

NEPAL: NATURE OF COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

Akash Gautam, Post-Doctoral Fellow, CRCAS, School of International Studies,
J N U, New Delhi

Abstract

In This paper will try to focus upon the international communist movement in Nepal while correlating it with movement at international level. At the latter's level, emphasis will be on China, Soviet Union and Indian communist movement, as these countries have close geo- political proximity to Nepal. In this paper Nepal perspective of International communist movement has been dealt upon. How the international community has taken this movement and how their political action have impacted upon this movement, especially in Nepal, where it has been originated will consist the matter of the analysis for this paper. After the revolution of April 2006 and after the Maoist model of communism how the contemporary politics is being affected from this nature of international communist movement in Nepal.

KEY WORDS - Monarchy, Society, Panchayat System, Communist Movement, Maoist movement, Jana Andolan, People's Democracy, Democratic Republic

Introduction:

Nepal is a Landlocked between the Asian giants of China and India. Nepal is a mountainous country with a population of around 24 million. It was ruled by the Rana oligarchy for one hundred four years until 1951 and by an absolute monarchy since 1960, with a brief multiparty experiment from 1990-2002 (Whelpton: 2005). Regarding its socio-

economic condition, Nepal is one of the 48 least developed countries in the world and the poorest in South Asia. With a total GDP of \$5.9 billion, it had a per capita income of \$230 in 2004 (UNDP: 1998). Underdevelopment is not limited to the economic arena. As per the latest UN Human Development Index 2014, Nepal is ranked 145 among 175 countries and more than 30 percent of Nepalese live on less than \$1 a day (UNDP: 2014). These facts render Nepal a diverse situation in terms of its social, economic, and political landscape. Confluence of these factors along with its geo-political situation makes it an interesting case to study some of the historically important political movements, and one of being them is International Communist Movement (ICM).

International communist movement started gaining popularity in many countries in Europe and Asia as a form of governance, as a political ideology and as an alternative to capitalism after the establishment of communist regime in the Soviet Union. The foundation of communist party based on the principles of Marxism and Leninism was considered to be the first step towards raising communist movement in a country. The communism was viewed as an international movement. So the countries like Soviet Union considered it one

of their primary objectives to encourage expansion of the Marxist ideology elsewhere in the world.

Objectives of the Study: Through the exploration of the emerging political situation in Nepal, after the post-soviet movement of international communism, the objectives of the proposed research paper study are as:

- To study of International Communist Movement of Nepal
- To the study impact of International Communist Movement on Nepal

Research Methodology:

This study is an effort to fill the empirical gap of knowledge by providing an ethnographic account from within the political movement in Nepal while connecting it to the international movement. In order to fulfill the objective of the study, it will employ will be employed historical, analytical and comparative method of research. For this, the secondary sources be utilised. Proposed study takes into account all new developments taking the conflict as well as the positive influence of the international communist movement over the political developments in the region. Emphasis will be given to Nepal's own policy level

developments regarding Maoist and related political movements. Apart from the available source materials.

Explanation: In Asia three factors were important in the contest of the rise of communism. The rise of nationalistic movement against the feudal-autocratic order; struggle against the colonial rule leading to the transfer of power to indigenous political elite and the establishment of democratic political order and the external support to the growth of communist organizations, particularly from the neighboring countries. (Upreti: 2007 : 11)

The communist movements thus taking shape in many countries have had different destinations. In many countries the communist party succeeded in establishing its rule, while in many others it survived but failed in founding a communist regime. In many countries including the Soviet Union communism collapsed after a certain period of time. There have been some countries where communist organizations succumbed to the rise of fundamentalism, authoritarian regimes and strong foundation of liberal capitalist regimes. There are countries like India where communist organizations have succeeded in sharing power at the level of state governments. (Upreti: 2007 ;12)

Communism is a sprawling, complex phenomenon. It spread from Europe, to Asia, to Africa, and Latin America. It saw itself as a new stage of human civilization: it involved not just a system of economic management and political control, but also a theory of aesthetics, a set of cultural practices, and even an urban architectural style. The appearance of communism coincided with the rise of industrial capitalism and the nation-state, so some understanding of communism is clearly necessary to make sense of the modern world.

Communism dominated the political history of the 20th century. Yet it remains an enigmatic force: how could a philosophy of universal liberation turn so quickly into an engine of oppression? How was it possible for a rag-tag movement of street protests and café conspirators to seize command of the Russian state, turn it into a military superpower, and spread revolution to other lands? Communism exemplifies the pernicious role of ideology in modern mass society. Both the sudden rise of communism in the early 1900s, and its equally abrupt collapse in the 1980s, caught observers by surprise and confounded academic conventions. (Rutland: 2010)

The history of the Nepalese communist movement begins in the mid-forties in India

when a struggle was being waged within the Indian National Congress. The National Party, the main bourgeois party in Nepal, also had its origins within that National Congress. The Communist Party of Nepal was established in Calcutta in 1949 and was immediately faced with the dilemma of which road to take. In India the Communist Party was supporting the Indian National Congress, abandoning any immediate perspective of the workers taking power (Mishra: 2004; Devkota: 2007). This was in line with the dictates of the Soviet Union which was backing the nascent Indian bourgeoisie. Across the border in China Mao's Communist Party was leading a peasant army. His perspective was one based on the two-stage theory, and therefore envisioned a period of capitalist development for China.

But the objective conditions ruled that out and in spite of his own perspectives Mao found himself in the process of coming to power, and establishing a regime modeled on that of Moscow (Fujikura: 2001). The Nepalese Communists were squeezed between these two apparently contradictory trends. Their reasoning led them to refuse to take part in the armed struggle, which was being waged by the National Party, condemning it as a "bourgeois" revolution. In a country where more than

eighty percent of the population was made of peasants the option of the guerrilla struggle along the lines of the Chinese model must have seemed the easiest option.

The Nepalese Communist Party instead in line with what was going on internationally in the official Communist movement, the party adopted the usual Stalinist two-stage theory and called for a broad-based alliance of all the "progressive forces" for the establishment of a "people's democracy", the meaning of which remained unclear. It could be interpreted as genuine workers' and peasants' power, but in reality it involved an alliance with a wing of the bourgeois, which meant subordinating the interests of the workers to those of the bosses and landlords. That was probably the first missed opportunity of the young Nepalese communist movement. A correct approach and a unified and cohesive leadership could have given them a real base in society. In many of the concerned literature it has been argued that the way to achieve socialism by stages has been proven wrong by the course of history. At the international level, they refute the Stalinist method of "democracy first" and "socialism later", while supporting the so-called progressive bourgeois. This has been proven to be a fatal mistake for the communist movement

internationally (Karki and Sedan, 2003). Some of the researchers cite the examples of Indonesia, Sudan or Iran for the failure of communist movement while sounding the words of cautions for Nepalese communists. As in any other country the social and economic conditions of Nepal determined the real tasks of the movement. Nepal had a peculiar class structure that did not help the young communist movement to reach the correct conclusions and move away from all the different forms of Stalinism. The party was in fact founded with many of the "clichés" of both the Moscow and Beijing bureaucracies.

During the second congress of the CPN in June 1957 had rejected an approach to a more pro-Chinese policy. The conference adopted a "republican" platform, but the leadership was under the control of the Rayamajhi group which was in favor of a more Maoist (pro-Chinese) policy. The decision of the Second Congress to organize a party congress after two-year interval had been postponed for 6 years by the Rayamajhi group on the basis of the "central committee majority". As many as seventeen factions - ranging from the quasi pro-establishment "royal communists" to the extremely radical fringe groups - vied for leadership and control, preventing the

movement from making significant gains. In the first democratic elections the CPN got only four MPs. When the parties were banned in the 1960s the communist factions worked in underground conditions which helped to widen the political differences between the different Stalinist-Maoist groupings (Deraniyagala, 2005).

The CPN (ML) was established on December 26, 1978, as a regrouping of many smaller "Marxist-Leninist" groups when a desire for unity swept across the movement. As a result of this the CPN(ML) developed as the most influential party within the communist movement of Nepal. In Nepal as in the rest of the official communist movement internationally, there was a reaction taking place against the de facto reformism (or popular frontism) of the official Soviet backed communist parties. But because there was no genuine mass Marxist pole of attraction this led to ultra-left tendencies in the form of guerrilla warfare as the only way of transforming society. But history has always shown that none of these methods alone have ever achieved any real solution for the masses of Africa, Asia or Latin America. They have either led to outright defeats, or where the guerrilla armies have come to power, they have

led to terribly deformed regimes where the working class has never had power. This is now leading to a situation where the so-called Communist parties (of China, Vietnam, etc.,) are ruling over a process where capitalist methods are gradually being introduced.

The splits within the communist movement over the question of the "armed struggle" including the tactic of individual terrorism only benefited the ruling class. It did not allow for the unification of the struggles of the working class in the cities together with that of the peasants in the rural areas. The Nepalese communist movement was established as a photocopy of the Moscow party, and later on they copied the Chinese model. Thus the trajectory of the leadership of the communist movement in Nepal has been from reformism to ultra-leftism and again back to reformism.

A number of the historical and cultural features above shape the nature of the political system, and of political parties, today. This is reflected in the dominance of factionalism, the existence of patronage and the centralisation of elites, and challenges of identity and the politicisation of civil society (Sharma, 2006; Blaikietal:1980). These pose significant challenges to the development of functioning and effective political parties. Firstly, many

political parties in Nepal have histories of splits and divisions, for both personal and ideological reasons. In part, this reflects a lack of internal processes for mediating conflict and dissent, as political parties divide rather than seek to accommodate the interests of a range of members (UNDP: 2009). This has been reinforced by highly personalised leadership. In contrast, some of the most successful political parties (including the UCPN Maoists and the CPN (UML) have been able to hold most of the party together and to successfully co-opt other parties. Overall, the dominance of factionalism has contributed to ongoing instability particularly where coalition governments have collapsed due to the splintering of party factions. To illustrate this argument the historical insight is needed. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the dominance of the Rana family established a political culture of subservience and patrimonial relations between rulers and the ruled, as well as establishing prescribed hereditary roles for different castes (Gellner: 2007).

The Ranas were overthrown in 1951 but elements of the caste system they reinforced exist today. In 1959, a new constitution was formalised which recognised multi-party democracy, leading to the election of the

Nepali Congress Party (NC). However, NC was overthrown just 18 months later by the new King who established the panchayat system of governance. The panchayat system opposed the autocracy of the Ranas but also opposed the so-called 'foreign ideology' of political parties (Gellner: 2007). It emphasised the leadership of the King combined with bottom-up representation through village councils (The Panchayats); Hinduism was also established as the state religion during this period (Gellner: 2007). The 1980s saw growing discontent with this regime, in part because of increasing awareness of the contradictions between the discourses of national economic development and emerging realities of corruption and stagnation within the Nepali state (Ibid.). Thus the banned NC party and the Communist Party joined forces to protest in the first '*Jana Andolan*' (public protests), contributing to the collapse of the regime in 1990 and the reinstatement of multi-party democracy.

A second cross-cutting feature is the extent to which parties have sustained their power base through patronage, with systems established to link rewards to party clients in exchange for services. This has generally excluded the masses, focusing on the most affluent or influential:

“This is, therefore, like a market-exchange system – ‘votes for favours’ and ‘favours for votes’ – between the power-brokers and the party” (Hachhethu: 2007). In light of the history of banned parties and underground movements, most of the ‘rank and file’ members of political parties have come to see access to power, privileges and resources as their ‘pay-off’ for previous struggles, reinforcing this cycle (Ibid). Hachhethu argues that while parties in Nepal present themselves as ‘agents of social change’, this is eroded where parties are seen as the basis for accessing power and resources, contributing to the “narrowing down of the political space, making it the exclusive domain of power holders and power brokers only” (Hachhethu: 2007). One of the interesting results of this anthropological upsurge on the Maoist movement has been a reconceptualization of the ideological context of the organization and, in particular, the way in which this has affected ideas of the individual’s role in a revolutionary movement (Fujikura: 2001).

The Nepal Communist Party-Maoist (CPN-M) began a violent insurgency in 1996 after the then government turned down a 40-point demand. In 1998, Baburam Bhattarai, the CPN-M’s second-in-command, published a booklet

called *The Politico-Economic Rationale of People’s War in Nepal*, which declared that the party’s goal was to usher in self-reliant, independent, balanced and planned economic development through a radical, land-reform programme and national industrialization (Bhattarai,1998). Since then 12,000 Nepalese have lost their lives. The insurgency has seriously impacted on the country’s economy and business sector. One estimate suggests that Nepalese economy lost about \$800 million in GDP by 2002. These kind of political movements have deep impact upon the socio-economic development of this small kingdom on the other hand keeping it aligned with international communist movement.

The world communist movement, which suffered a serious setback as of the counter-revolution in Russia in 1956, had to suffer another bigger setback of counter-revolution in China after Mao's demise in 1976. While arriving at the counter-revolution in China, the proletariat that exercised at one time socialism in a one third of the globe reached to such a situation at which there was no single socialist country in the world. It was an awful defeat for the world proletariat (Snow *et al*, 2004, Starn, 1995). However, the communist revolutionaries, who believe Marxism i.e. the

dialectical historical materialism is a guide to action, never got disappointed but taking lessons from such defeats advanced further.

The proletariat, which had been struggling against counter-revolution, succeeded to realise two important achievements in 1980s. The initiation in 1981 of people's war by the Peruvian Communist Party led by comrade Gonzalo was the first feat on the part of proletariat in that decade. And second one was the founding of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) in 1984. The Revolutionary Communist Party of America, the RCP USA, apart from other revolutionary parties, had an important role in organising the RIM (Starn: 2005). When there was widespread disappointment among the people due to counter-revolution, these two achievements can be regarded as two important milestones in the erstwhile international communist movement. It is evident that these two political events had succeeded to create all across the globe a new revolutionary wave in the erstwhile international communist movement, which was very weak from the standpoint of organisation and struggle.

The synthesis of Long Live: Marxism-Leninism- Maoism, which the second expanded meeting of the RIM reached to in

1993, has had an important ideological contribution to the contemporary world which included Eastern Europe and many of the South Asian Nations including Nepal. Communist movement pertains to a long and lively tradition of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist movements worldwide that seek to overthrow capitalist state structures and replace them with socialist ones. In Maoism, the question of emancipatory politics is always tied up with questions of militarism and a position of antagonism to the dominant social order, thereby closely integrating the political problem of capturing the state with the social one of building novel institutions and identities through which communist persons can develop.

During the rise of ICM, three revolutionary groups that adhered to the political philosophy espoused by Mao Tse-tung, the Communist Party of Peru-Sendero Luminoso (referred to also as "The Shining Path"), the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), and the Communist Party of India (Maoist) emerged in the forefront (Vishwkarma: 2006). Because Peru, Nepal and India contain vast populations of rural, semiliterate or illiterate peasants living in a state of abjection, the political thought of Mao has influenced the peasantry class in a more profound manner (Starn: 2005).

Although all three movements appear to follow a similar vanguard party model, the leadership structures of the first two groups, the Shining Path and the CPN (M), have a centralized leadership, with a central committee lead by one or two major figures, deciding policy and promoting action. The latter group, the CPI (M), appears to deviate from this model, as regional leaders seem to have a great degree of power and influence within the party. Each group carried out their respective revolutionary wars for a different length of time, meaning that an arbitrary period of time, for example, twenty years, cannot be used as a frame of reference in analyzing each of the three groups. The CPN (M) existed prior to its launching of a people's war in 1996, but it existed as a faction of another party, and did not begin meaningful work in the countryside until 1995.

In early 1995, Prachanda Dahal's faction and Baburam Bhattarai's UPFN held the Third Expanded Meeting of the Central Committee, when a decision was taken to change the name of both organisations to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), under the Chairmanship of Prachanda after breaking away of Nirmal Lama's faction in mid-1994, which followed a Russian-style general insurrection. Here it is important to mention that both the People's

Republic of China and the Soviet Union, which are the opposing poles in the international communist movement, gave priority to national interests over ideology, and there was a tendency to use ideology to put the party or the people under strict discipline, and signs of ideological confusion deepened further. Such inconsistency between ideology and national interests was clearly shown by the stand of the People's Republic of China in the Indo-Pakistani conflict. The trend of the Chinese and Soviet parties also affected the parties in other countries, and some parties maintain a critical attitude toward that trend. Soviet policy in Eastern Europe during the final year and immediate aftermath of the Second World War had a profound impact on global politics.

The international communist movement has felt the changing course of soviet politics after this war because of its much greater involvement in politics of Eastern Europe. . After the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, many questions and debates were raised at the global as well as regional level to think about communist movement given the existing economic, social and cultural inequality across the world. After disintegration, Russia was the largest of the fifteen republics that made up the Soviet Union, accounting for over 60% of the

GDP and over 50% of the Soviet population. Russians also dominated the Soviet military and the communist party (CPSU). Thus, Russia was widely accepted as the Soviet Union's successor state in diplomatic affairs and it assumed the USSR's permanent membership and veto in the United Nations Security Council. The clash of Soviet and western objectives have compelled to many of the East European countries to look into their own policies in context of Soviet Union's imposing communist ideology. The international splits in the world communist movement had an important and devastating effect on the CPN. The divisions about the line that the party had to adopt in relation to the dictatorship in Nepal, and the question of alliances, emerged just as the Sino-Soviet split was taking place on a worldwide scale. These factor along with internal factors casted a profound impact on the further course of political movement in Nepal (Upreti: 2003).

Another important dimension as discussed earlier was Nepal's own political context which remains highly shaped by its history of conflict, caste and ethnic division, and periods of authoritarian rule. Therefore it renders the importance to the analysis of development of communist movement in Nepal *vis-a-vis*

changes in the development of communist movement at the international level.

The year 1996 marked the launch of the people's war against Nepali state. The impetus behind the war was to fundamentally alter the 'historical relations of oppression' in Nepal. The outcome in 2006 has been control over 90 % of the rural areas by the people's government formed by the CPN-Maoist (CPN-M) party. The government and International community recognized in spite of terming it as an insurgent movement. This has ramification not only understanding a powerful social movement in contemporary South Asia but also in referring how the current initiative for state has the role to play for this movement.

There have been a number of studies on how the conflict has affected Nepalese Society. The anthropological study of political culture in Nepal is still a bourgeoning research field that draws on a wide variety of research themes. With the dramatic political events of the last decades, researchers in Nepal have increasingly turned their eye to studying political processes. The literature that has been gone through so far provides various intricacies regarding the political processes within the Nepal itself. Many of the studies have tried to demonstrate the reasons behind the various political

movements and their variegated objectives for that particular upheaval. But in context of a broader political correlation, many of the aspects of Nepal's communist movements need to be explored.

Conclusion:

Nepali Maoism offers an interesting and curious case because of its participation in a multi-party peace process after having carried out a program of armed struggle, thus contrasting with the history of Marxist militant movements that have either succeeded in capturing state power, remained underground, or been co-opted by less radical political forces. The Maoist movement was not defeated but changed its strategy from armed opposition to cooperation with the major political parties and this way entered into a joint peace process.

These developments have not only impacted the Nepal's communist movement but the entire communist politics of South Asian region. Therefore, this study aims to explore those intricacies of international communist movement which have one correlation with Nepal's communist movement, especially after Soviet era. The dynamical changes in political ideology of communist party of Nepal oscillating in between pro-Maoist to pro-

Soviet and other influences drawn by Indian communist movement be explored in this study along with their impact on domestic political environment.

References:

1. ADB (2009), Asian Development Bank, Nepal Factsheet, http://www.adb.org/documents/Fact_Sheets/NEP.pdf.
2. Bhattarai, B. (1998), The Political Economic Rationale of the People's War in Nepal, Kathmandu : Utprerak Prakashan.
3. Bista, D. B. (1991), Fatalism and Development: Nepal's struggle for Modernisation, London : Sangam Books.
4. Brown, L. T. (1996), The challenge to democracy in Nepal: A Political History, New York : Routledge.
5. Deraniyagala, S. (2005) ,The Political Economy of Civil Conflict in Nepal, *Oxford Development Studies* Vol. 33, No. 1, Oxford : Routledge.
6. Devkota, Surendra R. (2007), Socio-economic Development in Nepal: Past Mistakes and Future Possibilities, *South Asia Economic Journal*, Vol.8, No.2, 285-

- 315.
7. Fujikura, Tatsuro. (2001), Emancipation of Kamaiyas: development, social movement, and youth activism in post-Jana Andolan Nepal, *Himalayan Research Bulletin*, Vol. 21, No. 1, Pp. 29-35.
8. Gellner, David N. (2007), Resistance and the State: Nepalese Experiences, Oxford :Berghahn Books.
9. Hachethu, K. (2007), Nepali Politics: People-Parties Interface in Gellner, David N. (ed.), Resistance and the State: Nepalese Experiences, Oxford: Berghahn Books.
10. Hachethu, K (2008), The Second Transformation of Nepali Political Parties, in Lok Raj, Baral .(ed.) Nepal – New Frontiers of Restructuring of State, New Delhi: Adroit Publishers.
11. Hofsten, Martin . (eds.), People, Politics and Ideology. Democracy and Social Change in Nepal, Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point.
12. Karki, A and Sedon, D. (2003), People’s War in Nepal: Left Perspective, Delhi: Adriot.
13. Lawati, Mahendra. (2005), Towards a Democratic Nepal: Inclusive Political Institutions for a Multicultural Society, New Delhi : Sage.
14. Mishra, Rabindra. (2004), “India’s Role in Nepal’s Maoist Insurgency.” *Asian Survey*, Vol.44, Pp. 627-646.
15. Onesto, Li., Inside the Revolution, Karki Arjun & Seddon David (2003.ed.), The People's War in Nepal: Left Perspective, Delhi : Adroit.
16. Prachanda. (2004), Problems and Prospects of the Revolution in Nepal, Kathmandu: Janadesh Publication.
17. Pyakural, Udhav P. (2007), Maoists Movement in Nepal, Delhi: Adroit.
18. Sharma, K. (2006), “Development Policy, Inequality and Civil War in Nepal”, *Journal of International Development*, Vol.18, Pp. 553-569.
19. Snow, David A., Sarah A. (2004), Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi, (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
20. Starn, Orin. (2005), Maoism in the Andes: The Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path and the Refusal of History, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol.23, no. 2, 399-

421.

21. UNDP (1998): Nepal Human Development Report, Kathmandu: South Asia Center.
22. Upreti, B.C. (2007), Maoists in Nepal- From Insurgency of Political Mainstream, Jaipur.
23. Vishwakarma, R. K. (2006), *People's Power in Nepal*, New Delhi: Manak Publications.
24. Whelpton, John. (2005), A History of Nepal, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
25. Rutland, Peter. (2010), What Was Communism? *Russian History*, Wesleyan University 37,427–447. Retrieve on date- 18-09-2014 brill.nl/ruhi.