Political Cadre Structure and National Purpose in Nepal

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Abstract

Political parties in Nepal have broadened their organizational space by linking cadres operating in schools, colleges, and universities, as well as unions, professional organizations, and government structures. While once associated with democratization and representation, their overuse has eroded public confidence and weakened legitimacy. This study adopts a review-based methodology, synthesizing academic literature, policy documents, media reports, and survey data using thematic analysis. Findings show cadres are indispensable to parties but corrosive to institutions, creating a paradox where numerical strength coexists with declining trust. The judiciary, education, and professional bodies reveal deep politicization. The paradox undermines Nepal's national purpose by weakening fairness, equity, transparency, and trust. This article integrates political theory (Weber, Freire, Sen, Rawls, Dewey) with Nepal's cadre politics and highlights justice-sector capture as a central challenge to national purpose. This pattern is evident in judicial reform efforts, where party cadres often undermine constitutional checks on power (Chapagain, & Karna,, 2004,). Even in school governance, cadres dominate local management committees, crowding out community participation.
Keywords: cadres, institutional credibility, political legitimacy, national purpose, justice sector

Introduction: Cadres and Credibility

This credibility crisis was further revealed in the 2025 youth violence, tragically symbolized by the loss of young lives, and unambiguously demonstrated that public dissatisfaction was not with parties but with party-less political culture (Kathmandu Post, 2025a).

Nepali politics has a million cadres. Political parties measure their success in terms of not how well they implement their policies but how many loyal supporters they can mobilize. "Cadres" has become the everyday vocabulary of power, whether discussing student organizations, teachers' unions, government employees, or professional bodies. However, people are losing

faith in the government. There is a dilemma. The ranks of the cadre are swollen, but trust is disintegrating.

This paradox is not merely mind-bending. Nepal experienced one of its most significant teacher strikes in decades in 2025. Tens of thousands of teachers went on strike to protest the new School Education Bill. Many felt that politics drove them, although unions said the protests sought to raise professional concerns. Parents expressed their anger. Politics is holding our kids hostage (Kathmandu Post, 2025a). The cadre politics made things more explicit here, but it also made them less legitimate. Even in school governance, cadres dominate local management committees, crowding out community participation.

The new education policy draft, released in July 2025, reportedly had pluses, minuses, and loopholes, indicating attempts to curb the non-interventionist direction. Even in school governance, cadres dominate local management committees, crowding out community participation.

In all the regions, the story is the same. What were once the promoters of democracy, student unions are now infamous for violence, admission interference, and pressure in higher education (Hachhethu, 2002)? Scholarships are typically awarded due to party allegiance, not merit. This is a prime example. District education offices in Province 2 distributed scholarships following union negotiations, excluding children who were already disadvantaged (Setopati, 2021). The inference is obvious: the cadres rule and fairness loses.

In the past, cadres were instruments of inclusion. Political parties in exile relied heavily on dedicated cadres for survival under Panchayat repression (Baral, 2012, #). After 1990, these networks evolved into student and professional organizations that supported multiparty democracy. A cadre was code for action, energy, and representation. However, when Nepal was declared a federal state, the distribution of cadres turned from being what you get instead of how it works to what you take in place of giving (Bhattarai, 2019).

This was further strengthened in 2025, as parents' groups decried the continued closure of schools as a denial of children's rights (Kathmandu Post, 2025a).

Public opinion reflects this change. Then, the 2022 poll conducted by the Interdisciplinary Analysts demonstrated that over 70 percent reported that political parties prioritized their own interests over serving the people. The gap between networks of control and social trust is widening. Politicians can cajole people to come out, but they cannot make them believe.

That danger comes from its conflation of cadres with legitimacy. Max Weber's indelible sense of legitimacy insists that authority always has an institutional, a traditional, or a charismatic foundation (Weber, 2019, #). However, parties in Nepal generally avoid buying legitimacy and hire cadres. The result is a facade of strength: the appearance of numbers on paper, without any fundamental belief.

The warning is all the more insistent from some of the philosophical voices. John Dewey believed that education is the foundation of democracy based on notions of equity and participation (Dewey, 2004). According to Paulo Freire, education should liberate rather than indoctrinate (Freire, 2005). Sustainable real development is about freedom and choices (Sen, 1999,). Justice was first named and conceptualized as fairness by John Rawls himself; he

argued that in institutions, the most vulnerable individuals must be prioritized (Rawls, 1999). In Nepal, it violates all of these. It is a system of work, not for justice, equity, or freedom, but for loyalty and political obedience.

Here is the primary question that the research aims to address. Can a country uphold its goals when cadres replace legitimacy? Evidence indicates otherwise. Then, political parties are in charge for a brief period, and the national agenda falls apart. Party negotiations prevent education from occurring. Professional organizations turn into battlefields. Unions help people navigate the civil service workforce. People lose faith. .

The selection of Sushila Karki as the first female Prime Minister of Nepal in September 2025 was a result and a symbol of this revolt against patronage politics (Ratopati, 2025).

This recap leads up to the caution ahead. Cadres cannot substitute for trustworthiness. National purpose fails without credibility. Nepal stands at a crossroads in its history. Parties may feel powerful, with many people working for them, but without legitimacy bestowed by justice, openness, and a long-term vision, the words "democracy" and "development" could become empty.

Research Objectives

- To analyze the historical evolution of political cadres in Nepal.
- To examine how cadres infiltrated education, professional associations, bureaucracy, and judiciary. This pattern is evident in judicial reform efforts, where party cadres often undermine constitutional checks on power (Chapagain, & Karna, 2004). .
- To evaluate the consequences of cadre politics on national purpose.

Review of Literature

Cadres Development in Nepal in a Historical Perspective

The rise of political cadres is a result of Nepal's long history of political development. The cadre structures did not appear spontaneously; instead, they arose from repression, survival, and mobilization. Under the Panchayat rule , when political parties were banned, cadres were integral to the underground political movements. Leaders worked in covert capacities, and cadres provided the all-important linkage between leadership and the rank-and-file, disseminating political messages while keeping the organization's spirits high (Baral, 2012). It set the precedent of political dependence on networks of cronies rather than institutional authority.

The landscape underwent significant changes with the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990. By the early 20th century, members of the cadres previously limited to a life of secrecy began to emerge in public through student unions, teachers' associations, and professional bodies. They had, in other words, turned from organizations of resistance into organs of party politics. Their formal status made them more visible, but they still mainly functioned as partisan den mothers. Instead of transforming into neutral professional institutions, they were closely connected with party lines (Hachhethu, 2002).

The Maoist uprising consolidated the role of cadres in Nepali politics. The Maoist party organization explicitly relied on cadres for both mobilization and propaganda, as well as enforcement. Parallel "people's governments" depended on local cadres to connect rural residents with services and party discipline. The post-2006 peace agreement and the embrace of federalism in 2015 have not sapped the power of cadres. Indeed, coalition politics only institutionalized cadres further making them bargaining pawns in power-sharing deals. The persistence of cadre systems through these political ruptures is indicative of how well-rooted they are in Nepal's political system.

Cadres Structures across Institutions

The infiltration of cadre politics in these various spheres of society reflects the degree to which institutions are captured. .

Created to safeguard professional rights, teachers' unions quickly turned into an arm of partisan politics. The transfer, promotion, and recruitment plans of colleges show how deeply politicized the education system has become. A Transparency International Nepal report from last year found that teacher transfers were among the most politically influenced decisions at the local government level. Parents have often said that during their time, when schools closed for long periods, strikes and closures made students pawns in political struggles. After the 2025 teachers' strike left thousands of schools across the country paralyzed, it became clear how cadre-driven unions could take precedence over children's right to education. .

Student Unions and Universities

Student unions are dominated by political cadres, particularly at Tribhuvan University, Nepal's largest seat of higher learning. Unionized staff control everything from admissions, through selection examination, to faculty appointment (Hachhethu, 2002). Instead of encouraging student leadership, unions often become strongholds in partisan battles. Violence between rival unions has left no place of learning untouched. Lecturers resent resisting trigger-happy student factions due to harassment, stymied promotions, or worse, physical threats (Panday, 2017). The upshot: a world in which education and politics are hopelessly intertwined.

Professional Associations

Political parties run cadre structures into professional bodies like doctors, lawyers, and engineers." Elections take place as national elections; the parties have manifestos and slogans. For example, the 2021 strike by the Nepal Medical Association was not primarily a professional struggle but rather a factional conflict instigated by political parties (The Himalayan Times, 2021). These actions disrupt essential services and undermine professional independence, indicating how deeply cadres have infiltrated the most basic areas of people's lives.

Civil Service and Bureaucracy

Moreover, what was once regarded as a neutral bureaucracy in Nepal, its civil service, has similarly been subsumed into cadre networks. Unofficial networks of party-linked bureaucrats determine postings, promotions, and procurement. Research on federal governance also suggests that municipal party leaders pressure the staff at local levels to allocate resources based on partisan support (Adhikari, 2020). This undermines the distinction between governance and patronage in a manner that sidelines efficiency and justice. Nepal consistently

performs poorly on corruption perception indices, reflecting the capture of bureaucracy by party cadres (Transparency International, 2023).

The civil service, which should operate as a neutral administrative body, has become increasingly divided along party cadre lines. Studies indicate that civil servants aligned with political factions are often seen as sources of corruption, using their positions to provide benefits in exchange for partisan loyalty (Adhikari, 2020; Panday, 2019). Many openly admit, in surveys and reports, that their actions serve political patrons rather than public interest, relying on political power to shield them from legal accountability (Transparency International Nepal, 2019; Interdisciplinary Analysts, 2022). Political leaders, in turn, hesitate to discipline cadres in the bureaucracy for fear of weakening their own organizational base (International Crisis Group, 2019). This cycle deepens public mistrust, erodes professional ethics, and places the national purpose in dilemma. Instead of ensuring fairness, transparency, and service delivery, the bureaucracy becomes a mechanism for partisan preservation, undermining both state legitimacy and the credibility of democratic governance.

Not even private colleges and schools are free from cadre capture. Dozens are owned by political leaders or their allies, who are closely tied to the politically powerful. Do some of these institutions provide party financing and organizations as well as education? Scholarships, internships, and jobs are awarded to students with party connections at the expense of underprivileged youths who are not affiliated with any party (Setopati, 2021). The result is that inequality ranks high, and the message is clear: what matters in education is not merit, it is obedience. [Education2021].

Justice in crisis

Lawyers' associations in Nepal run elections along party lines, with candidates openly backed and funded by political parties (Chapagain, & Karna, 2004). Judicial appointments, including to the Supreme Court, are widely perceived to reflect party loyalty (Chapagain, & Karna, 2004). Courts were disrupted during political movements, which normalized external pressure on justice (BTI Project, 2024). Party-affiliated citizens often receive quicker or more favorable remedies, while others face delays (BTI Project, 2024). Almost all infrastructure and documents of the Supreme Court were severely damaged during the arson attacks of August 8–9, 2025, when more than 26,000 ongoing case files and 36,000 stored case files were destroyed (Hindustan Times, 2025; My Republica, 2025).

Collectively, these cases demonstrate how cadres infiltrate institutions at all levels. They shape everyday experiences, everything from the reassignment of a rural teacher to the assignment of hospital shifts, from a student's odds of getting into college to the independence of the civil service. It makes parties everywhere appear strong but empties the institutions of credibility. This pattern is evident in judicial reform efforts, where party cadres often undermine constitutional checks on power (Chapagain, & Karna, 2004).

Cadres and National Purpose

On Thursday, cadres with a vehicle of inclusion were welcomed. They represented the energy of grassroots activism and democratic mobilization. Their rise corresponded to the rise of

political participation, particularly among those who were not members of established elite circles. Cadres could also further the national purpose by politicising the people.

However, over the years, the cadre structures they devised have evolved from inclusion to capture. The federal era has been characterized by the use of cadres as a bridge between leaders and citizens, rather than their instrumental role in resource distribution and institutional control (Bhattarai, 2019). They are generally not responding to serving education, health care, or professional integrity — they are using those as a screen, instead of favoring the survival of the party. "They have swept aside the national purpose — that is, fairness, equity, transparency, and service. .

The consequences are clear. Teachers' strikes disrupt education for children (Kathmandu Post, 2025a). Health care is a casualty of professional strikes (The Himalayan Times, 2021). Politically based scholarships add to the fairness deficit (Setopati, 2021) [Setopati2021]. Party-pressured civil servants undermine the neutral character of state agencies. The politicization of all of these things destroys trust. .

The cadre is facing increasing public backlash. Dang parents, speaking to Kantipur in 2023, referred to the extended closure of schools as "an attack on children's rights." In Kathmandu, students took to the digital streets with campaigns using hashtags like #StudentsNotCadres, a direct assault on party unions. Already, professional organisations are coming under scrutiny from their own members for prioritising partying over professional ethics. These civic responses signal an expanding resistance, but they also highlight the depth of the problem.

The paradox is severe: as cadres multiply, legitimacy deteriorates. Party gatherings mobilize large audiences and fill the streets with rallies, but public trust is plummeting, according to surveys. In a 2022 survey conducted by Interdisciplinary Analysts, trust in political parties fell below the 30% mark, whereas other institutions, such as the civil service and judiciary, remained higher-rated. This tension indicates the overriding crisis: cadre politics has created an optical illusion of strength, but a material world of fragility. This pattern is evident in judicial reform efforts, where party cadres often undermine constitutional checks on power (Chapagain, & Karna, 2004).

Synthesis

In Nepal, as studies indicate, cadres are both a historical phenomenon and a present-day product of politicization. They were born in repressive times as survival instruments, legitimized during democratic ascendancy, militarized with insurgency, and institutionalized in federalism. In these stages, cadres have given form to education, health, bureaucracy, and the professions. Moreover, their dominance undermines the very credibility institutions require to function in the service of society. This disjunction between cadre expansion and institutional trust epitomises Nepal's contemporary credibility crisis. .

Balanced Perspective: Why Cadres Persist

An objective analysis of Nepal's cadre politics should take into account not just the harm such politics does, but also why they survive. Despite political turnovers, regime shifts, and widespread criticism, the cadre structures have remained largely intact. It was no accident that

their survival has been the result of historical necessity, functional convenience, and still-present importance for party survival.

Historical Necessity

Cadres were initially a means of survival. During the Panchayat rule , when political parties were outlawed, trusted aides served as underground couriers, campaigners, and bodyguards for party leaders. They disseminated political ideas, led protests, and also helped maintain high morale against authoritarianism (Baral, 2012). Student groups, teacher networks, and professional associations emerged as semi-legal venues to articulate democratic aspirations. Had there been no such cadres, the People's Movements of 1990 and 2006 would not have garnered sufficient momentum in weakening authoritarian structures. In this respect, their continuous persistence can be construed as a continuation of the historical resistance to such forces.

Functional Roles in Party Survival

There are still some functional roles that the cadres perform, which are crucial to the party organisation.

Grassroots Mobilization: Cadres serve as a bridge between party elites and local communities. They coordinate rallies, mobilize supporters, distribute pamphlets, and oversee the voting process. This role is logistical and becomes crucial during elections .

Political Socialization: Cadres disseminate ideology and reinforce party identity. Among rural areas, where mass media are scarce, cadres frequently remain the primary political communicators. Moreover, while that process has been dangerous — verging on indoctrination — it has also brought awareness and politicized front-line communities marginalized in the past.

Organization Discipline: In a politically unstable situation, cadre loyalty means party unity. Cadres implement the decisions of top leadership and keep order during factional struggles. This has made them invaluable in coalition politics, in which discipline is the currency of bargaining.

Prevents Prompt Action; Cadres supply the workforce required for prompt action, be it launching strike calls or enforcing protests, or rendering relief work during natural calamities. Parties rely on cadres to demonstrate power immediately, which formal institutions are often unable to do.

Positive Contributions

While the literature has tended to emphasize the adverse outcomes of cadre dominance, cadres have also played constructive roles in other situations. In rural villages, government cadres have served as intermediaries between citizens and distant leaders, facilitating the acquisition of infrastructure projects, schools, or health posts. For marginalized groups, being part of cadre organizations has provided an opportunity for access to political life that is not available through elite-linked networks. Dalit and Janajati youth, for instance, were able to secure their initial space for protest within cadre-based organisations. While cadres can be excluded, they have also established channels of empowerment.

Paradox of Persistence

The contradiction lies in the two sides of the cadres. The very qualities that make them effective for parties such as loyalty, discipline, and the reach of a community organization are the same ones that corrode institutions. They survive because they are useful to parties. However, their expansion is not trusted by the public. The parties cannot readily cast the cadres aside without risking organizational collapse, but for citizens they become ever more a barrier to fairness and professionalism.

This paradox highlights why cadres persist despite widespread condemnation. To political leaders, they are totems of strength; to the people who live in them, bastions of rot. That contradiction is exacerbated by the federal system, in which local governments rely on cadres for mobilization while also battling the credibility crisis that their dominance brings.

Synthesis

Cadres in Nepal survive not because they are universally applicable but because they fit specific party needs. The continuity of their life in the annals, on grounds of utility, is based on political expediency. This equilibrium is important: it reminds us that cadres are not aberrations, but the very heartbeats of Nepal's political life. Thus, any reform agenda must tackle not only the damage inflicted by cadres but also why their indispensability remains a feature of parties. There can be no credible path forward without both sides being addressed".

Discussion

Evidence from across the sectors shows a paradox that persists: political cadres are enlarged, but not trusted. Evidence of omnipresent party politics abounds, but the institutions have been torn apart. This credibility crisis is not solely a political issue; it is also philosophical, institutional, and ethical. Theories by Max Weber, Paulo Freire, Amartya Sen, John Rawls, and John Dewey can serve to illustrate this dichotomy. Their reflections shed light on why cadre politics has faltered in maintaining legitimacy and what this implies for Nepal's national purpose.

Weber's Lens: Authority without Legitimacy

Max Weber, for his part, distinguished among traditional authority, charismatic authority, and, further on, rational-legal authority (Weber, 2019). Nepal's cadre politics is an enemy of all three. The old consensus, with its sense of stability and cultural entitlement derived from continuity in power, has been disrupted by the continual shifts in coalition, unstable administrations, and the volatility of political life. Charismatic authority is so very rare; only once in a blue moon would figures like, say, B. P. Koirala or Pushpa Kamal Dahal in his belligerent years have had that legitimacy for even a limited time span. The rational-legal authority of impartial institutions has been eroded by the politicization of unions, bureaucracies, and professional associations.

All that is left is authority without legitimacy: cadres can mobilize strength visibly, but remain unable to earn public trust. This gap between power and credibility explains Nepal's institutional fragility.

Freire's Warning: From Emancipation to Indoctrination

Paulo Freire emphasized that education should be a liberating experience for learners, allowing them to question and transform their world (Freire, 2005). In Nepal, student unions were one

of the vehicles through which this emancipatory possibility was first articulated. They resisted the Panchayat rule, and they played a key role in both the 1990 and 2006 people's Movements. For a while, they were instruments of democratic awakening.

However, when cadres dominate, student unions interject with party lines. Rather than foster critical discourse, they enforce ideological homogeneity. When universities themselves — which are supposed to be homes for creativity, dissent, and the pursuit of truth — are reduced to arenas for intimidation, you know something has gone wrong. Strikes, padlocking administrative offices and violent clashes are examples that demonstrate how education is used not to liberate but to indoctrinate. This possibility of pedagogy as liberation, according to Freire, is sharply at odds with what happens in the classroom. .

Sen's Perspective: Narrowing Freedoms

Amartya Sen defines development as freedom from a restricted range of choice, the capability to lead lives that people have reason to value (Sen, 1999). In this sense, cadre politics is at odds with development. Transfers of teachers are made based on party loyalty, rather than merit. The organization awards scholarships based on affiliation, not need. Careers are based on connections, not competence.

These approaches impose, rather than broaden, freedoms. Students who lack connections often miss out on educational opportunities. Non-party members are made to wait for services. Experts who refuse to comply are threatened with marginalization. As Sen would have it, the cadres fetters are of that bare stuff which is real development itself. .

Rawlsian Justice and the Betrayal of the Least Advantaged

Rawlsian fairness is inverted when courts operate through political affiliation. The least advantaged, lacking party ties, face barriers to impartial justice. Legal rights appear contingent on networks, not principles. This politicization of the judiciary breaches the basic structure of fairness and directly weakens Nepal's national purpose. This pattern is evident in judicial reform efforts, where party cadres often undermine constitutional checks on power (Chapagain, & Karna, 2004).

Rawls contended that fairness must play a role in the establishment of institutions to benefit from justice, especially those who are least well-off. In Nepal, cadre politics turns it on its head. The dividends are often accrued to those who are already highly favored due to their political connections. A politically connected student may obtain a scholarship, while a talentless and unconnected peer is denied. Loyalism: A loyal teacher is assigned to an advantageous post, while a neutral one is overlooked.

This reversal conflicts with Rawls's principle of justice as fairness. Rather than reverse inequality, cadre politics entrenches it. The least advantaged are disadvantaged not by happenstance, but by active partisan choice. The social contract, which is supposed to ensure fairness, has been breached throughout.

Dewey's Democracy in Action: Interrupted

John Dewey described education as not mere preparation for democracy but democracy in action (Dewey, 2004). Classrooms, he believed, are places where students rehearse civic life through conversation, collaboration, and problem solving. .

The democratic rehearsal is repeatedly disrupted in Nepal. A strike shuts down schools, campuses are closed with padlocks, and violence explodes on university campuses. Instead of dialogue, confrontation prevails. Instead of cooperation, hierarchy dominates. So, rather than socializing students into democratic deliberation, we are instilling in them the habit of obedience to party dictates. Cadres tapping frustrates Dewey's ideal of schools as democratic communities.

Taken together, these theorists reveal how cadre politics simultaneously erodes legitimacy (Weber), suppresses emancipation (Freire), narrows freedoms (Sen), undermines fairness (Rawls), and disrupts democracy in practice (Dewey). The convergence of these perspectives underscores that Nepal's cadre crisis is not just political, but philosophical and human.

Comparative Insights: Global Parallels

Analysts argue that Nepal's political transition remains muddled, with cadre politics preventing institutional consolidation (International Crisis Group, 2019).

In China, party cadres remain deeply embedded in bureaucratic life, though managed through institutionalized adaptation (Shambaugh, 2008).

UNDP's Human Development Report stresses that political capture weakens service delivery, a problem mirrored in Nepal (UNDP, 2023).

The paradox of the cadre is not unique to Nepal. Comparable patterns can be observed in other countries, indicating that cadre politics can gain control but lose legitimacy.

Zambia. Under the Patriotic Front's years in government, cadres' extortions on public space were well documented, as they "levied" them and also threatened ordinary citizens. Policy Briefs labelled them as wielding a "reign of terror" (Policy Brief, 2021). As in Nepal, Zambia's parties used cadres to mobilize, but at the expense of public trust.

Zimbabwe. Cadres of the ruling party were used to control scholarships, jobs, and local government. As Matenga shows, patronage networks not only propped up authoritarianism but also decimated institutions. This is comparable to Nepal, where cadre-based scholarships and transfers are used for control.

China. The Chinese Communist Party has bureaucratized leadership via the nomenklatura system, where selection and promotion are tightly directed by the party (Shambaugh, 2008). Unlike in Nepal, the Chinese cadre system is bureaucratized and centralized. However, it is the same principle: loyalty trumps merit.

India. Indian politics also includes cadre-based parties, the most prominent of which is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and its offshoots. Unlike Nepal's party unions, these groups are not clones; however, they demonstrate that disciplined networks can shape education, culture, and politics.

These cases highlight a global challenge: systems organized around cadres can embed parties deeply in society, but at the expense of institutional credibility. The struggle in Nepal is part of this larger battle. These global patterns suggest that while cadre politics ensures party survival, it consistently undermines institutional credibility, a dilemma Nepal shares. Yet Nepal's uniqueness lies in the depth of cadre penetration into education and professional institutions — extending beyond patronage, bureaucratic control, or civil society networks.

Synthesis: The Philosophical Crisis of Cadres

The constructs of Weber, Freire, Sen, Rawls, and Dewey make explicit a crisis in philosophy.

- Weber is the power of authority without the right of legitimacy.
- Freire exposes indoctrination for what it really is: education.
- As Sen shows, it is the closing of spaces for liberties.
- Rawls emphasizes the injustice that occurs when partiality trumps impartiality.
- Dewey unmasks the dislocation of democracy in action.

Nepal is not the only such country, as confirmed by comparative examples. It is the way cadres from all over the world operate; it is a method of survival and maintaining power, but also one that diminishes credibility. What sets Nepal's case apart is the degree to which cadres not only control politics, but also academic and professional institutions, undermining one of the mainstays of national purpose itself.

The theoretical value of this paper lies in its linkage between the politics of cadres and philosophical perspectives on democracy, justice, and liberty. Cadre-ism is not just a problem of governance; it is also ultimately a crisis of the human, where loyalty supplants fairness, discipline suffocates dialogue, and capture crushes service. Understanding this catastrophe is crucial to figuring out a course from cadres to credibility.

Methodology

Toward a Methodological Framework: An Article applies a review-based methodical approach to contribute to the academic literature, policy documents, media reports, and survey data, offering a critical analysis of Nepal's political cadre structure and its implications for national purpose. The aim is not to generate new primary data but rather to achieve in-depth and conceptual analysis that situates Nepal's cadre politics in local/national as well as in comparative contexts. Examining the institutionalization of cadres and their role in institutions such as education, health, civil service, and professional bodies, among others, this paper demonstrates how they have proliferated alongside a decline in dignity. .

Research Approach

The research employs an integrated review method, which enables the convergence of theoretical, historical, and empirical sources. The approach was fitting since what this book refers to as the phenomenon of political cadres involves an intersection of multiple disciplines—political science, education policy, sociology, and philosophy—which demand synthesis rather than a single-case approach and so demands synthesis rather than case extinction. The review spans materials from 1990, when multiparty democracy was reinstated, to 2025, a period marked by teachers' strikes, new discussions on education policy, and changes in political leadership. .

Source Selection

A purposeful search on different platforms selected sources. On the one hand, academic databases contributed peer-reviewed literature as well as books; policy repositories as well as official documents (e.g., Transparency International Nepal | TINEPAL, MoE reports, UGC publications) offered institutional views; while media reporting were employed for contemporary postulations of cadre impact on daily governance from (The Kathmandu Post,

Kantipur Daily, Setopati, The Himalayan Times.-------------). Terms like political cadre, party networks, union politicization, institutional capture, and national purpose provided the focus for these searches.

This dual-source strategy offered the advantages of both coverage and appropriateness. An emphasis was placed on triangulating media reporting with policy documents to negate any bias introduced through partisan or tabloid journalism.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for inclusion were:

- Direct studies on political parties, cadre system, or politicization of institutions in Nepal.
- Studies included: from 1990 up to 2025 to cover both the democratic and federal periods.
- Comparative studies of cadres in South Asia, or other hybrid regimes, could be included as long as they provided lessons learned that could be applied to Nepal.

The exclusion criteria eliminated:

- Sources to partisan commentary without evidence.
- Books that are general political culture but not cadre structure.
- Other foreign cases are not associated with the implementation of party cadres.

By imposing those limits, the review stayed focused on the connection between cadre and national purpose, even as it drew comparative insights.

Analytical Framework

The data from the included studies were integrated and synthesized based on a thematic analysis model. Using Braun and Clarke's six stages of analysis, the review was conducted as follows:

Repeated reading for familiarity with the sources.

- Early coding of repeating items, including discipline, mobilization, capture, and trust.
- Aggregation of codes into higher-order categories .
- Checking that categories were based on the data.
- Articulating end-game themes such as cadres as the life support of networks, cadres as patronage relations, and cadres' credibility disasters.
- Using thematic weaving to write analysis with theoretical frames.

This procedure enabled the review to progress from description to analysis, illustrating how Nepal's cadre structures are both vital for parties and damaging to institutions.

Limitations

To mitigate bias, findings were triangulated across academic, policy, media, and survey sources, reducing the influence of partisan perspectives. This triangulation enhanced the robustness of the review by balancing academic rigor with contemporary policy debates and lived civic experiences. Survey evidence suggests declining public trust in political institutions, reinforcing the study's findings. Global youth networks such as SDSN emphasize the risks of cadre politics undermining student and youth representation (SDSN, 2022).

There are two primary limitations to this study: the first is that it is based on secondary data. Secondary sources are necessarily enriched by their breadth; they cannot fully record the lived experiences of cadres, teachers, and citizens. The research addresses this by triangulating the findings across four source types . Further research may also include primary interviews with cadres, union leaders, or decision-makers in the study to enhance understanding.

Justification of Approach

A review-based approach was suitable in this study for two reasons, despite the limitations. The first is that the issue of base politics and national vision is inescapably interdisciplinary, one that demands a synthesis between political science, sociology, education, and philosophy. Second, the subject of interest–party capture of institutions poses a challenge to primary data collection, as it may introduce political bias or concern for personal security. Such a consideration of secondary sources in varied forms thus offers a legitimate, morally responsible, and timely rationale for analysis. .

Conclusion: From Cadres to Credibility

There is a bitter paradox about Nepal's political journey. Although they have expanded their cadre networks to every major institution – including education, universities, hospitals, the civil service, and chambers of healthcare professionals - their authority has been significantly eroded. Organizational strength often appears as institutional weakness. Party-affiliated unions and associations are visible everywhere to citizens, who no longer see in these groups vehicles serving the nation's interests. .

The consequences are severe. In education, teacher and student strikes are a violation of children's and young people's right to uninterrupted learning. For healthcare, the combination of professional strikes and partisan politics undermines access to necessary services, with patients caught in the crossfire between the competing interests of political factions. In the civil service, cadre influence on matters such as narrow casting, transfers, promotions, and procurement undermines the neutrality of the bureaucracy. Party factions that stymie bodies that should defend integrity paralyze professional associations. Taken together, these measures subvert all that is fair, inclusive, transparent, and disciplined, the key hallmarks of national purpose. .

Philosophical perspectives sharpen this warning. Dewey's vision of education as democracy in action falters when classrooms shutter at the behest of politics. Freire's pedagogy of liberation is suppressed when unions brainwash and enslave. Sen's view of "development as freedom" shrinks to patronage-driven scholarships and discriminatory opportunities. You turn Rawls's idea of justice as fairness on its head when loyalty trumps merit to the detriment of the least advantaged. Weber's concept of rational-legal authority shows how cadres bring control but not legitimacy. When analyzed from these perspectives, Nepal's cadre politics is not just a governance failure, but a more profound philosophical quandary of what constitutes democracy, justice, and humanization. .

However, accepting the problem also suggests solutions. Reform needs integrity, not cadre numbers. This requires:

- Depoliticization of schools and universities, making sure that education is immune to the clubs of parties and domineering labor unions. .
- Independent commissions for transfers, promotions, and scholarships, cutting the link between party loyalty and institutional access.
- Professional autonomy in health and associations reinforces the idea that expertise must serve society, rather than being used for the benefit of political groups.
- Long-term civic charters built through widespread consultations that deliver a consistent education and institutional vision beyond short-term coalition negotiations. .
- Civil resistance and the leadership of youth, already apparent in hashtags like #StudentsNotCadres and parental protests, needs to be galvanized and legitimized within policy frameworks.

Justice is central to national purpose. When bar associations mirror party ballots and judicial appointments follow political lines, citizens doubt fairness at its core. Without credible justice, trust in all other institutions—schools, hospitals, and administration—erodes. Restoring national purpose therefore requires restoring judicial independence.

The way forward is not just administrative reforms, but the revival of a culture. Nepal needs to transition from ideology to humanization, from custody to service, and from cadres to credibility. This shift is essential to the preservation of democracy. A nation's mission cannot be carried out when its institutions are organized to serve party power above justice, equity, and good faith. The path to it will certainly not be easy, but it is the only way to begin returning democracy and justice as meaningful words for the people of Nepal. Recent assessments show that Nepal's democratic transition continues to struggle with politicization and weak institutional accountability (Asia Foundation, 2022).

Visual Elements

Figure 1. Simplified Structure of Party Cadres Networks in Nepal

Party Leadership → Central Committee → District/Provincial Cadres → Union/Association Wings → Local Ward Cadres and Activists

Figure 2. Public Trust in Political Parties and Institutions

Institution	% Trust (High/Moderate)
Political Parties	28%
Parliament	32%
Civil Service	41%
Teachers' Unions	27%
Professional Associations	35%

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