Cooperative Federalism Model (CFM) speaks to the prevailing concerns: 1) To the opponents of the federalism: CFM safeguards their fear of sovereignty and disintegration, 2) To the proponents of the ethno-federalism: CFM safeguards identify politics through a mix of territorial and non-territorial aspects of federalism; 3) To the proponents of the non-ethno federalism: CFM allows administratively efficient integrative 4-state structure with river, geography, natural resources, and economy of scale.

On the panelists were: Janajati activist Balkrishna Mabuhang; economist and former Planning Commission Vice Chair Dr. Shankar Sharma ; MJF leader Ratneshworlal Kayastha; UML leader Shanker Pokhrel; NC leader Dr. Minendra Rijal; and the CPN (M) spokesperson Dinanath Sharma.