

# Political Transition in Nepal: The Role of Maoist Force

## Abstract

The present paper attempted to highlight the growth and development of democracy through various phases in Nepal and the also emergence and role Maoist force, their base, ideology and objectives. The paper also analyses the impact of Maoist force over the politics of Nepal. The paper also highlighted important and vital role played by Maoist movement in propelling the Nepal consciousness high on the ladder of democracy. The Maoist upsurge forced the Nepali monarchy to move from the absolute monarchy to democracy.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Maoist Insurgency, India- Nepal Relations.

## Introduction

Nepal is known for monarchy not for democracy. It is one of the few countries of the world, where the old form of absolute monarchy had been flourishing even in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Geographically speaking, Nepal is a small land-locked country of nearly 54,000 square miles, but the largest of Himalayan Kingdom. It has long borders but difficult terrain to cross. Nepal lies on the Southern Slopes of the Himalayas and shares 500 miles of an open border with India, does also share its borders with Tibet.

The modern history of Nepal had been shaped by three important periods. First, the conquest of the Katmandu valley by Prithui Narayan Shah in 1769 that led to the unification of Nepal under one ruler. Since then, Nepal had experienced various ups and downs with regard to the power structure and position of monarchy. From 1769 to 1846, the king was ruled with aid and advice of a country of his nobility. In the second phase, Jung Bahadur, (the first Prime-Minister of Rana family) usurped the power in 1846, which resulted in the hegemony of the Rana family for 104 years without any break, while as Monarchy had started to undergo certain cracks in its position and power. The Rana family maintained cordial relations with the British Raj to its south and retained supremacy in Nepal with a policy of international isolation. With dawn of independence in the subcontinent in 1947, the Rana regime became concerned about their future. A growing anti-Rana movement of exiled Nepali opposition groups, based on Indian Territory, and the establishment of a democratic regime in India put pressure on the Rana to open up their polity. In the third phase, the sequence of events from 1850 to 1962 may be described as transitional or interim period. The Rana rule was over thrown in the winter in 1950 and constitutional monarchy was installed in its place, headed by king Tribhuvan and from February 1951 to 1959, the Government was conducted in accordance with the provisions of Nepali interim Government Act. Within this transitory period, the king regained his lost power and position. The dawn of democracy revolutionized the politics and power structure of Nepal. In February 1959, eight years after the proclamation of constitutional monarchy, a new constitution was announced by king Mahendra and in accordance with the provisions of new constitutions, the first general election was held and a popular Government under the charismatic leadership of B.P Koirala was formed. In 1960, the king Mahindra dismissed the 18 month first elected Government of Nepal and acquired the absolute powers of the state. In 1962, he promulgated a new constitution and assumed complete powers of the Government there under. The constitution 1962, introduced Panchayat institutional system in place of parliamentary democracy and no other political party was allowed to function. However, it was in 1990, the youth of the country revolts against the king, supported by the common masses and politicians from the background. The movement ultimately, became so strong that the king had to yield to the public demand and agreed to restore full-fledged democracy. Accordingly a new constitution was drafted and adopted in 1990, which provided provisions for a new political structure. The general

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elections were held in 1991. However, due to the rise of intra-conflicts, the Government could not continue. Consequently, Prime Minister G.P. Koirala had to resign and declared mid-term polls in 1994. After that, within the period of ten years from (1994 to 2004), more than a dozen majority, minority and coalition Governments came and collapsed, resulted in the instability in the country.

#### **Objective of The Study**

1. To trace out the growth and development of democracy, through various phases in Nepal.
2. Emergence of Maoists forces, their base, ideology and objectives.
3. Impact of Maoist forces over the politics of Nepal.

#### **Methodology**

The study would be carried on both historical and analytical bases. The substantial amount of data will be drawn from the interviews from the functionaries of the movement. So as to produce a sound and comprehensive research work on – political transition and the emergence and role of Maoist forces in Nepal.

#### **Review of Literature**

India's role in Nepal's Maoist insurgency, *Rabindara Mishra*, Annual Survey Vol. 44, NO. 5 (September/ October 2004), Published university of California press, ISBN NO 00044687 2004. This article examines India-Nepal relations namely India's role in Nepal's ongoing Maoist insurgency. It argues the insurgency's trajectory is heavily influenced by trans-boundary links and should be viewed in the context of India's role in shaping the past 50 years of Nepal's political history.

China and Maoist Nepal: Challenges for India, *Abanti Bhattacharyam*: IDSA New Delhi 2008. In this article, author analyses that china feels the Himalayas alone in this nuclear age are not enough to guarantee its national security, especially in view of Tibet's strategic location. It therefore ideally wants a China of small, preferably pro-Chinese, neighbours on the cis-himalayan region separating the two Asian giants.

Maoist rhetoric on India-Nepal relations, *Nihar Nayak*, IDSA New Delhi, 2010. In this article author highlights that India should clarify through actions and words that it has no intension of interfering in Nepal, that it respects Nepal's sovereignty and it is ready to work with any dispensation in Nepal for furthering mutual security and economic concerns.

Maoist insurgency in Nepal radicalizing of gendernarratives, *Rita Manchanda*, South Asia Forum for Human Rights ISSUE 16(2/3): ISBN.237–258. SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi) 2016, Nepal The article try to attempt to highlighted the gender dynamics of the political the contradictions in the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. The paper also examines Exploring the emancipatory potential of the participation of women in an authoritarian, militarized movement, this article also comments on the transformation of cultural identities and the radicalization of the social agenda in Nepal.

Maoist insurgency in Nepal: a study of ideological Change and tactical flexibility, *Ajay kumar*

new man international journal of multidisciplinary studies (ISBN: 2348-1390) vol. 3 issue 6 June 2016.

The paper try to analysis about Nepal, a buffer state clutched in between India and China, was engulfed in a civil war between 1996 and 2006 that cost the lives of over 13000 people. This paper is trying to look into the developments in the civil war that made this alliance and the following peace process possible and argue that several interconnected factors made the alliance possible. The change in ideology on the part of the Maoists made possible a compromise with the political parties (Seven Party Alliance). Something that earlier would have been seen as revisionism.. This paper looks into the reasons for the Nepali Maoists' decision to join the peace process.

#### **Rise of Maoists in Nepal**

The post 1990 political process and the prevailing conditions of Nepal could be held responsible for the rise of Maoists in Nepal. The functioning of Government was marked by wide spread corruption, favoritism and nepotism. Instead of strengthening democratic institution, there had been institutional decay. Parties and leaders were more interested in personalized politics than the stability. As a result there was widespread dissatisfaction with the political parties and the Government. It was in 1996 that Maoists launched an organized nation –wide movement. The Maoist movement in Nepal sustained itself and could challenge state through its own efforts. They had links with a number of international revolutionary organizations, but infact, the Maoists revolutionary of Nepal had cultivated strong domestic constituencies of their own, had taken possession of arms and finance by force, raised their own army of young cadre. Within a period of ten years, they could get nearly one third of the country under their influence of which some areas were totally under their control.

#### **Maoism - Meaning and Definitions**

Maoism is the brand of communist movement and its ideology that developed in China under the leadership of Mao Tse-Tung. Mao Tse-tung was born in Hunan in 1893, and became for more than 40 years, the undisputed leader of the Chinese Communist Party and the head of the Communist Government in China after the Civil War (1946-1949) and until his death 1977. According the Oxford Social Science Dictionary, "Maoism verbally and officially known as Mao Zedong Thought is a variant of Marxism derived from the teaching of the late Chinese leader Mao Zedong "Mao Tse-Tung" widely applied as the political and military guiding ideology in the Communist Party of China (CPC)."

Thus, above definition explains that Maoism is a form of Communism developed in China by Mao Zedong and represents the first, apparently successful, Communist Revolution in an under developed non- European society and the first viable non- European Communist regime. Mao Ts- Tung is considered the tallest personality of the 20th century, who played a vital role in propagating Communism in China. He combined Marxism-Leninism with the Scio-economic structure of China, while Marx has

predicted socialist revolution in capitalist societies; Mao Tse- Tung brought it in a predominantly agrarian society.

#### **Profile of Maoist Forces in Nepal**

The Maoist Movement in Nepal cannot be understood unless we divest into the background of Communist Movement in the Kingdom of Nepal. The Communists of Nepal, who had a close affinity with a Communist Party of India (CPI) organized themselves towards the end of 1940s and formed the Communist Party of Nepal in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) on September 15, 1949. Their object was that Nepal should strive for People's Republic following the Chinese model and if necessary an arms struggle would be launched in order to achieve this goal. The communists of Nepal believed in a new democratic order in the country, which they call "People's Government." The People's Government is supposed to work for the elimination of social and economic discrimination based on hierarchy. They wanted to overthrow the present state and establish a new democratic republic, which would be neither Communist nor Socialist, there would also be no place for feudal, bureaucratic and capitalist forces. The new system need not be a one party system but could be a multiparty system. However, when the New Delhi Agreement to decide the future course of Nepali politics was concluded in February, 1951, Communist Party of Nepal unsuccessfully demanded the formation of Constituent Assembly. In subsequent years, the Communist Party of Nepal continued to struggle for its goals. But it lacked adequate organizational strength to launch a movement.

Though a vast majority of followers of the Maoist Movement may not have any clue, understanding, assimilation of the ideological basis of their movement, the leadership has always tried to give the facade of a serious Maoist doctrine. The enunciation of these doctrines, their attractive but violent advocacy and forcible implications have, however, mobilized an army of have not's against the fragile democratic system. In more realistic terms, the hard core of supporters came into the Maoist fold not because of lofty ideological goals and principles, but for the simple reason and expectation that this movement may ultimately take them out of morass of absolute poverty, protracted illiteracy and consistent social discrimination and well designed political deprivation.

After the royal coup of December, 1960, in which King Mahindra abrogated the Parliamentary, system took all his powers in his hands, the Communist Party of Nepal splits in two groups. The first group was Pro- Soviet Union headed by Keshar Jug Raimaghi, supported the King accepted constitutional monarchy, and demanded some peaceful changes in the prevailing system while as, the other group was Pro-Chinese faction headed by Tulsilal Amritya, the most uncompromising extremist, who was against the royal action and decided to continue its struggle against the authoritarian forces. Thus, these two contradictory views resulted in split among its top leaders into royalists who aligned with the authorities in July, 1961 and anti- royalists who

remained in opposition to the regime till the dawn of democracy revolutionized the politics of Nepal in 2008.

The Maoist Movement was initially launched in five mountain districts- the district of Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Salyan and Gorkha. The Maoists followed the strategy of expanding their area of influence. They destroyed loan documents and bank records in the area. The local administration was compelled to withdraw from the areas of their influence. In the rural areas, they also took up anti-liquor campaigns and tried to mobilize the people against many socio-religious bondages and ill-practices.

#### **The Objectives of Maoists**

1. To overthrow the authoritarian and capitalist class and state system.
2. To uproot feudalism.
3. To drive out imperialistic forces.
4. Formation of constituent assembly.
5. Declaration of Nepal as a republican state
6. Secularization of politics.
7. Socio- economic reform.

On February 01, 2005, the king Gyanendra declared a national emergency placed all of Nepal's leading politicians under house arrest, shut down the country's phone system, internet server and F.M radio stations, diverted International flights and imposing strong censorship, and announced that municipal election will be held in February 2006 and the general election to form new parliament will take place by mid-April 2007.

On November 08, 2006, Nepal witnessed a historic political change when Maoist rebels who waged a decade-long bloody insurgency agreed to confine their fighters to camps, lock up their weapons (under supervision of the U.N) On November 21, Government and the Maoists signed a comprehensive peace Accord. According to peace Accord an interim Government was formed and elections were held for constituent Assembly by June 2007. However, the country was still reeling within the context of historic shift from monarchy to democracy and important political events took place. King Gyanendra was forced to relinquish power following 19 days (April 6-24) consecutive political agitation by Maoists and other seven opposition parties. The House of Representative which had been dissolved earlier was restored and Nepali Congress President, Girja Prasad Koirala was named as new Prime-Minister of the country. Nonetheless, with the domestic protestors, the International community, including India, China, and Japan exerted pressure on the king to handover the power to the people. The United States and the European Union also lent their support to the people's movement and commended the institutionalization of democracy in the country.

On May 18, 2008 the House of Representatives, declared it a sovereign and supreme body, brought the army under civilian control, dissolved the royal Privy Council, and declared Nepal A Secular State, removing its identity as a Hindu State. The House drastically cut the power and privilege of the king including his right to decide the heir to the throne.

**Maoist Insurgency and Indo-Nepal Border Relations**

The re-launching of the Maoist insurrection on 23 November 2001 has highlighted the issue of cross-border linkages between various extremist and terrorist groups. Whilst the sub-continent is grappling with the aftermath of September 11 and the subsequent war hysteria, there is an imminent danger that cataclysmic events in Nepal may affect the internal security scenario in India. This assumes significance because these terrorist movements have developed inextricable cross border linkages.

A succession of recent events and utterances has warranted rethinking on India's security frontiers with Nepal. Approximately five months before the Maoist insurgents decided to suspend the latest cease-fire, the Co-ordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organization of South Asia (CCOMPOSA), an umbrella outfit of nine left-wing extremist and Naxalite organizations active in four countries of South Asia – India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, had been launched. The People's War Group (PWG), Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), Revolutionary Communist Centre of India (RCCI-Maoist) and the Revolutionary Communist Centre of India (MLM-Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) in India are signatories to this declaration calling for 'revolutionary solutions'. It has appealed to "all Maoist forces to unify and coordinate the activities of the Maoist parties and organizations in South Asia" and observed that 'national liberation' movements were underway in Kashmir, Nepal, Assam, North-eastern States, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The MCC, traditionally active in the districts of central and south-central Bihar, has reportedly chosen Sheohar district in north Bihar, bordering Nepal, as its new operational area. The MCC is active in Darbhanga, another north Bihar district bordering Nepal. Reports indicate that the MCC moved from central and south-central Bihar to the north to link with the Maoists in Nepal. Both groups have reportedly cemented their ties and are now exchanging men and material.

The Maoists were also attempting to establish a network in north Bengal and Sikkim. Their imperative was to develop a nexus with the PWG, which was trying to build a safe corridor from Bihar to Nepal through Burdwan and north Dinajpur districts. Regular meetings were being reported from Jhapa district, along the Indo-Nepal border, and Siliguri. The Nepali Maoists were believed to be taking shelter in India and building on their relations with Tharutribal's residing on the Indo-Nepal border. BheriAnchal district in Nepal, adjoining India's Bahraich district, has been the centre of Maoist activities. The Nepali Maoists were reportedly infiltrating into India, mainly through the Indo-Nepal border in Darjeeling district, following a crackdown upon them. That they have frequently been crossing over into Bihar, besides Jharkhand, and that they have been collaborating with their associates in India which was evident from a recent report submitted to India's Home Ministry. Media reports of May 2001 indicated that the Home Ministry had forwarded to the Bihar government Nepal's request to flush out from the State extremists who

were reportedly conducting training camps for Nepali Maoists. ("A spurt in Maoist attacks",

This indicates that there had been a steady trickle of Maoists into Kaimur and Aurangabad districts over the past years, as the area was ideal for hideouts being mountainous and densely forested. Kaimur, close to Uttar Pradesh (UP) on the Indian side of the border, also provides an escape route for the Maoists. Deb Mukherjee, the Indian Ambassador, reportedly said in September 2001 that the extremists in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar could have links with the Maoists in Nepal. However, he emphasized that the Indian government was not supporting Nepal's rebels. Following reports that the Maoists had fled towards the Indian border, the responsibility for monitoring the entire 735km open border in Bihar has been handed over to the Special Services Bureau (SSB). The State government has been requested to cooperate with it by keeping a watch on the Maoists. The UP Border Police, especially constituted to control the 550-km border with Nepal, were ill equipped at the time to handle the task. The transborder confederation of leftwing extremists also added to increase the problems facing the security forces along the 1,751-km porous border between the India and Nepal. These diffused networks of violence in the east needed to be critically examined. Effective strategies for meeting these evolving internal security challenges must address the complex networks of individuals and ideologies, apart from their state sponsorship.

Following widespread violent attacks by the extremists, a state emergency was proclaimed in Nepal on 25 November, Indian government supported the government of Nepal for the steps taken by it to restore normalcy and maintain peace and security in the country. India also offered such assistance as was desired by Nepal to addressing the situation. The governments of both the countries were in close touch with each other in this regard.

**Conclusion**

Democracy in Nepal had a long story of uncertainties. Among many key factors that played a role in the progress and establishment of democracy in Nepal, the Maoist movements played the most important and pivotal role in propelling the Nepal consciousness high on the ladder of democracy. In fact, the Maoist upsurge forced the Nepali monarchy to move from the absolute monarchy to democracy.

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