

Dilemma and Factionalism in the Maoist Politics of Nepal

Arjun Bahadur Ayadi

Abstract

The history of the Communist movement of Nepal has passed almost 70-years since the formation of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) in 1949. During this period, the Communist movement of Nepal passes through so many ups and downs, twists and turns, and defeats and victories. It has taken different paths in course of its development. It has experienced series of split and merger, which still continues. The Maoist, a radical faction of the communist movement, led the armed struggle for ten-years between 1996-2006 to seize political power and establish a “New People’s Democracy”. However, the deadly armed struggle concluded in negotiation after 10-year and Maoists re-entered in the competitive politics. As it entered in the competitive politics, the CPN (Maoist), revised its ideological goal from “New People’s Democracy” to “Democracy in the Twenty First Century”. After these ideological change, it has entered in the vicious circle of split and merger. In this context, this paper aims to understand the relations between political dilemma and fraction taken place in the history of Communist movement of Nepal in general and Maoist politics in particular. On the basis of documentary analyses, this paper argues, the whole Communist movement of Nepal including Maoists politics suffered from ideological dilemma (between liberal and radical line) that resulted internal contradiction within the movement leading toward the series of split and generated the serious crisis to radical politics in Nepal.

Keywords: CPN (Maoist), Maoism, Marxism, Leninism, ideology

Introduction

... it will appear that sometimes we are going to the Left and

sometimes to the Right. In the course of revolution, if one goes Left, then they are Leftists. If they swerve to the Right, then they will be Rightists. We are walking on both legs. Sometimes the left foot leads, sometimes the right foot is forward. It is only by walking on both our feet that we accomplished the ten years of struggle. (Prachanda, 2006, p. 20)

The Maoists were moving to the Right. If there is need, we will once again move to the Left. This is the revolutionary strategy. (Ibid, p. 19)

We are not dogmatic communist and we are prepared to change and debate our belief with anybody. (Washington Post, 22 November 2006)

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels originally propounded the modern concept of the communism in 1840s. However, it failed to pick up any serious resistance in advanced capitalist countries of Europe. Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known by *nom de plume* Vladimir Lenin, founder of the Russian Communist Party (RCP) and leader of the Bolshevik Revolution (BR) (1917), gave a new twist on the idea of communism by reinterpreting it in accordance with the realities of pre-capitalist Russia. Over the next few years of the BR, Mao Tse-tung, Chinese Communists leader, architect of Chinese Cultural Revolution (CR), and the Asian interpreter of Marxism, redefined the Marxist-Leninist (ML) doctrine in the context of the Asian agrarian societies with a touch of nationalistic sentiment, anti-colonial, and anti-imperialist rhetoric which have still strong appeal in several Asian countries. His idea on Marxism, military strategies, and political policies are collectively known as Maoism.

With the end of World War-II (WW-II), the wave of decolonization or independence movement had taken place all over the world.

In this context, in the next door of Nepal, the Cultural Revolution under the leadership of Mao in China and decolonization or independence movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in India got success respectively. Many Nepalese political leaders living in India joined the Indian independence struggle against the British Raj. The reason behind the support of Nepalese political leaders was that it would be helpful to trigger the collapse of authoritarian Rana rule in Nepal if the colonial rule in India ended. Nevertheless, Rana had enjoyed special privileges of British regime. Inspiring from Indian independence movement, the Nepali Congress (NC) party, with principle of liberal democracy, was initially formed in India with the objective of overthrowing the Rana regime in Nepal. Puspa Lal Shrestha, who was affiliated to Nepali Congress in the beginning of his political career, formed the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) in Calcutta (India) on 22 April 1949¹. This establishment of the Communist Party of Nepal had formally introduced the idea of communism or Marxism in the political history of Nepal. Meanwhile, the above cited statements² made by Puspa Kamal Dahal, better known by *nom de plume* Prachanda, Chairman of the CPN (Maoist), confirmed that the communist movement of Nepal in general and Maoist politics in specific has no consistency and it is being passed through various confusions between Marxist philosophy and liberal democratic framework. Due to the ideological and pragmatic inconsistency,

1 The date of establishment of the CPN has no uniformity, some claimed that CPN was established on 22 April 1949 (when its founder members were agreed to establish CPN) and other argued CPN was established on 15 September 1949 (the date when the CPN made public its first Manifesto). See Bhim Rawal, *Nepalma Samyawadi Andolan: Udhav Ra Bikash* (The Communist Movement in Nepal: Origin and Development) (Kathmandu: Saman Prakasan, 1988).

2 Among the three statements, first two statements were made immediately after the *12-Point Understanding* agreed between the then CPN (Maoist) and the Seven Party Alliance (SAP) in 2005 and third one was made after signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) 2006.

the communist movement of Nepal has not only become fragile but also supposed to reach the point of liquidation.

In this context, this paper has attempted to explain how the communist movement of Nepal in general and Maoist politics in particular suffered from the political dilemma and fraction. For the purpose, the paper is divided into three sections. First, it briefly draws a picture of how the political dilemma and fractions in the communist movement of Nepal led to the origin of the CPN (Maoist). The second section examines the ups and downs of a decade long Maoist armed struggle that caused political dilemma and fractions within the Maoists themselves. Finally, the paper tries to narrate the political dilemma and fraction in the Maoist after its entry into the competitive electoral politics.

Methodological Aspects

This article is the outcome of five years' long rigorous study of the communist movement of Nepal in general and Maoist politics in specific in between 2013-2018. To fulfill the objectives of the study various sources of information have been collected and consulted during the study period. Primary information has been collected from the documentary sources, such as party documents. The formal and informal talk with different people involved in communist movement of Nepal, either as a leader, cadre, or analyst also become helpful. Along with the primary sources of information, to address the theoretical aspects and historical information about the subject matter, different books, journals, newspapers, and other secondary sources of information are also used in this piece of writing. Although the piece of writing is the combination of documentary and empirical information, it has primarily relied on the method of documentary analyses.

Maoist Movement as an Outcome of Dilemma within Communist Movement of Nepal

The communist movement of Nepal is the outcome of inspiration of the Indian communist rooted in the independence movement of India. Political activists who were disappointed with NC leadership led the formation of communist party of Nepal. During the inaugural session of the party, CPN stated that, “Nepal should establish a ‘new democracy’ as in China, if necessary through armed struggle so as to create a People’s Republic” (CPN, 1949). CPN initially declared itself as the true representative of the proletariat class of Nepal and it expanded the support base throughout the country within a short period of time. Because of the wider support base, immediately after the end of Rana regime in Nepal peasant movement spread against proprietor in rural parts of Nepal. But, because of the ideological confusion and dilemma of leadership, the CPN was unable to lead the movement.

Differences within the leadership of CPN regarding the future strategy of the party came into the surface during the second congress of CPN held in 1957. Disagreements aroused over the issues of Constituent Assembly (CA) and parliamentary democracy proposed by Puspa Lal Shrestha, republican system by Sambhu Nath Shrestha, and constitutional monarchical system by Keshar Jung Rajamajhi (Rawal, 1991, p. 51). These differences and disagreements had affected all the structures and units of the party. The units and structures were divided according to the loyalty towards the particular leaders and began to act independently. This phenomenon led to a further crisis in the communist movement of Nepal.

The CPN criticized the 1950’s political change as having no political significance since it was not a total revolution

(Adhikari, 1951). But it decided to join the democratic process and participated in the election for parliament in 1959. The CPN won four constituencies out of 109 in the parliamentary election. In 1960, King Mahendra seized the power and directly ruled the country introducing party-less *Panchyat* system. During the Darbhanga Plenum of CPN, the clear division of leadership was seen. Leaders were divided in for and against the King's political takeover. The faction led by Keshar Jung Rayamajhi had supported the king's move by advocating the idea of constitutional monarchy. Whilst, Pushpa Lal Shrestha led faction had opposed the royal coup and favored the mass movement as proposed by NC. This division led to the split of the CPN into the CPN Pushpa Lal Shrestha group and the CPN Rayamajhi group. Later, CPN Rajamajhi group joined the government led by the King under party less *Panchayat* system. With this incident, the series of split and merger began in the communist parties of Nepal. Nirmal Lama and Mohan Bikram Singh formed a CPN 'Central Nucleus' in 1971 and agreed to continue the "protracted People's War" (PW) as the party's strategy departing significantly from the line that the establishment was practicing. However, Pushpa Lal Shrestha was against the PW but advocated the need of "United Movement", jointly with the NC, against the absolute monarchy.

Inspired from Chinese Cultural Revolution and Naxalite movement of India, a group of young leaders of CPN launched the armed uprising with the aim of eliminating class enemies in *Jhapa* district in April 1962. The revolt is popularly known as *Jhapa Bidroha* in the communist history of Nepal. The *Panchayat* regime has easily crushed the rebellion and taken the situation under control. Although the revolt could not be successful, the *Jhapa* incident had significant implication in the future course of the communist movement of Nepal. Nonetheless,

Koshi Regional Committee of the CPN, which led to the *Jhapa Bidroh*, was developed as the All Nepal Revolutionary Co-ordination Committee (ANRCC) in 1975 and later it emerged as the CPN (Marxist-Leninist), CPN (ML), under the leadership of Manmohan Adhikari in 1978. The CPN (ML) gave up the line of PW in 1979 and emphasized to “Nepali Road to Socialism” based on an understanding of economic and social conditions in Nepal (Rawal, 1991, pp. 80-87). Due to the severe state repression, CPN (ML) popularly known with Nepali acronym “*Ma-Le*” abandoned the path of armed struggle for mass based movement as a road to socialism (Mikesell, 2004, p. 8).

On the other hand, the extreme communist group organized the *Chautho Mahadhibeshan* (Fourth Convention was)³ in the initiation of Mohan Bikram Singh and Nirmal Lama in 1974. The Fourth Convention continued the decision of ‘Central Nucleus’ and re-endorsed the PW as a future strategy of the party. Meanwhile, the King Birendra declared *Janmat Sangrah* (Referendum) on 24 May 1979 responding towards a month long nationwide student movement. The CPN (Fourth Convention) initially announced an active boycott but it changed its stand to participate in the referendum without any pre-condition at the last moment (Rawal, 1991, p. 148).

The Fourth Convention also divided in 1983. CPN (Masal) was formed out of the Fourth Convention. The CPN (Masal) further split into the CPN (Mashal) in 1984. Mohan Baidya became the General Secretary (GS) of the CPN (Mashal) and continued PW based on guerrilla warfare as its course. When the radical line of the communist movement gradually losing its public support due to the regular split, the CPN (Mashal) launched

³ The top Nepali Maoist leaders- Mohan Baidhya, alias “Kiran”; Puspa Kamal Dahal, alias Prachanda; Chandra Prakash Gajurel, alias “Gaurav” and Ram Bahadur Thapa, alias “Badal” are all belonged to this communist faction.

an urban insurrection (popularly known as *Sector Kanda*) in 1989 attacking the local police posts at Kathmandu, capital city of Nepal. However, this insurrection was not successful and ended with the arrests of many party cadres. The Central Committee (CC) of the party deemed it as a mistake and forced Mohan Baidhya to resign from the post of GS. Mohan Baidhya's resignation led to the promotion of Prachanda as new GS of the CPN (Mashal) (see K.C., 2006 for more details).

On February 1990, *Jana Andolan-I* (People's Movement-I) under the leadership of NC began in order to end autocratic *Panchayat* regime and restore multiparty democracy in the country. At that time, the communist parties formed two alliances: the United Left Front (ULF)⁴ and United National People's Movement (UNPM)⁵. The ULF joined the People's Movement-I from the beginning. With the initial reluctance, the UNPM, particularly CPN (Mashal), participated the people movement when the street protest had gained the momentum. Royal proclamation reinstated the multiparty democracy and ended the People Movement-I on 8 April 1990. Two alliances of the communist parties reacted differently towards the royal proclamation. The ULF welcomed the proclamation and announced that the People Movement-I was successful. However, the UNPM rejected the royal proclamation and continue the movement demanding the election for Constituent Assembly (CA) and the abolition of the monarchy. UNPM halted the mass protest because of few people shown up in the street. On November 1990, new constitution was promulgated having the main essence of multiparty parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy.

4 ULF includes a group of moderate left parties– 1) CPN (Marxist-Leninist), 2) Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP), 3) CPN (Fourth Convention), 4) CPN (Marxist), 5) CPN (Burma), 6) CPN (Manandhar), and 7) CPN (Amatya).

5 UNPM includes a group of extremist communist parties- 1) CPN (Mashal), 2) CPN (Masal), 3) Nepal Marxist-Leninist Party, 4) Nepal Communist League, 5) CPN (Nanda Kumar Faction), and 6) Proletariat Labour Organization).

The merger of radical communist parties of Nepal happened immediately after the promulgation of new constitution. The CPN (Unity Centre) was formed on November 1990 through the merger of four splinter group of communist parties⁶ and Prachanda became the GS of the newly formed party. The Unity Centre rejected the new constitution declaring it as inadequate for a genuine democracy and did not show its interest to take part in the election scheduled for May 1991 (Karki and Seddon, 2003, p. 15). However, the Unity Centre had changed its previous position and took part in the parliamentary election under the banner of *Samyukta Janamorcha Nepal* (United People's Front of Nepal- UPFN). In this election, the UPFN won Nine constituencies out of 205 constituencies in the parliament.

In December 1991, the CPN (Unity Centre) organized its first unity congress and adopted the “Marxism-Leninism-Maoism” as its ideological base. Furthermore, the congress denounced the recently established parliamentary system as incapable for progressive change and approved PW along with Chinese model as its path (Prachanda, 1991) opposing the proposal of “mass uprising” presented by Nirmala Lama. During the mid-term election 1994, the Unity Centre split into two factions one led by Prachanda and another by Nirmal Lama advocating armed struggle and people uprising respectively. During the party registration process of mid-term election 1994, the Election Commission (EC) recognized the UPFN belonged to Nirmal Lama camp as official. After being rejected from the official registration, UPFN led by Baburam Bhattarai and belonged to Prachanda camp had boycotted the mid-term election. It is said that the decision of EC was one of the reasons behind

6 CPN (Unity Centre) includes- CPN (Mashal) led by Prachanda, The Fourth Convention led by Nirmal Lama, The CPN (Janamukti), and Proletarian Workers Organization led by Rupal Bishwakarma. Similarly, a splinter group of the CPN (Masal) led by Baburam Bhattarai and Shital Kumar joined the Unity Centre.

the emergence of the CPN (Maoist) and one of the triggering points to endorse armed rebellion as the course of the CPN (Unity Center) led by Prachanda. Dalit Liberation Front, sister organization of CPN (Unity Center) led by Prachanda, carried out the anti-untouchability movement in October 1994 in the name of *SiJa* campaigning in Rolpa district⁷ in the line of the preparation of armed struggle. This *SiJa* campaign included *Miteri Abhiyan* (friendship campaign) and *Jansewa Abhiyan* (serving the people campaign).

On March 1995, CPN (Unity Center) led by Prachanda organized its third expanded meeting of the Central Committee (Plenum). The meeting decided to change the name of the CPN (Unity Centre) into the CPN (Maoist). In addition, it took a decision to quit parliamentary politics and declared the inefficiency of parliamentary democracy for progressive change in the country. It also took a decision to prepare ground for armed struggle in the country. Further, the CC meeting of CPN (Maoist) held in September 1995 adopted the *Plan for Historical Initiation of People's War* as its policy paper for armed struggle.

Maoist Dilemma during Armed Struggle

The UPFN led by Baburam Bhattarai and affiliated to CPN (Maoist) presented the 40-point demand⁸ to the government on 2 February 1996. The 40-point demand was not more than a list

⁷ The UPFN's underground party committee had organized this campaign to provide the political education for their party cadres of the two districts: Rukum and Rolpa. The *SiJa* campaign was named after two mountains peaks and villages: *Sisne* and *Jaljala* located respectively in Rukum and Rolpa district and familiar symbols of the Kham Magar ethnic group of people living in the area. A senior Maoist leader Badal led the *SiJa* campaign. The meaning of the *SiJa* campaign was also derived from English word "siege" means to capture state power from the feudal landlord, usurers, and comprador bourgeoisie.

⁸ List of 40-point demands was related to nationalism, democracy, and livelihood not much different from the points outlined in the 1991 election manifesto. For more detail see, UPFN election manifesto 1991 and 40-point demands presented by UPFN chairman Baburam Bhattarai to the government on 2 February 1996.

of social grievances under the liberal democratic framework contrary to the previous claim of September CC meeting⁹. However, the government did not respond to the demand and this was considered one of the immediate factors behind the start of Maoist armed struggle throughout the country on 13 February 1996. Meanwhile, the Maoist armed struggle did not match the essence of PW as they claimed. Instead of strengthening the public support and broadening the base area as per the basic principle of PW, the Maoists adopted terror as their basic weapon from the very beginning of the armed rebellion. The Maoists applied hit-and-run strategy and carried out thousands of assaults in the name of “people’s actions” including propaganda, sabotage, and guerrilla actions. During the Fourth Plenum held in August 1998 at Faridabad, India, the CPN (Maoist) took a decision about the development of base area and guerrilla zone. For the purpose, Maoists adopted the slogan “*march forward to the direction of building base area*” (People’s March, 2001) and began to declare the base area (mostly of rural parts) without the effective control in the areas.

In February 2001, the CPN (Maoist) introduced *Prachandapath* as the guiding principle of Nepali Maoist during its second national convention held at Punjab, India (Prachanda, 2001). This introduction of *Prachandapath* had increased contradiction and dilemma within the Maoists as well as it divided the Maoists into two lines: radical and moderate. The radical line led by Mohan Baidhya emphasized on military strategy and violent measures to achieve “New People’s Democracy” whereas moderate line led by Bhattarai did not denounce violent measures but ready to consider taking a cooperative path. Whilst, Prachanda had no

⁹ In a document “*Plan for Historical Initiation of People’s War*” adopted by the CPN (Maoist) CC meeting held in September proclaimed that, their first and immediate concern was to complete the “New Democratic Revolution” through PW based on Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM).

clear stand and played cleverly in between two lines according to the situation. In the changing context and with the elapse of time, the radical line became weak and a moderate vision gained ground.¹⁰

The ideological dilemma among the Maoists further came into the surface after the palace massacre on June 2001. In one hand, Maoists presented their demand of republic to government during the negotiation (first round in July 2001) and on the other hand, they claimed that they had *Aghoshit Karyagat Ekata* (hidden working alliance) with the assassinated King Birendra (*Tarun Weekly*, 2001) and decided to join the government under the leadership of new King Gyanendra (Bastola, 2008, p. 5). However, neither the negotiation became success, nor the Maoist plan to join king's government converted into reality. In the second round of negotiation from January to August 2003, the CPN (Maoist) withdrew its previous demand for republic and forwarded the demands including a round-table conference; an interim constitution and interim government; and elections to an inclusive CA to draft a new constitution (Pathak, 2005, pp. 354-56). In between, the CPN (Maoist) organized its CC meeting in May/June 2003 at Rolpa and adopted a document named *the Development of Democracy in the Twenty-first Century (DDTC)*. This document was the further explanation of *Prachandapath* that advanced the working idea in a multi-party competitive democratic system within the stipulated constitutional framework.¹¹ With the introduction of DDTC, the

10 On 14 December 2002, in an interview Baburam Bhattarai explained that his party was “not pressing for a ‘communist republic’ but a bourgeois democratic republic.” In addition, he repeated the Maoists’ “commitment to a multiparty system” and he mentioned that “diplomatic and friendly relations with all the countries of the world”, *Washington Time*, 14 December 2002, retrieved from <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2002/dec/14/20021214-105150-2928r/> on 21 August 2017.

11 Santanu Dey, “Advance of the Maoists in Nepal: From Armed People's War to the Long March towards People's Democracy”, Retrieved from <http://www.pragoti.com>.

radical line within the party lost the ground. The CPN (Maoist) discarded its previous line of one party system and endorsed the pluralist political system.

During the CC meeting of the Maoist held in *Funtiwang* (Rolpa) in August 2004, the heated debate took place between two groups regarding the primary enemy of the armed struggle. The radical group identified India as the primary enemy since India supported the King and was pressing for the preparation of strategic offensive action. The moderate faction headed by Baburam Bhattarai argued monarchy as the main enemy of the Maoists and other option should remain open not only strategic offensive action. The rift between two lines was so intense that the party almost reached on the verge of split; Prachanda was alleged of being “agent of Palace” and Baburam Bhattarai alleged of being “agent of India”. The politburo meeting of the party decided to take punitive action against the leaders of moderate line and three leaders Baburam Bhattarai, Dina Nath Sharma and Hisila Yami suspended from all the portfolios of the party (Ogura, 2008, p. 21). The Maoist adopted strategic offensive action as its official line.

In the political twist, the King Gyanendra dismissed the elected government and began his direct rule on 1 February 2005. The CC meeting of the Maoist in October 2005 held in Rukum district, famously known as *Chungwang* meeting, reached a conclusion that they could not capture state power by force. The meeting withdrew the disciplinary action taken against the leaders; reviewed the official line of the party; decided to go with the multi-party democratic republic as the immediate tactics; and set out the terms of agreement with parliamentary political parties (Prachanda, 2005). Mohan Baidhya, the main leader of the radical line, could not attend the *Chungwang* meeting because

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he was arrested in India in March 2004. After the meeting, 12-points understanding between CPN (Maoist) and Seven Party Alliance (SPA) concluded in 22 November 2005 that became basis of *Jana Andolan-II* (People's Movement –II) 2006. With the success of People's Movement-II, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government and the Maoist concluded in November 2006 and the Maoist formally entered into the electoral politics in Nepal.

Re-entry into Electoral Politics and Maoist Dilemma

On the basis of 12 point understanding, *Jana Andolan –II* (People's Movement-II) started and got success in reinstating the dissolved parliament and restoring the multi-party democracy on 24 April 2006. The CPN (Maoist) accepted the outcome of the movement with reservation. After the success of *Jana Andolan – II*, interim government was formed under the leadership of Girija Prasad Koirala. Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between government and Maoists on 21 November 2006. The interim constitution was promulgated in 15 January 2007. As per the agreement, the Maoists got 83 MPs in the interim parliament. Finally, Maoists entered into the interim government led by Girija Prasad Koirala on 1 April 2007 and Maoist armed struggle came to a formal end. However, the Maoists still presented themselves as a vanguard revolutionary that shows the difference between the policies taken by the party and actions taken by the Maoist leadership. The Maoist leadership warned publicly to the other party's leaders, cadres and ordinary people by saying if the "reactionary forces" derail the peace process of a "democratic republic" they would not hesitate to use more traditional revolutionary tactics and initiate mass insurrection (as October Revolution) (Gobyn, 2009, p. 433). The Maoist reorganized their militant youth wing, the Young Communist

League (YCL)¹², into a nationwide organization under the leadership of former PLA commanders. The CPN (Maoist) had openly carried out extra legal or wartime activities e.g. force, seized public property (*Outlook India*, 2007); and attack against security force (*Refugee Review Tribunal*, n.a.).

In the extended CC meeting (Plenum) at Balaju, Kathmandu in August 2007, the radical line of the party became dominant over the moderate. The hardliner leaders- Mohan Baidhya and Netra Bikram Chand emphasized the necessity of urban insurrection, the immediate declaration of republic by the interim legislative parliament and the full proportional representation (PR) system in every organs of the state. This meeting also took a decision to launch the peaceful protest in order to declare the republic before the CA election at all levels-the government, the parliament, and the street. As a result, the Maoist submitted 22-points demand to the coalition government in which Maoist itself a coalition partner. Likewise, the ministers of Maoist resigned from the government on 18 September 2007 but resumed the post after an agreement on the end of December.

The CPN (Maoist) emerged as the largest party in the CA election held on 10 April 2008 winning 229 seats out of 601seats. Immediately, after the numerical change in the CA cum parliament, the CPN (Maoist) had emphasized on the constitutional amendment towards the presidential government with full executive authority but other political parties rejected that. The issue of constitution amendment created the political stagnation for more than three months. Only after three months of CA election, Prachanda became Prime Minister of Nepal by

¹² According to a database, since the CPA came into effect in November 2006, 22 persons were killed and 772 people were abducted by the Young Communist League (YCL), the Maoist youth wing, over a period of one year (November 2006-December 2007) *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, retrieved from http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/6_23.htm on 25 August 2017.

the overwhelming support of 464 MPs¹³ on 15 August 2008. Increasing conformation and dilemma within the Maoists and between the Maoists and other parties had pushed the Nepali state towards political instability and uncertainty. Meanwhile, the prominent leader of radical faction of Maoist, Mohan Baidhya, resigned from the membership of constituent assembly on 20 October 2008 advocating for the single party Communist dictatorship in Nepal contrary to the party official line after *Chungwang* meeting.

During the national conclave of the Maoist held on 17-26 November 2008 at Kharipati, Bhaktpur, the key leaders representing two lines produced two separate political documents. Prachanda in his document emphasized on gradual move towards the people's democracy creating a favourable environment with the support of people (Prachanda, 2008). Baidhya in his political document claimed that a suitable time had come for an urban insurrection and setting up a "People's Democracy". Baidhya also blamed Prachanda group that they became too much flexible in negotiations with other political parties diverting the spirit of the ten-year long armed struggle and leading to a luxurious path after holding power (Baidhya, 2008). After several level of discussion, the conclave ended with a consensus to incorporate both the document and produce a new one and altered the party's goal from "federal democratic republic" to "People's federal democratic republic" reasserting the party's radical leftist aspirations (Sigdel, 2008). The result of this conclave was that the leaders and cadres fragmented into two groups. On 13 January 2009, the unification of CPN (Maoist) and CPN (Unity Centre- Masal) had happened and renamed the

13 The 21 political parties elected to the CA announced their support to the CPN (M), while the People's Front of Nepal and the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party boycotted the PM election. The CPN-UML and the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum joined the cabinet. The NC decided to remain in the opposition.

party as Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), UCPN (Maoist). Dissatisfied with the unification, Matrika Yadav, Madheshi leader, broke away from UCPN (Maoist) and formed the CPN (Maoist) in February 2009. He blamed the UCPN (Maoist) leadership as corrupt, opportunist, and deviated from the aspiration of Madhesi people. This had begun the vertical split in Maoist party after getting re-entry into electoral politics.

The contradiction that was taking place within the Maoists also reflected in the Prachanda led government activities and Maoists' behavior in the parliament and outside. During his premiership, Prachanda accused the state institutions like: judiciary, bureaucracy, security forces, and media house for not cooperating to his action. His government attempted to sack the Army Chief of Staff (COAS) and removed the Indian priest from Pashupatinath temple, the most sacred Hindu temple in Nepal. In row over the sacking COAS, Prachanda resigned from the post of Prime Minister on 04 May 2009. In order to uphold the civilian control over the military in the country, Maoist launched regular protests and obstructions in the parliament. Such protests and obstructions were also meant to end American imperialism and Indian expansionism in the country.

The line struggle within the UCPN (Maoist) had become more vivid in Palungtar plenum organized on 21-28 November 2010. Three separate political documents were presented by Prachanda, Mohan Baidhya and Baburam Bhattarai. The political document of Prachanda, Chairman of the party, includes the peace and constitution making as the top priority for the future course of the party whilst armed revolt as second option. Furthermore, Prachanda emphasized that the party would have to revolt if the traditional forces within the country and imperialist and expansionist forces were to sabotage the process of peace and

constitution. Prachanda also stated that domestic feudalism and Indian expansionism as the party's principal enemy (Prachanda, 2010). Ideologically, the political documents of both Prachanda and Baburam had similar line and view. However, Baburam Bhattarai, vice-chairman and leader of moderate line of the party, presented different view regarding the identification of the principal enemy of the party. According to him, domestic feudalism is the principal enemy and the party should first defeat domestic feudalism; the intermingling of feudalism and Indian expansionism as a principal enemy only encourages the counter-revolution (Bhattarai, 2010). Mohan Baidhya, vice-chairman and radical line of the party argued that the peace process had already reached the point of saturation and emphasized the capture of state power through people's insurrection in order to establish people's democratic republic. His view was that it is impossible to achieve socialism and communism without military means in Nepal. However, Baidhya agreed with Prachanda regarding the identification of the principal enemy (Baidhya, 2010). Both the vice-chairmen accused Prachanda for the misuse of power and authority and financial irregularities. The plenum ended without approving the common political document because of the wider differences within the party. But the plenum concluded that the decision regarding the correct ideological line to be taken by the party would be made from the national conclave or general convention.

From this plenum, the dilemma of the Maoist had come into surface clearly and the line struggle was not limited to theoretical level. The desire for more power among the top leaders of the party and organizational disputes relating to the allocation of organizational seats in the party to the members of different factions had also grown up to organizational and personal level, too. After Palungtar Plenum, the UCPN

(Maoist) hold its first CC meeting on 18 December 2010. The CC meeting had adopted the people's revolt as the immediate programme to capture power (Republica, 2010) overturning the political line adopted in Chungwang meeting five-year before. Similarly, India was identified as the principal enemy of the party in Palungtar plenum. In Chungwang meeting, the political line adopted was the capture of state power through peaceful means. Similarly, India was considered to be a friend. However, Baburam Bhattarai registered his dissent in the party, arguing that institutionalization of the achievement should be the first priority of the party against the CC decision in Palungtar plenum (Republica, 2010).

The political line that had taken during the Palungtar plenum could not remain for a time. Prachanda, who keeps on vacillating between hardliners and moderate workers within the party, presented a brief political document that included the moderate line of peace and constitution in the Politburo meeting in 20 April 2011. Furthermore, he argued that there was a real risk of counter-revolution in the country and chances to lose the political achievement made so far, if the party would not put its best effort for peace and constitution. He also put forward three reasons, massive changes in the objective reality for revolution; chances of counter-revolution had been raised during the period; and needed more homework for revolt, that compelled his ideological shift (Prachanda, 2011). Criticizing the new political document presented by Chairman, Mohan Baidhya argued that it is against the fundamental spirit of official political line that adopted by the Palungtar Plenum. Furthermore, Baidhya claimed that it was a serious ideological deviation towards rightist and against the proletariat dream of revolution (Baidhya, 2011). This confrontation between the two lines was settled in the CC meeting started from 27 December 2011 and ended on 17

January 2012 by taking the middle path. This meeting adopted “People’s democratic republic” as its immediate policy until the completion of constitution drafting process keeping the option open for “People’s Revolt” (Kathmandu Post, 2012).

The continuous intra-party rifts in the UCPN (Maoist) reached to the point of split when the Prachanda, Chairman of the party, agreed the regrouping of the Maoist Army Combatants (MACs). The situation is further complicated after the special committee for the reintegration of MACs gave an order to Nepal Army (NA) and Armed Police Force (APF) to take control of the cantonments of MACs on 10 April 2012. The hardliner fraction of the party harshly reacted to the situation and formed People’s Revolutionary Bureau (PRB) comprising 17-members under the leadership of Netra Bikram Chand, member of the Standing Committee (SC). Parallel to the PRB, Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai’s fraction formed the Ex-People’s Liberation Army (PLA) association under the leadership of former PLA chief, Nanda Kishor Pun, on 27 April 2012. Finally, hardliner faction held a national gathering on 16 to 18 June 2012. As per the decision of the national gathering, Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (CPN-Maoist) was formed under the leadership of Mohan Baidhya on June 2012.

The Seventh General Convention of UCPN (Maoist) held on 2-7 February 2013 at Hetauda has changed the political course of the party. The UCPN (Maoist) will follow the liberal competitive politics as its future political line; emphasizes the economic revolution through capitalism in order to reach socialism; and declares that political revolution has been over (Prachanda, 2013). After the split, the UCPN (Maoist) had been somehow free from internal friction and political dilemma but the road ahead to broaden the popular support is the hardest to chew.

On the other hand, the CPN-Maoist remained undecided regarding its future political line. The leaders of the party firmly iterated that it will not follow the parliamentary democracy and will not take part in the elections. CPN-Maoist set the people's revolt instead of people's war as its future political line during the general convention held on 9-13 January 2013. But the party was not able to restore the armed revolt immediately. Such prolonged situation of indecisiveness resulted into the emergence of faction within the party. Netra Bikram Chand, General Secretary of the party, led the group of hardliner and pushed for immediate restoration of the armed struggle as per its political line of the party. But Mohan Badhiya, Chairman of the party, was reluctant to initiate the armed struggle. This contradiction led the party towards the split. The dissent faction led by Netra Bikram Chand organized a four-day long meeting on 20-23 November 2014 and concluded to form a new party called the CPN (Maoist). As per the decision of the meeting, Netra Bikram Chand "Biplab" declared the dissociation from the party by submitting a divorce-letter to the party headquarters on November 24, 2014. The breakaway faction led by Biplab has chosen the radical political line and most of the leaders have remained semi-underground in order to establish "People's New Democracy" through PW. The CPN-Maoist led by Mohan Baidhya is still wandering with political dilemma¹⁴ even after its relegation in terms of size and credibility.

Conclusion

After the brief overview of communist movement of Nepal in general and Maoist politics in particular, the inference could be made that the rightist political line openly dominated the

¹⁴ The First National Assembly meeting of the CPN (Maoist-Revolutionary) that has recently concluded (held at Pokhara during 9-11 October 2017) took the decision to participate in provincial and federal parliamentary election scheduled for 26 November and 7 December 2017 against its previous stand not to participate in parliamentary democratic election.

Nepalese communist movement since its inception. Because of rightist line, the communist parties are not guided by true essence of communist ideology in the country. Utmost desire for power among the top leaders of the party has created personality clash, ambiguity of idea and dilemma of struggle strategy that led the Communist movement of Nepal supposed to collapse through a series of split and merger. The history of the communist movement of Nepal also revealed that every splinter group of the communist movement projected themselves as more radical than old group however it becomes futile immediately. The Maoist politics of Nepal has also suffered from this general trend. Ideological dilemma and internal contradiction within Maoists has made the party to revise its political line and ideological goal since 2001. These revisions allowed the party to join parliamentary politics under multiparty democracy. However, the ideological dilemma and increasing internal rifts within the Maoists generated the serious crisis to Maoist politics in particular and the radical politics of Nepal in general.

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