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**NAVAL  
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SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**PRACHANDA: THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THE MAOIST  
INSURGENCY IN NEPAL**

by

Prem Shahi

December 2010

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Gordon McCormick  
Michael Freeman

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.			
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>	<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> December 2010	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> Prachanda: The Mastermind Behind the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal		<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Prem Shahi		<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A		<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Nepal Army or the Government of Nepal. IRB Protocol Number: N/A.	
<b>12 a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited		<b>12 b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>  This study focuses on the leadership roles of Pushpa Kamal Dahal, alias "Prachanda," in the Maoist's political victory in Nepal. The Nepalese Maoist Insurgency under Prachanda's leadership, without strong evident external support and without achieving a military victory over the state, rose to power in a very short time. Prachanda chose an outdated ideology and launched armed struggle to put forward his grievances in spite of the country having restored democracy after thirty years of autocratic regime.  The evidence shows that it was Prachanda's leadership qualities that facilitated the Maoists' growth in Nepal. They gained political success without military victory and eventually won an electoral victory in the Constituent Assembly. The main reasons for his success in this endeavor, which the findings show, are: 1) correct selection of the members in the party's top leadership positions; 2) thorough planning and timely implementation of a precise strategy; 3) the flexibility to switch his strategy from classic communist ideology of class struggle to identity issues, to form many ethnic fronts, to establish autonomous ethnic regions, and to raise caste and ethnic issues to mobilize the indigenous nationalities; and 4) timely switching to political settlements, in the present-world context, after realizing military victory was unlikely.			
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Nepal, Maoist Insurgency, Prachanda's leadership, Conflict in Nepal		<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 85	
		<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU

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**PRACHANDA: THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THE  
MAOIST INSURGENCY IN NEPAL**

Prem Shahi  
Lieutenant Colonel, Nepal Army  
B.A., Tribhuban University, 2008

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the leadership roles of Pushpa Kamal Dahal, alias “Prachanda,” in the Maoist’s political victory in Nepal. The Nepalese Maoist Insurgency under Prachanda’s leadership, without strong evident external support and without achieving a military victory over the state, rose to power in a very short time. Prachanda chose an outdated ideology and launched armed struggle to put forward his grievances in spite of the country having restored democracy after thirty years of autocratic regime.

The evidence shows that it was Prachanda’s leadership qualities that facilitated the Maoists’ growth in Nepal. They gained political success without military victory and eventually won an electoral victory in the Constituent Assembly. The main reasons for his success in this endeavor, which the findings show, are: 1) correct selection of the members in the party’s top leadership positions; 2) thorough planning and timely implementation of a precise strategy; 3) the flexibility to switch his strategy from classic communist ideology of class struggle to identity issues, to form many ethnic fronts, to establish autonomous ethnic regions, and to raise caste and ethnic issues to mobilize the indigenous nationalities; and 4) timely switching to political settlements, in the present-world context, after realizing military victory was unlikely.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

COAS	Chief of the Army Staff
CPN	Communist Party of Nepal
CPN (M)	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CPN (Masal)	Communist Party of Nepal (Masal)
CPN (Mashal)	Communist Party of Nepal (Mashal)
CPN(UC)	Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre)
CPN (UML)	Communist Party of Nepal (United-Marxist-Leninists)
IAAS	Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science
ICG	International Crisis Group
NCP	Nepali Congress Party
RIM	Revolutionary International Movement
SPA	Seven Party Alliance
UCPN (M)	Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
US AID	United States Agency for International Development

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I thank my advisor Professor Gordon McCormick for his interests and guidance, and for imparting his vast knowledge on insurgencies and counter-insurgencies around the world, which helped me to generate this particular idea to look into insurgent leadership. I also thank my second reader Professor Michael Freeman for his support and guidance throughout this endeavor. Without their support, this project would never have been completed.

I thank my family, who has been supportive of my journey through the Naval Postgraduate School. They always understood me and my life as a student, and became a part of it to accommodate me with ease in this new environment.

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# **I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Pushpa Kamal Dahal, known mostly by his alias “Prachanda” since the beginning of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, has been in the forefront of Nepali politics for much of the last 15 years. However, his ascension to power appears to have been expedited since the Maoists laid down their weapons and came into the mainstream politics after successful negotiations that took place in various stages during 2006.

Although Prachanda’s very existence was often questioned throughout the insurgency, he nevertheless became the Prime Minister of Nepal in 2008 after Maoists secured the majority of seats in the Constituent Assembly elections. Unlike many nations of the world where insurgencies lead to massive blood baths before incumbents are toppled and rebels come to power, Nepalese Maoists rose to power with relatively less violence, giving up arms for negotiated settlements. This event led the Maoists to accept democratic means to settle the internal problems of the country.

There are many reasons to explain how insurgencies begin and how they end and whether they succeed or fail. In this thesis, I particularly look into the leadership of Prachanda, who is the chairman of the Unified Communist Party (Maoist)—UCPN (Maoist)—in the context of his successes and failures in his path to power. What made his party rise to power without militarily defeating the state?

Prachanda shrewdly but carefully balanced the “inside” and “outside” political games. He maneuvered through government oppositions and constraints. In 2005, realizing that the military victory over the state was unlikely, he decided to enter into a political settlement with major political parties and subsequently outmaneuvered them, and he created the largest political party in the Constituent Assembly elections and led the government.

## **B. BACKGROUND**

In the era when communist powers of the world, such as the former USSR, had collapsed and China continued to reform politically and economically to stay globally competitive, Prachanda and his party members were promoting an outdated ideology and practices in the remote Kingdom of Nepal to supposedly serve the illiterate and economically and socially destitute population.

While democracy is believed to be an appropriate system to address people's grievances and resolve conflicts by negotiation and compromises, Prachanda still chose an outdated ideology and launched an armed struggle to put forward his grievances in spite of the country's restoring democracy after thirty years of autocratic regime (Thapa, 2005).

## **C. HISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN NEPAL**

The Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) was founded in Calcutta, India, in 1949. Since its inception, it has experienced many ups and downs, personality clashes, splits, reunions, and mergers. At present the mainstream left is represented by the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxists-Leninists)—CPN (UML). At the same time, there are nearly half a dozen other communist political parties that take part in the active politics of Nepal. Outside this grouping stands the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists)—CPN (Maoist)—with an ideological stance that is farthest left (Thapa, 2005).

In Nepal, the communist parties have a long-standing history of splitting when and if some ideological differences or opportunities arise. Since the establishment of the Communist Party of Nepal in 1949, there have been more than a dozen splits in the party (Thapa, 2005). Disregarding their historical trends of splitting, Prachanda chose to overlook the costs of a party split and went ahead with his agenda based on communist ideology.

#### **D. MAOIST IDEOLOGY AND PRACHANDA PATH (THE PRACHANDA'S LINE)**

The Maoist insurgency was initially based on Mao's three-stage strategy for winning a "People's War"—strategic defense, strategic stalemate, and strategic offence (Lawati, 2010). However, Prachanda was flexible and tactful enough to formulate new strategies to grab the opportunities that appeared along the line of struggle.

When he realized that the rural mobilization was not sufficient to pressure the centre, he revised the strategy and complemented it with urban mobilization, subsuming the dual rural-urban mobilization strategy within the Prachanda Path, or the Prachanda Line. Initially the movement was a class-based struggle, but Prachanda later recognized the salience of identity issues in Nepal and raised these issues. This mobilization of ethnic groups produced rich rewards for the movement (Lawati, 2010).

In this manner, Prachanda switched his strategy from the classic communist ideology of class struggle to identity issues, formed many ethnic fronts, established autonomous ethnic regions, and raised caste and ethnic issues to mobilize the indigenous nationalities. Prachanda was able to make his party grow strong enough to disrupt social, political, and economic life as well as strong enough to bring political and economic processes at the national level to a near standstill (Lawati, 2010). Concluding that the military victory over the state is not only difficult but also time-consuming, Prachanda decided to forge a deal with political parties to end the armed struggle and enter into mainstream politics (Roy, 2008).

After entering into a comprehensive peace agreement, the Maoists were able to oust the 240-year-old Monarchy and convert the only Hindu kingdom in the world into a secular state. Furthermore, they secured an impressive victory in the Constituent Assembly election and formed a government (Lawati, 2010). They ruled the country for nearly a year. As a part of the exploration, this paper will investigate the "inside game" and "outside game" of Prachanda's leadership successes and failures and explain how he maneuvered through oppositions and constraints to enter into political settlement with major political parties in Nepal. The thesis will also explore how he outmaneuvered even

the other political parties to lead his party to become the largest party in the constituent assembly elections and facilitate his rise to power.

#### **E. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

“Most internal wars end on the battlefield. Only a small percentage end at the negotiating table” (McCormick, 2005, p.321). The Maoist insurgency in Nepal is one among that small percentage which ended at the negotiating table. The purpose of this thesis is to study Prachanda’s “inside game” and “outside game” and to analyze how he maneuvered through oppositions and constraints to enter into a political settlement with the major political parties in Nepal and subsequently how he outmaneuvered them to turn his party into the largest political party in the Constituent Assembly elections.

The scope of this study is to evaluate Prachanda’s leadership qualities and analyze his adaptive strategic vision, particularly by illustrating some events that strengthened the party to form the government as well as some events that brought the party to the brink of a split. The events that will be illustrated are: 1) the evolution of the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal; 2) the Chunbang Plenum, which decided to give up the politics of arms for political settlement; 3) the Kharipati Plenum, which managed to unite the political differences within the party; 4) negotiations that strengthened the Maoist organization; and 5) the sacking of the Army chief that led to Prachanda’s resignation as Prime Minister.

#### **F. RESEARCH QUESTION**

Collapses of communist powers of the world, such as the former USSR, and the Chinese adoption of political and economic reforms to stay globally competitive indicate the failure of communist ideology worldwide. Moreover, Nepal already was a democracy and GDP growth was in a positive direction (Lawati, 2010). In these political and economic conditions, it is difficult for insurgencies to grow even to a recognizable size. However, the Nepalese Maoists under Prachanda’s leadership, without external support and without achieving a military victory over the state, rose to power in a very short time. Was it Prachanda’s ability as a political entrepreneur to balance the “inside game” and

“outside game” to maneuver through oppositions and constraints that facilitated his party rise of his party to power through the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal?

Furthermore, the thesis will try to answer: Who is Pushpa Kamal Dahal, or “Prachanda”? What was his vision and how has he executed his vision over the last 16 years? In addition, the thesis will try to understand the Maoists’ present position in national and international politics as well as also look into the future of Prachanda and his party.

The Maoists in Nepal, led by Prachanda, launched their communist-based insurgency at a time when politically Nepal had been transformed from a one-party autocratic monarchy to a multiparty democracy with a constitutional monarchy. The country’s economy was witnessing a positive growth, as indicated by the growth in GDP, due to the introduction of many liberal policies (Lawati, 2010). Furthermore, the communist regimes around the world either had collapsed or were on the path of collapsing. Yet the Maoists in Nepal managed in just 12 years to rise as a viable political power in the country and obtained a leadership role in the government. In order to explain this transformation, one would have to examine the leadership abilities of Prachanda, how he countered the state oppositions and constraints and maneuvered to ascend to power, and the pivotal role he played in uniting and organizing the Maoist party towards political victory.

Hypothesis: Prachanda’s abilities to maneuver through oppositions and constraints led the CPN (Maoist) to power through instigating the insurgency, but without achieving military victory over the state.

## **G. LITERATURE REVIEW: OVERVIEW OF PAST RESEARCH**

The available literature on the Maoist movement in Nepal focuses primarily on the causes of insurgency, the growth of it, and failures of the government policy to counter the insurgency. The literature focuses on comprehensive peace agreements between the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance that led to peaceful settlement; furthermore, it discusses the way the Maoists achieved their political victory as an organization in a Constituent Assembly election.

Moreover, the available literature on the Maoist rise to power mainly focuses on 1) the causes of Maoist insurgency, 2) the communist ideology, 3) the counter-state strategy, 4) structural and organizational growth of the Maoists, and 5) the weaknesses of government.

Mahendra Lawati and Anup K. Pahari (2010) put emphasis on poverty, economic inequality, socio-cultural inequality, and social change and fluidity as causes of the evolution and growth of the Maoist movement in Nepal. They further argue that these causes are only a conducive environment for the insurgency; unless a committed group exploits favorable conditions to build an organization and engage in mobilization, a rebellion may not occur. They have emphasized the ideological and organizational side of the insurgency.

Ali Riaz and Subho Basu (2007) illustrate the causes and conditions of Maoist conflict in Nepal. They blame state failure for the weak “performance legitimacy” of the government. They further analyze the roles of ethnicity, identity, and deprivation in engendering discontent, and the rise of the Maoists as a formidable political force.

Hutt (2004) examines how historical political contexts led to Maoist growth in Nepal. He concludes that the Maoist movement, having similarities to Peru’s Shining Path, has grown at an extraordinary speed and that the Maoists controlled most of the rural areas of the country due to the government’s shortcomings in the post-1990 democratic system of governance. He also emphasizes the social, the economic, and the political deprivation of people that led to Maoist growth in the country. However, there are very few arguments put forward to argue whether the Maoist leadership, especially Prachanda’s, had any role in their success.

A 2005 International Crisis Group Report, N 104-27, focuses mainly on Maoist aims, structure, and strategy. The paper concludes by arguing that the Maoists, whether by force of arms or force of ideas or a combination of both, have emerged as a formidable political organization.

Lawati (2010) comments on the Maoist strategy to counter the state—how the Maoists indoctrinated their cadres and how they initiated ethnic and caste issues to boost

their movement. By doing this, they grew spectacularly in size and spread geographically in different areas. He also argues that the weak democratic government and its failure to recognize the insurgency at the earlier stage were the reasons for their success.

International Crisis Group Report (2005) argues that Prachanda has a tight grip on the party and writs are sent by him down the line to districts on a timely basis. The paper also argues that there are minor leadership conflicts within the party. However, there is not much written on Prachanda to investigate the particular role he played as a leader of the Maoist movement in Nepal.

The literature lacks a comprehensive study on the leadership events that caused the insurgency to grow in Nepal. The present literature lacks research on Prachanda's role in the overall Maoist movement. There is very little investigation done on the part of Maoist leadership, especially Prachanda's. It lacks the answers to the questions such as: How did he visualize the structural condition of the country and assess the human terrain that would support his movement? How did he manage to formulate the strategies that would counter the state and let the insurgency grow in size? How did he motivate the cadres under his leadership and build organizations that willingly would implement his strategy? Finally, what made him give up arms to settle for peace so that he could secure political victory in the constitutional assembly election and become the Prime Minister of the country?

In this thesis, I particularly try to focus on explaining Prachanda's ability as a leader, how he balanced the "inside game" and "outside game" to counter the government's opposition and maneuver the party to power.

## **H. METHODOLOGY**

In this thesis, I will adopt a historical process-tracing method. This study will include both primary and secondary sources of information. I will investigate Prachanda's leadership effectiveness during the Maoist insurgency as well as while in power as the Prime Minister of the country. While it is possible to get data to show a change in the dependent variable (the Maoists' rise to power), the measurement of the independent variable (leadership ability) will logically be qualitative.

To analyze Prachanda's leadership, I will illustrate four major events from the beginning of the insurgency to their electoral victory in the constituent assembly elections. In particular, his vision and strategy that led the Maoist insurgency in Nepal to power will be analyzed. In particular, the following events will be investigated:

1. His role in Chunbang Plenum (where he decided to join mainstream politics by giving up arms).
2. His role in Kharipati Plenum. The rumors about the ideological differences among the hard-cores and the moderates within the party were leading into a greater conflict. The party was heading towards a split. I will investigate how he managed to address the political differences and saved the party from the split.
3. Prachanda's role during negotiations, which always placed Maoists in advantageous positions.
4. His decision to sack the Army chief. The Maoists' unilateral decision to sack the Chief of the Army Staff, who was retiring after three months, and the appointment of a new chief generated a new conflicting environment within the ruling coalition. This decision was overruled by the president, which forced Prachanda to resign from the government.

To understand his vision and strategy, I will first outline the socio-political structure of the country from which Prachanda launched the armed struggle to challenge the democratically established government. I will attempt, based on his vision and strategy, to explain how Prachanda organized his party into political, military, and popular fronts to rise to power.

By illustrating the above-mentioned events, I will try to evaluate his successes by looking into the decisions that strengthened the organization's unity along the line of growth, and evaluate his failures by looking at those decisions that weakened the organizational strength and generated inter-party conflicts.

## **II. EVOLUTION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF NEPAL (MAOIST)**

### **A. HISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN NEPAL**

The Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) was founded in Calcutta, India, in 1949. Since its beginning, it has experienced many ups and downs; personality clashes, splits, reunions, and mergers. At present the mainstream left is represented by the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxists-Leninists)—UCPN (UML). At the same time, there are nearly half a dozen other communist political parties that take part in the active politics of Nepal. Outside this grouping stands the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) or CPN (Maoist), with an ideological stance that is furthest left (Thapa, 2004).

The main root of the present Maoist party can be traced back to 1974, when the Maoists had sought to form a viable political party based on sustainable unity. Under the leadership of Mohan Bikram Singh and Nirmal Lama, Maoists formed a party called the Communist Party of Nepal (Fourth Convention or Fourth Congress) (Basu & Riaz, 2007). They had planned to launch an armed struggle against the Monarchy at that time. However, the king announced a referendum in 1979 for a transition to multiparty democracy; their plan for an insurgency got diverted to supporting other political parties for victory against the Monarch.

In 1983, Mohan Bikram Singh splintered away from the Communist Party of Nepal (Fourth Convention or Fourth Congress) and formed a separate wing of the communist party, identified as the Communist Party of Nepal (Masal), or CPN (Masal). Under Mohan Bikram Singh, CPN (Masal) became a founding member of the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM) ( Lawati & Pahari, 2010). Most members of CPN (Masal) can be considered as the main group of people that later on emerged as CPN (Maoist) leaders.

In 1985, CPN (Masal) yet again split into two. The original Masal was led by Mohan Bikram Singh. The splinter group, which also named itself CPN (Mashal) added “h” to its name to sound different, was led by Mohan Vaidya (a.k.a. Kiran), who is also

considered as the present CPN (Maoist) ideologue and hardliner. The leaders of the Mashal faction are the main initiators of the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal. In 1986, just after one year, present chairman of the UCPN (Maoist), Pushpa Kamal Dahal, replaced Mohan Vaidya as head of the CPN (Mashal) (Lawati & Pahari, 2010).

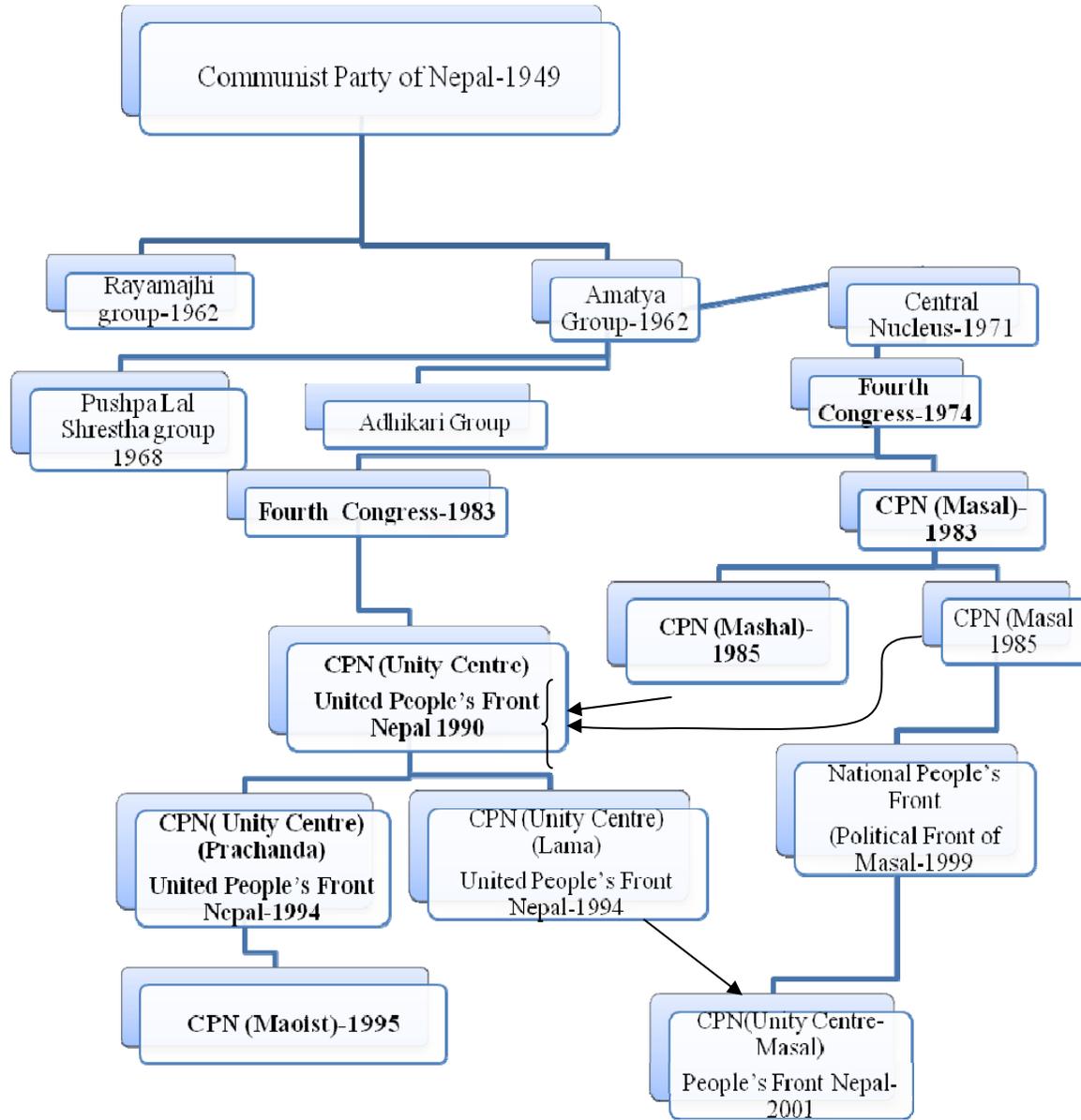


Figure 1. Evolution of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

Source: Thapa and Sijapati, 2003, p. 44

In 1990, to fight against the Panchayet System (King's rule), the radical communists, CPN (Fourth Convention), CPN (Mashal), Bhattarai faction of CPN (Masal), and Communist Party of Nepal (Peasants' Organization) united to form the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre), or CPN (Unity Centre), and adopted Maoism and People's War as the party's ideology. Prachanda became the General Secretary of this Unity Centre. Lawati (2010) argues that the Unity Centre brought together the radical/Maoist strains of the original CPN. CPN (Unity Centre) participated in the 1991 election under the banner of the United People's Movement (UNPM) and won nine seats with 352,000 votes ( Riaz & Basu, 2007, p.126).

The split in CPN (Unity Centre) in 1994 gave birth to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), led by Prachanda. In 1992 CPN (Unity Centre) had promoted a violent general strike in Nepal, but the Nepali Congress Party's government suppressed the strike. The repression by the ruling party triggered inner-party debate over the appropriate political strategy of CPN (Unity Centre). A faction supported participation in the parliamentary election; radicals stuck to the line of People's War. These differences led to a further split and gave rise to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), led by Prachanda. The rest of CPN (Unity Centre) remained under the leadership of Nirmal Lama (Basu, 2007).

In Nepal, the communist parties have a long-standing history of splitting when and if some ideological differences or opportunities arise. Since the establishment of Communist Party of Nepal, there have been more than a dozen splits in the party (Thapa, 2005). Disregarding their historical trends of splitting, Prachanda chose to accept the costs of a party split and go ahead with his agenda based on communist ideology.

## **1. Who Is Prachanda?**

On December 11, 1954, Chabilal Dahal—also known as these three names: Pushpa Kamal, "Biswas," and "Prachanda"—was born into the poor family of Muktiram Dahal in Lewadi, a village in Kaski district, west of Kathmandu (*Britannica*, 2010). He was raised in Chitawan, where he moved from his village in Kaski at the age of 11. As a

child, he was hard working and helped in household work. In schools, he was an average student who did not stand out among his peers (*Jane's Intelligence*, 2006).

Chabilal was the eldest of the eight children in his family, and the younger children all looked up to him for guidance. After school young Chabilal cooked food for the family, milked the cows, and herded the family buffaloes in the village.

Roy (2008) argues that Chabilal as a child was an easy-going, fun-loving schoolboy. In studies, he was an average child who had difficulties in distinguishing between three and six in Nepali. He failed in class III. As a child from a very young age he was emotional, honest, and sincere (Roy, 2008, p. 11).

Chabilal was renamed Pushpa Kamal Dahal after his English teacher, Raj Krishna Kandel, thought that Chabilal deserved a more appropriate name—Pushpa Kamal (Lotus) (Roy, 2008, p. 12). At the age of 15, even before finishing high school, Puspa Kamal Dahal got married to Sita Paudel. Although she did not attain school, she was literate (Roy, 2008). She received her primary education at home.

After completing high school, he wanted to get admission in Amrit Science College or Trichandra College, the best science colleges at that time in Nepal. However, due to his late arrival and lack of money, he was not admitted into any of those colleges; nevertheless, he got admission into Patan Multiple Campus and studied science.

In Patan, as the campus did not have hostel facilities, he had to stay outside in a rented house, where he got an opportunity to make connections with communist leaders and had access to communist literature. Roy (2010) argues, although he was a science student, he was reading books on social science and communism more than books on course materials.

After two years of college in Patan, he joined the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science (IAAS) at Rampur in his home district, Chitawan. It was during this time that Pushpa Kamal Dahal started reaching out to develop his communist career by keeping close affiliation with local communist leaders and by influencing his own friends in communist ideologies (Roy, 2008).

Not getting a job after completing a three-year degree program in agriculture and animal science frustrated him. In the hunt for a job he travelled even on foot for long distances in the eastern part of the country with no results at all. Pressed by financial needs, at last he found a job in a rural development project sponsored by United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In this project, he worked for three months and resigned to take a job as a science teacher at Bhimodaya Secondary School in Gorkha district. This job gave him more time and the environment to engage himself in politics.

## **2. Becoming a Leader**

Roy (2008) says that Dahal's perspective on life and ideology changed completely after witnessing an incident where his father was humiliated by a local moneylender. In one occasion, as Roy argues, "...my father fell on the money lender's feet. But the money lender kicked him. It lit a fire inside me. It was a political lesson I would never forget. It changed the course of my life" (p. 13). After the incident, he started getting interested in books on revolutions.

Furthermore, at an early age, he was indoctrinated in communism by Chandra Raj Bhurtel, a schoolteacher (*Britannica*, 2010). However, it is believed that he had been fascinated by the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Having studied the Chinese revolution and Marxism in his own time, he became inclined towards the communist ideology and started his early political life in mid-1970.

It was only after he resigned from his school job in 1979, as a teacher, and became a full member of the communist party, that he entirely devoted himself to communist politics. Within two years of taking full membership, in 1980, Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Biswas" (a *nom de guerre* meaning "trust") was tasked to lead the All Nepal National Free Students' Union (Revolutionary), which was affiliated with the radical Communist Party of Nepal (Masal), or CPN (Masal) (*Masal* means *flame* in Nepalese). It was during this period that Biswas met a number of communist leaders, including Mohan Vaidya and Bhakta Bahadur Shrestha as well as the young communist leader Ram Bahadur Thapa.

Very shortly after leading the students' union for three years, in 1984, at the age of 29, he was elected to the Central Committee of the CPN (Masal). In November 1984, the Fifth General Convention of the radical Communist Party of Nepal (Masal) elected Pushpa Kamal Dahal, alias Comrade Biswas, to the Central Committee (Roy, 2008, p. 26).

In 1985, due to an ideological difference between Mohan Bikram Singh and Mohan Vaidhya, the CPN (Masal) split into two factions. CPN (Masal) was led by Mohan Bikram Singh; Mohan Vaidya became the leader of CPN (Mashal). Pushpa Kamal Dahal allied himself with Vaidya.

The CPN (Mashal) under Vaidya's leadership planned and adopted a violent doctrine in the hope of instigating mass uprising. A part of the strategy was to attack some isolated police posts and blacken the faces of the king's statues located in the capital. The armed operation was code-named *Sector Kanda* (sector incident). During this operation, some of the party cadres, among them Om Subedi, were arrested; due to these arrests, the party became publicly known through police interrogation.

After this action exposed the underground party, it was heavily criticized by the central committee members. The failed action became the reason for Vaidhya's downfall, and Pushpa Kamal Dahal unanimously emerged as the general secretary of the party in 1989, the position he has held since (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003).

After assuming the post of general secretary and finding the treasury of the party nearly empty, he realized something had to be done to raise money for the party to function. Finding no alternatives, he decided to sell his land to run the party (Roy, 2008, p. 27). He started to reorganize the party and called a Central Committee meeting in Chitawan, which made the decision to change the *noms de guerre* of the leaders.

It was during this meeting that Pushpa Kamal Dahal transformed himself from "Biswas" (Trust) to "Prachanda" (Valiant One) (Roy, 2008). All other top leaders also changed their previous *noms de guerre*.

In 1990, three radical left communist parties, including Fourth Congress and Mashal, formed a new party called Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre). In this new

union among radicals Prachanda was also smart enough to secure his position as the general secretary. Since then he has always been in the top-most leadership position of the party.

The unity among the leadership of the CPN (Unity Center) did not last long. The ideological differences among the leaders over whether to participate in the election or not to participate led to a split in the party. A faction supported participation in the parliamentary election, but radicals stuck to the line of people's war. These differences led to further splits and gave rise to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), led by Prachanda. The other faction of CPN (Unity Center) remained under Nirmal Lama (Basu, 2007).

## **B. ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL CONDITION OF NEPAL**

### **1. Economic**

After the new political set-up, 1993/94 saw some promising results. GDP growth was 7.9 percent; the tourism sector was able to contribute 4 percent to the GDP. But the momentum did not last. The growth rate decelerated in 1995 due to political instability, bad governance, and rampant corruption among the political parties (Lawati & Pahari, 2010).

The new political set-up after the 1991 election failed to include all the sectors of Nepalese societies, ethnic groups, and castes. Most of these groups remained and felt that they were outside the mainstream politics and reach of the national resources. As Thapa (2008) argues:

...traditional regional disparities continued and far-flung areas like the district of Karnali Zone remained under-represented in politics, planning, and the development processes. In the meantime the gap between the people in the villages and the cities and between the rich and poor continued to widen. (p. 13)

In this political environment, the absolute number of poor increased in 1990; the government statistics show around 40% of the people as poor. Even though this

percentage remained the same from the 1970s to the 1990s, the absolute number of poor persons doubled due to increase in the population (Lawati & Pahari, 2010).

There was a great deal of infrastructure development in the early 1990s, especially in the banking sector, private schools, and air transportation; and many development projects emerged in the country. However, these developments only benefited those who were already well off and the society who were in urban settings or around them. The people in the remote areas of Nepal were deprived from the benefits of the democratic system.

As Lawati (2010) argues, “Inequality increased in Nepal despite improved national economic indicators. Nepal had become the most unequal country in South Asia in the 1990s with the highest Gini Index of 0.426” (p. 15).

## **2. Social Structure**

Nepalese society is basically divided into a four-caste class system by Hindu religion. However, Lawati (2010) argues, “Nepal not only faced class inequality, but extreme socio-cultural inequality also existed among numerous linguistic, ethnic, religious, racial, caste and regional groups” (p. 10). He further argues that in Nepal, the Caste Hill Hindu Elite Males (CHHEM) has monopolized the political, economic, social, and cultural powers. However, the present statistic of monopolization of power by CHHEM cannot be attributed only to the present and the near-past governments of the country; it goes beyond a few centuries. The society has been divided as such since the rise and acceptance of Hindu tradition. The social functions have been divided according to the castes. To transform a society from a preexisting system to a new one needs more commitments from all sectors of the society.

There are about sixty ethnic and caste groups in the country; among them-Bahun Chetri and Newar are economically, politically, and socially dominant. In the post-1991 democratic system, the presence of the indigenous nationalities decreased in some institutions as compared to the Panchayet (pre-democracy government) era (Lawati & Pahari, 2010).

The majority of these ethnic groups have never had access to the state resources. Civil servants operate from Kathmandu; all political and developmental decisions are centralized and seen as the hub of the national life. The welfare of the people of the remote areas is completely ignored; it was like this during the Panchayet System and remained the same during the democratic system.

Thapa (2003) argues, Bahun and Chetries together constitute only 29% of the population, and yet have almost total command over the states' resources. Even during the democratic rule the state continued with the policy of exclusion.

### **3. Political**

In 1990, after the mass movement led by pro-democratic parties who had been kept out of the political system until then, an understanding was reached between the king and the democratic parties; Panchayet System was replaced by a constitutional monarch with multiparty democracy. Democratic political changes in 1991 gave rise to high expectations among the people for a better, more prosperous life. Unity among all the stakeholders behind a democratic agenda and a belief that a democratic political freedom would rapidly and quickly transform into progress and prosperity did not materialize, and the situation deteriorated.

As Thapa (2007) argues,

the idealism of the movement soon gave way to Nepali realities—parties poorly prepared to exercise democratic power, old patronage structure remained intact, limited scope left for sustained economic growth, the antiquated centralized state continued, and government lacked capacity, expertise and will to convert ideas into successful policy. (p. 37)

After the change to democracy in early 1991, Thapa and Sijapati (2003) argue, even

as the parliamentary exercises proceeded, there was no improvement in the socio-economic condition of people. Governance remained in shambles as political parties expanded their energy in power plays... corruption soared unchecked. The gap between rich and poor grew wider. (p. 64)

The politics and political agendas did not go beyond the capital, Kathmandu. Thapa and Sijapati (2003) argue:

The centralized system remained intact. Kathmandu, the nation's capital which contains all forms of economic and political power, is the place where decisions regarding the appropriation, distribution and realization of surplus generated are made... because major decisions are made in the centre, the prospects, aspirations, and needs of the people from the periphery do not get represented. They are often ignored or the decision makers are unaware of the need of the rural region. (p. 61).

Centralization concentrates power in the hands of a few state agencies, with power exercised by only a few people. The politics among the parties focused more on getting into government rather than fulfilling the aspirations of the people. There were continuous intra-party conflicts for the post of Prime Minister, which led into party splits among the major parties—Nepali Congress as well as Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninists.

The post-1990 democratic politics can be characterized as chaos among and within the political parties. From 1991 to 2002, four parliamentary elections occurred, thirteen government changes, and four recommendations to dissolve the House of Representatives. As Thapa and Sijapati argue,

Not one of the 13 governments that have held power since 1991 has done anything to liberate the rural peasantry, who constitute a majority of the population, from the exploitative land relationships existing in the villages. (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003, p. 61)

The Nepali Congress Party (NCP) was the main stakeholder in the post-1991 politics. It got the majority in the first parliamentary election; the Nepali Congress Party (NCP) won 110 seats in the 205-member House of Representatives and formed a government. Due to Krishna Prasad Bhattarai's (then President of NCP) loss in the election, Girija Prasad Koirala became the Prime Minister of Nepal.

Instead of ruling the country democratically, transparently, abiding by rule of law, and promoting strong democratic institutions, the Nepali Congress took a critical turn towards a clientelistic pattern of mobilization. Power was shared through networks of informal dyadic relations that linked individuals to unequal power. The political power of

the country was vested in a few top individuals who personally decided how to distribute resources according to personal preferences (Thapa, 2005).

Even having the majority in the parliament, intra-party conflict in the NCP led Prime Minister Koirala to dissolve the parliament. Dissolving parliament at the wish of the Prime Minister initiated an unhealthy political game that spread throughout the internal democratic politics of the country. Man Mohan Adhikari, a communist Prime Minister, made a similar decision to dissolve the parliament when he faced a vote of no confidence in the parliament. However, this time the Supreme Court over-ruled the decision.

When no single party won a majority in the second Parliamentary election, coalition governments were formed and ousted frequently. This trend of forming and breaking coalitions led the country towards instability, corruption, and bad governance; furthermore, the people lost their trust in political parties (Thapa, 2005). It was during this time that the Maoists were vigorously preparing for their armed struggle in Nepal. The government, busy in the intra- and inter-party conflicts, failed to understand the situation in the remote villages of Nepal.

#### **4. Prachanda's Vision to Victory**

After the 1990 political changes, the country became politically unstable, socially divided, and economically deprived. Furthermore, increasing unrest due to an increasing number of strikes generated frustration. Under these conditions, Prachanda was, slowly but surely, putting his ideas of launching an armed struggle against a government into practice.

The gap between the rich and the poor was increasing each day; the majority of the population did not have a share in the governance; only people in the urban areas and close to power centers had access to state resources. The people of rural Nepal were left behind without any services and opportunities. The dreams that democracy would provide prosperity in life were fading away for the Nepalese people.

Since joining the communist party at an early age, Prachanda was dedicated to revolution. He seemed to be waiting for the right time and the right political and social conditions in the country. He had spent much of his early age studying revolution (Roy, 2008).

## **5. Preparation for the Insurgency**

In 1984, realizing that without ideological support from the outside world, armed struggle in Nepal would be difficult; the Communist Party of Nepal (Mashal) became a founding member of the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM). Moreover, prior to committing himself to revolution, Prachanda had established connections with other revolutionary leaders and organizations abroad. The Maoists gained a lot of theoretical knowledge from Chairman Robert Avakin of the Revolutionary Party of the USA (Roy, 2008, p. 39).

To get familiar with guerilla warfare, Prachanda was trained by ex-Gorkha soldiers in India (Roy, 2008). Prachanda had also established a link with Ram Raja Pratap Singh, a Nepalese revolutionist living in exile. Prachanda met Ram Raja Prasad Singh personally and learned how to make bombs. It is also argued that the bombs used in the early stages of the insurgencies were made from the same technologies taught by Ram Raja Pratap Singh (Roy, 2008, p. 186).

Prachanda was also connected to, and developed a very close relation with, Ganapati, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India. To get a firsthand experience, Prachanda visited many places where the insurgencies were taking places in India. He had studied the movements in Bihar (India) and Jharkhanda (Roy, 2008, p. 91). He also visited the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

Prior to launching an insurgency, a detailed study of the situation of the country had been done. The “Document Adopted by the Third Expanded Meeting of the Central Committee of the CPN (Maoist) in March, 1995” examined the possibility of armed struggle in Nepal. It concludes:

In our situation, the armed struggle can be initiated, sustained and developed only through a skillful implementation of a policy which would

go like this—give priority to the rural work, but do not leave out the urban work; give priority to illegal struggle, but do not leave out the legal struggle, too; give priority to specific strategic areas, but do not leave out work related to the mass movement, too; give priority to class struggle in rural areas, but do not leave out countryside struggle, too; give priority to guerrilla actions, but do not leave out political exposure and propaganda, too; give priority to propaganda work within the country but do not leave out worldwide propaganda, too; give priority to build army organization, but do not leave out building front organizations, too; give priority to relying on one's own organization and force, but do not fail to forge unity-in-action, to take support and help from the international arena. Neither by getting one-sided, nor by giving equal emphasis to all work, can the People's War be initiated, preserved and developed in the present context. From this point of view the People's War will unfold as a total war. (CPN [Maoist], 1995)

Furthermore, on the overall social and political situations of the country, the document argues that the revolution is possible in the country. The Nepalese people are historically violent; the reforms up until today are the consequences of the violent nature of the Nepalese people. The paper also argues that the Nepalese people will lay down their lives on the issues of nationalism (CPN [Maoist], 1995).

Socially, since 1951 anti-establishment sentiment among the Nepalese people has been very strong. In terms of physical and mental strength, the paper argues that the Nepalese people are great warriors and can bear the severe material and bodily hardship while in the war (CPN [Maoist], 1995).

However, in terms of their aim of the armed struggle, the document is confusing instead of offering a clear-cut vision. The document reads:

The long-term aim of the party is to move towards socialist revolution after the successful completion of New Democratic revolution as an integral part of the world proletarian socialist revolution and to achieve communism by waging Cultural Revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. (CPN [Maoist], 1995)

It is difficult to make clear sense out of the above phrase. However, in the same document it is also stated that the nature and orientation of the Nepalese armed struggle would be, “in the line of protracted people's war based upon the strategy of encircling the city from the countryside” (CPN [Maoist], 1995).

For the first phase of the insurgency, Prachanda had specifically identified feudal individuals, industries, financial institutions, and bureaucratic capitalists as targets. The confiscated land would be distributed to the landless or poor communities of the society.

The leadership made an in-depth evaluation of the overall condition of the country as well as their advantages and disadvantages to launch an insurgency. They also categorically differentiated the social groups that were easy and those difficult to motivate. The strength and weaknesses of the government and their party were also considered in advance. By analyzing the overall political, geographical and social environment of the country, the leadership concluded (CPN [Maoist], 1995) that:

1. The geographical situation is the most favorable for waging guerilla war with a direct link with the people.
2. Nepalese armed struggle cannot take the form of a direct or positional warfare against the enemy at the beginning. Attack the enemy's weak spots in piecemeal.
3. Initiate and develop guerilla wars in different parts of the country by taking peasant revolution as the backbone.
4. People's support will increase if the tactics are pursued carefully.
5. Mobilize the people abroad, especially in India, for logistic purposes.

The leadership was also cautious, noticing "... it is impossible for armed struggle in Nepal to make a quick leap into an insurrection and defeat the enemy; however, it is possible by systematic development of it." (CPN [Maoist], 1995) The leadership also seemed to be very much concerned about people isolating them; they emphasized to "...grasp firmly that the People's war is the war of the masses and it can be developed only by relying on the masses and principally on the peasants and the masses are the creators of history" (CPN [Maoist], 1995). On the matter of combatants, Prachanda is also cautious: "...not to permit, at any cost, a situation where a gun would control the party (CPN [Maoist], 1995).

## **6. Strategy and Methods**

The CPN (Maoist) followed Mao's strategy of guerilla warfare and mass political mobilization in the pursuit of a communist republic (Lawati, 2010). Prachanda initially followed Mao's three-stage strategy for people's revolution that had worked in China. The insurgency is divided in three phases: 1) strategic defence, 2) strategic balance, and 3) strategic offence (Sharma, 2004). The goal was to surround the centre with rural peasant mobilization in the traditional Mao style.

To fulfill these strategic goals Prachanda had primed his party and leadership. In 1995 the Prachanda-led Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre) held its third plenum, during which the leadership renamed it the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)—CPN (Maoist)—and decided to begin an insurgency (Deepak & Sijapati, 2003). The leadership began with their long preparations for the insurgency (Lawati, 2010).

Before launching their insurgency, the CPN (Maoist) had developed their organization and organized awareness and training programs in the rural areas of Nepal to prepare cadres. Among the people, they also indoctrinated a collective political imagination for social justice and prosperity in life (Eck, 2010).

The Maoists expanded their organization and made it stronger by establishing an army and opening new Unified Front Organizations (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2005). The fronts and the sister organizations were used during attacks to help combatants for administrative purposes as well as for calling strikes and street protests in district headquarters and cities.

To implement their initial plan and motivate their cadres, the Maoists came up with a flexible timetable and slogans. The slogans focused on what was required to be done during a particular phase of insurgency. It also gave the general public an indication of what the Maoists were up to at any given point in time.

The first plan, which lasted only one month, came at the initial phase of the insurgency in 1996 (Sharma, 2004). The slogan read, "Let us move ahead on the path of the people's war to establish the new people's democratic state by destroying the

reactionary state.” (CPN [Maoist], 1995) This plan mainly focused on showing the people the initiation of Maoist insurgency in Nepal. During this first phase about 6,000 “people’s” actions (a person beaten or threatened or land confiscated) were carried out. Eighty percent of this plan was focused on publicity (Sharma, 2004, p. 51).

The second plan, from March 1996 to June 1997, said, “Develop a people’s war in a more organized way.” (CPN [Maoist], 1995) It also included strong action for “eliminating selected enemies.” (CPN [Maoist], 1995) According to this plan there were many killings of individuals, the first two being policemen in the Tak village of Rukum (Sharma, 2004). The third plan in 1997 had the slogan, “Raising the development of guerilla warfare to new heights.” (CPN [Maoist], 1995) This plan was said to make the insurgents able to fight the Army. During this plan, the Maoists also boycotted the local elections; furthermore, they started to threaten the elected body to force them to resign from their posts. Due to a vacuum created by lack of an elected body, the Maoists began exercising their rule in some rural areas (Sharma, 2004).

The fourth plan started in 1998 and had a stronger slogan, indicating that the insurgents were getting stronger. It read, “Let’s embark on the great path of creating base areas.” (CPN [Maoist], 1998) During this period, the Maoists were also successful in organizing an international rally in Delhi in support of their insurgency in Nepal.

In February 2001, after completing its sixth plan, the CPN (Maoist) organized its Second National Conference. This was taken as a new turning point in the history of the Nepalese Maoist insurgency. The new post of Chairman was created for Prachanda. Prachanda also presented a report titled, “The Great Leap Forward: An Inevitable Need of History,” which, after discussion, was adopted as the party’s doctrine, the “Prachanda Path.”

Roy (2008) argues that the concept of Prachanda Path was initially inspired by the doctrine of the Communist Party of Peru-Marxism-Leninism-Maoism-Gonzalo Thought. Prachanda Path in essence is a different kind of uprising, which can be described as the fusion of the Chinese model of a protracted people’s war strategy (to extend from the villages to the cities) and the Russian model of a general armed revolution (Roy, 2008, p. 64).

Lok Raj Baral, a political scientist in Nepal, writing on Prachanda Path in Roy (2008), explains:

Prachanda Path adopted by the Maoists, does not apparently make an ideological break with Lenin and Mao, but they find that the doctrine and strategies adopted by the two leaders cannot be replicated wholesale in the Nepali situation. Prachanda Path is, thus, taken as a fusion of an insurgency and a protracted war. Lenin had used the first during the October Revolution and Mao used the second in China. Applying it to the Nepali context, Prachanda Path seems to adopt urban and a protracted people's war. (p. 64)

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### **III. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: KEY EVENTS**

#### **A. INSIDE GAMES**

This chapter focuses on the internal differences among the leadership inside the Maoist Insurgency and external constraints posed by the state and other stakeholders that challenged the growth of the insurgency. Further, it analyzes how these differences and constraints were dealt with and managed by Prachanda to give an overall better or worse outcome for the insurgency, either helping it grow or decreasing its popular support. These internal and external differences, challenges, and opportunities are termed in this thesis as “inside” and “outside” games. When these games are managed and manipulated well, these opportunities will yield a positive outcome for the insurgency’s growth; if mismanaged, they can be counterproductive.

Internal conflicts and differences among the Maoist leadership can be traced back to various alliances and divisions that occurred during the formation of what we know today as the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Since the formation of the hardliner radical communist party, the Communist Party of Nepal (Fourth Convention) in 1983, the leadership encountered ideological differences, which resulted in numerous splits in the party.

Close observation of the CPN (Maoist) leadership has shown signs of ideological differences among the top three leaders. Their differences are reported more so than in the recent past, which could be due to the fact that they are in the open and under media scrutiny. While all three are committed to their hardliner communist ideologies, they disagree about whether the party should take a hard-line or moderate stance within the national and international political environments. There have been differences explicitly in approaches the party should take in particular circumstances and points in time.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal, “Prachanda,” is regarded to be a dedicated and a charismatic leader, with a good grip on the party rank and file. His ability to balance the hardliners and moderates has not only kept him in the present position since the time he became General Secretary of CPN (Mashal) in 1989; but it is also much needed for the

unity of the party. Lawati (2010) states that Prachanda is skilled in balancing different factions and leaders, for instance, through incorporating issues raised by others into the official party line (Lawati, 2010, p. 13). This was evident during the Chunbang meeting and Kharipati national convention.

Mohan Vaidya, “Kiran,” the founding leader of CPN (Masal), the faction that split from Mohan Bikram Singh’s CPN (Mashal), is the instrumental person for Prachanda’s rise up to Central Committee Member and Politburo Member of the CPN (Fourth Convention) (Roy, 2008). Vaidya, a hard-line communist ideologue who advocates for a People’s Republic and a single-party communist dictatorship, was elected to the current Constituent Assembly, but resigned, citing differences within the party.

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, “a scholar with a bright career”-turned revolutionist, is considered to be a moderate and pragmatic politician. He is also considered as the main ideologue who advocates for a moderate path within the Maoist party politics.

Although there are rifts among the top leaders, Prachanda has maintained the party unity since the beginning of the insurgency. The unity among them alone is a major factor that elevated the party to the present status. However, since the party joined the mainstream politics, especially after the Kharipati convention in which the top leadership was heavily blamed for too much flexibility in negotiations with the seven party alliances, the differences within the party are alarming.

This chapter looks into various conflicts/differences that have emerged within the party up to its present status, and how Prachanda was able to keep the balance and save the party from a split. Prachanda successfully led his party into mainstream politics, secured a maximum number of seats in the Constituent Assembly election, and formed a government under his own leadership. However, a greater question lies ahead: Can he play a similar role in open politics where multiple national and international players influence an outcome that a single party seeks to obtain?

In contrast to the recognition he has received for his skilled leadership that brought the party out into the open politics, the prevailing observation is that the role he played as the Prime Minister (PM) and later as the leader of the opposition party could

have been better. His miscalculated decisions (attacks on the judiciary system, media houses, religious places, and army institutions), the party's souring relationship with the country's southern neighbor, the Young Communist League's ever-increasing coercive actions around the nation, and the lack of commitment to past agreements have raised questions regarding the Maoists' intent and credibility. Furthermore, a nationwide strike called by the Maoists proved to be counterproductive as there was increasing loss of faith and trust in Prachanda, both nationally and internationally.

On the other hand, since the beginning of the peace process, Dr. Bhattarai has been slowly getting stronger within his party and gaining trust among national and international powerhouses. Prachanda's anti-Indian rhetoric helped Dr. Bhattarai, known to have close links with Indian authorities, to stand out as a new leader to head the party in a new, open, and competitive political environment. Furthermore, the leaders of other political parties seem to be more comfortable working with Dr. Bhattarai as other parties start to question Prachanda's motives and failure to abide by promises and agreements from the past.

Events that are attributed to bringing CPN (Maoist) to internal conflict and the brink of splitting are worth examining to gauge Prachanda's ability to lead and to put his party in favorable strategic positions.

### **1. Chunbang Plenum 2005**

Why does a growing insurgency, with an aim to establishing a communist dictatorship, which is not facing any grave threat from the existing establishment, engage in negotiations? The rational answer to this question could be: 1) for strategic gains, 2) for a strategic pause to reorganize the growth of the party or, 3) to avoid a party split due to internal differences. In the case of CPN (Maoist), it could be argued that all three are possible.

It is evident that there are two distinct ideological differences between the CPN (Maoist) party hardliners, as led by Kiran, and moderates, led by Dr. Bhattarai. Moderates within the party call for a peaceful and democratic approach, whereas the

hardliners insist on their idea of “absolute power with the barrel of a gun.” Prachanda, as the chairman of the party, has acted and established himself as the necessary force within the party to moderate the differences and maintain unity. The histories of the communist parties in Nepal indicate that the unity between them has not always lasted for very long, and there have been moments where CPN (Maoist) have been faced with a split.

In 2001, during the first peace talks, it was the military faction that chose to walk out of the negotiations (Riaz & Basu, 2007). In 2003, both factions decided to walk out of the talks due to a military attack during the ceasefire that killed their cadres. In the Chunbang and Kharipati national conventions, the rift reached a level at which some actions (punitive) and precautions (security) had to be taken to settle the differences.

In late 2004 or early 2005, relations between Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai soured. This was reportedly due to growing disagreements on power sharing as well as party policies, particularly on the way the Monarchy and India should be perceived. Dr. Bhattarai, who is recognized to be pro-India, showed his resentment against the consolidation of power under Prachanda and his plan for anti-Indian sentiment. Similarly, the decision to build an alliance with the King rather than with other major political parties came into the media and shook the party leadership. Dr. Bhattarai’s push to work with other democratic alliances, rather than with the King, challenged the majority decision of the party. This rift almost split the party after it was leaked to the media. Subsequently, the Politburo meeting in Lahabang decided to take punitive action against three Politburo members: Hishila Yami, Dina Nath Sharma, and Bhattarai (Ogura, 2008).

However, the King’s actions on February 1, 2005, made it easier for the democratic parties to forge an alliance to fight against the King’s move. According to Bhattarai, “After the King’s coup, our internal dispute over issues of priority was automatically resolved because it had become clear that he was the main enemy. Actually, the King’s move against the state brought us together” (Ogura, 2008, p. 21). Dr. Bhattarai was released soon after the King’s move, and the Maoists held a meeting in Chunbang (a village in Rolpa), and discussed Bhattarai’s concept on working with the other political parties. After the discussions, the party came forward with a new concept to align with political parties to overthrow the Monarchy.

Dr. Bhattarai, who, in addition to pushing for alliance with other democratic parties, had been also advocating for a decentralized approach in the party structure. These ideas have established Dr. Bhattarai as a visionary leader as well.

## **2. Kharipati Convention 2008**

The CPN (Maoist) also avoided splitting at the national convention held during November 17–26, 2008, in Bhaktapur, Kharipati. Opposing Chairman Prachanda's document, another senior leader, Kiran, produced a contrary document. The conclave ended when a consensus was made to incorporate the spirit of both the documents and produce a new one (Chandrasekharan, 2007).

The cadres were split up into two groups. The majority—including senior leaders C. P. Gajurel, Hari Bhakta Kandel, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, and Netra Bikram Chand—supported Senior Leader Kiran's document. Chairman Prachanda and his supporters, as well as Baburam Bhattarai and Barsaman Pun, were shocked to see the majority in favor of Leader Mohan Vaidya, “Kiran.” Kiran presented a document that claimed that a suitable time had come for a popular uprising and setting up a people's republic, contrary to Chairman Prachanda, who produced a document stating that the party should move ahead with creating a new statute in favor of the people and a tactical slogan for a People’s Republic (Sigdel, 2008).

The conclave held several levels of discussion where some disputes regarding the team leader, Prachanda, arose. The team who supported Kiran's document had a leader who favored Prachanda's document and vice-versa. The meeting ended up compromising both documents, which would again be presented in the future National Convention (Sigdel, 2008).

The groups supporting Kiran's document blamed Prachanda's group for betraying the spirit of the people's war and for being more interested in luxury after having held power. Chairman Prachanda was also blamed for sidelining the revolutionary leaders from important positions of the party and filling these vacancies up with those who

supported his steps. The Kharipati national convention was a second time when huge differences within the leadership came out in public after the Chunbang meeting (Sigdel, 2008).

Prachanda and Kiran placed their proposal documents before the Central Committee. In those documents the main differences centered on, first, how to synthesize all the experiences acquired since the initiation of the people's war in order to have a deeper grasp of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the Prachanda Path. The second concern was how to develop political and tactical slogans so as to help unite all of the allies of the people's revolution and isolate the principal enemy. The third was how to develop under the leadership of the party a coordinated mechanism for the three fronts of struggle, namely the street, the constituent assembly, and the government, and how to decide which one to make the principal struggle. The central committee meeting, held during the convention, reached a compromise, which was later ratified by the convention. The main points of the compromise reached were as follows:

First, it was decided to bring out a single document at the next Central Committee meeting, organize an internal forum based on the Leninist concept of "freedom in expression and unity in action" prior to the forthcoming party congress, and thereby synthesize the experiences and ideological and political positions that the Maoists had taken up during 10 years of people's war, 19 days of mass movement, the ongoing peace process, and so forth. So, the whole synthesis was deferred until the coming party congress (Sigdel, 2008).

Second, the Central Committee meeting developed a skeleton of a unanimous immediate political program, "People's Federal Democratic National Republic," or, "the People's Republic," which was, in fact, a synthesized expression of the programs, "Federal and Competitive Pro-people Republic" and "National Federal People's Republic" that Chairman Prachanda and Kiran had proposed respectively through their documents.

Third, the Central Committee meeting decided to build up a mechanism under party leadership to coordinate all three fronts of struggle in which the street struggle would be the principal one (Sigdel, 2008).

By compromising, once again Prachanda was able to rescue the party by engaging in serious discussions and making ideological compromises from a split within the party. The leadership convinced the cadres who were agitating against the leadership to settle down and accept the mistakes the leadership had committed while in power; in turn, the leadership promised not to repeat those mistakes in the future. The leadership was united by accepting the core ideas of both papers and converted them into a single document.

## **B. OUTSIDE GAMES**

### **1. Negotiations With the Government**

The Maoists' armed struggle until 2001 was on a relatively easy path without much scrutiny by and fight from the government. The government's countermeasures, police operations Romeo and Kilo Sierra Two, all proved to be ineffective and counterproductive. Instead of suppressing the insurgency, they alienated the people from trusting the government. The extra-judicial killing of the innocent people forced the people to join the Maoists to take revenge (Thapa, 2003).

By 2001, the Maoists' sixth plan had ended, and Prachanda had concluded that the insurgency was successful as per their plans. Due to the assassination of King Birendra on June 1, 2001, allegedly by then-Crown Prince Dipendra, the king's brother, Gyanendra, became the new king of Nepal. This may have compelled the Maoist leadership to adjust their party policy vis-a-vis the new king and a new political environment in the country (CPN [M], 2001).

Since the Maoists had launched their insurgency, there had been no improvement in the political situation of the country; the Royal Massacre only added more to the uncertainty of the political situation. Taking full advantage of the fluid situation of the country, the Maoists turned up their insurgency attacks even more. The pressure was built to convince the new king of their strength and to make the most out of the initiative while the nation was still focused on the Royal Massacre.

The intensity of Maoist attacks increased between 6 and 13 July 2001. A series of police stations were attacked in Lamjung, Nuwakot, and Holeri. "While the Maoists

intensified their attacks the Military strangely enough refrained from extending their support to beleaguered police forces at Holeri” (Riaz & Basu, 2007, p. 151).

The military version of this episode denies that the military received any clear mandate from the government with all the legal process completed in order for them to initiate any action. The Constitution of 1991 clearly outlines the process of military mobilization. Article 118 of Paragraph 2 says, “His Majesty shall operate and use the Royal Nepal Army on the recommendation of the National Defense Council.” In the case of Holeri, the military leadership was only asked by then–Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to rescue the police forces that were kept captive by the Maoists; hence, the army was not mobilized as per the constitution.

Facing a situation where the military refused to function under his direct order and where the Maoists were harassing the state at an increasing pace, Prime Minister Koirala had no other alternative but to resign. He resigned from his post on 19 July 2002.

Koirala was replaced by Sher Bahadur Deuba as the new prime minister. Deuba was then an up-coming leader who was challenging Koirala for the leadership and had a growing influence in the party. The Maoists seemed to be optimistic towards the new prime minister, namely due to three reasons: 1) Prime Minister Koirala, who had wanted to mobilize the army against them, was ousted; 2) Deuba’s rhetoric for peace; and 3) due to the external and internal political situation, they needed a pause after a continued fight against the government (Thapa &, 2003).

## **2. First Ceasefire 2001**

Since the day they had initiated armed struggle in 1996, there was a relatively conducive environment within the country for the insurgency to grow in. The government had been always weak and fragmented due to internal and external conflicts within the parties. Decline in economic growth, a high unemployment rate, a surge in the unemployed youth population (35% of population aged 16–34), and, above all, no commitments of the government to address these issues were the main conditions that facilitated the Maoists’ growth (Lawati, 2010; Thapa & Sijapati, 2003; Sharma 2004).

The government's inability to identify the problem, interparty power struggles, frequent government changes, and the Maoist leadership's shrewdness in using political parties against each other for the Maoists' tactical advantage all led to a rapid growth in the Maoist organization. As Hachhethu (2004) argues, the Maoists had cultivated internal contradictions and crises among the state actors—particularly conflicts among political parties, and confrontation between the palace/army and political parties—to enhance their party's strength and capacities.

“The Maoists, strategically in the first stage of their People's War, remained soft on the Monarchy and hard on the party political machinery” (Riaz & Basu, 2007, p. 151). During their initial phase, the majority of the people who were assassinated were cadres of the Nepali Congress and CPN (UML). The military members on leave in remote villages were assured of their security. The Maoists convinced the army personnel that the fight was against the corrupt political parties, not the army. The army was told that the Maoists had nothing to do with the military and viewed the military as “friends.”

In 2001, after the death of King Birendra and, more importantly, the September 11 attacks on the twin towers by Al Qaida, the national and international political environment changed. The change of prime minister in Nepal and the changed international and national political environments forced Prachanda to rethink their strategy. They foresaw the opportunity to further strengthen their position by entering into talks with the government rather than by continuing to fight in an unfavorable political environment (Riaz & Basu, 2007, p. 152).

To pressure the government and to show their growth, the CPN (Maoist) announced for the first time its formation of the People's Army as the military wing of its movement. The Maoists were following the classic strategy of combining pressure and compromise (Riaz and Basu, 2007, p.152).

As the Maoists had been on the run since the beginning of the insurgency, the negotiations held in 2001 can be argued to have been a “strategic pause” by the Maoists to publicize their movement for sympathy as well as to reorganize their growing movement for future growth (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2001).

The talks also provided them with political prestige and elevated their position—from being seen as desperate—to an officially recognized counter-political force equal to the government.

The negotiated ceasefire allowed them to secure the release of a large number of cadres who were under government captivity. Additionally they took advantage of the ceasefire to hold political rallies all over the country to reach out to the public. This too was the perfect time to demonstrate to the international community their supposed willingness to open a dialogue with the government for peaceful resolution to the crisis (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003, p. 119; Riaz & Basu, 2007, p. 152).

The talks and ceasefire clearly showed that the Maoists could still grow stronger, as they were able to consolidate during this period. In addition, there were visible indications of a newly emerged tension among grass-roots level Maoist leaders, the military wing of the movement, and the peace negotiators (Riaz & Basu, 2007). However, the government was not ready to accept the radical demands: an interim government, a constitutional assembly, a new constitution, and institutionalization of a republic.

As a result of the peaceful environment during the ceasefire, the Maoists were able to openly collect donations and strengthen the organization by organizing different fronts; and they walked away even stronger than when they had come to the peace talks. Following the collapse of the peace talks, the Maoists were able to attack police and army posts in 42 districts. On the other hand, the government, with much frustration, turned around and mobilized the army in haste. As Ogura claims, "...the CPN (M) took advantage of the positive climate and open environment created by the ongoing negotiations to expand their armed forces and increase their local power bases" (Ogura, 2008, p. 17).

In Ogura (2008), Bhattarai sums up the advantages they gained during the first peace talks:

During the first truce, we gained more and lost less. We were able to go among the masses and propagate our political demands in a variety of ways. Internally, the more open environment allowed us to hold some

important meetings and training sessions. Although the negotiations were unsuccessful, we did not regret this at all (Ogura, 2008).

During this period, the Maoists were also able to form district-level governing bodies in nearly two dozen of Nepal's 75 districts. It is also claimed that it was during this time that the Maoists were able to organize, train, equip, and develop their army.

### **3. Second Ceasefire 2003**

In 2001, after the first unsuccessful peace negotiation, the government declared a state of emergency and deployed the army against the insurgency. Military assistance to Nepal poured in from the USA, the UK, and India. The US and the Indian governments were the first ones to label the Maoists as terrorists. International attention in Nepal increased with the visit of Secretary of State Colin Powell in 2002.

Despite this international assistance, Nepal's internal political crisis among and within the parties lacked a unified national effort to address the growing insurgency. Prime Minister Deuba, due to lack of support from his own party to extend the emergency term, ended up dissolving the parliament. At the same time, due to Maoist activity, the election commission was unable to hold scheduled local elections. The political situation worsened when the King dismissed Deuba for his inability to hold elections and appointed Lokendra Bahadur Chand as the new Prime Minister.

These rifts among the stakeholders of the country further contributed to the Maoists growth. While the political situation remained volatile, the Maoists increased their attacks on government forces around the country. They organized nationwide agitations on 11–13 November 2002, paralyzing the capital. After nearly one month of a continuous pressure on the government, the Maoists ended up assassinating Chief of Armed Police Krishna Mohan Shrestha in January 2003 (Basu & Riaz, 2007).

Within a few days after the assassination of the Chief of the Armed Police, the Chand government initiated a peace agreement. The peace initiative came at a time when all the other democratic parties were sidelined by the King. The political parties were questioning the legitimacy of Chand's government to negotiate as parliament did not exist and Lokendra Bahadur Chand had been appointed as prime minister by the King

without approval of a parliament. For the Maoists it was an opportunity to use the Monarch for their own benefit and engineer a stronger rift between the Monarch and the political parties.

Although sluggish, the initial phase of the negotiation seemed to be going in a positive direction. The Chand government had shown some flexibility on the government's stand. The government had admitted the possibility of a round-table conference to form an all-party government; however, the Maoist leadership maintained their position on a constituent assembly as a precondition for their dialogue.

At a time when the government and the Maoist leadership were in a dilemma over whether to continue the dialogue or not, the army attack in which 19 Maoist cadres were killed during the ceasefire forced the Maoists out of the negotiations. On August 28, talks were suspended from the Maoist side. "Both sides used the talks as a period of respite in the middle of a war" (Basu & Riaz, 2007, p. 175).

Once more, the Maoist leadership had rigorously utilized the ceasefire to expand and strengthen their organizational capability throughout the country. It was at this time that the Maoists had dispatched a company of combatants (close to one hundred) to be deployed in the eastern part of the country, where they lacked military capabilities. It was only after the second ceasefire that the Maoists were able to expand their hold in the economically and socially better-developed eastern region of the country.

In particular, the Maoists were able to garnish the following advantages during and after the second ceasefire in 2003:

- 1) High profile detainees were released, including the suspected assassins of the Chief of Armed Police (Basu & Riaz, 2007, p. 156).
- 2) They opened public relations offices in nearly all the big cities of the country and started direct contacts with the public.
- 3) They used the ceasefire to smuggle arms and recruit cadres (Basu & Riaz, 2007).
- 4) They expanded their organization where they were not able to do so during the insurgency, especially in the eastern part of the country, where people were better off economically and socially.

During and after both ceasefires Prachanda was successful in terms of expanding the organization, building public relations, accumulating funds, and getting the release of most of the cadres from the government jails.

#### **4. The Final Ceasefire 2005**

From the beginning of the armed struggle, the Maoist leadership had been smartly cultivating internal contradictions and crises among the state actors for their own benefits. At the initial stage of the insurgencies, the Maoists psychologically aligned themselves with the King and Royal forces, claiming an undeclared working relationship with the King (*Aghosit karya sambhanda*). At times, there were rumors on the question of Prachanda's existence; some members of the royal family were accused of being Prachanda.

#### **5. Alliances With Democratic Political Parties**

To avoid the military intervention at the initial stage of their insurgency, the Maoist cadres in the villages were constantly convincing the members of the armed forces not to worry about their security. Similar reports were coming from the soldiers reporting from leave from their villages. However, an army barrack was attacked, and arms and ammunition were looted when the insurgency grew large enough to fight against the army. After an emergency was declared and the army mobilized, the Maoists started aligning themselves with whichever party was in opposition in the government. By doing so the Maoists distracted the focus of the ruling political parties from serious agendas of the country; rather, the ruling parties focused more on how to stay in power than give priorities to the burning issues of the country.

The Maoists even went to the extent of, and were successful in, using individual leadership of other political parties against each other. In 2002, during the Holeri incident when then-Prime Minister Koirala tried to mobilize the army against them, they called Koirala a fascist determined to break the peace. However, the Maoists supported Deuba, a member of the same party who ousted Koirala from the post. This generated long-term interparty conflict inside the Nepali Congress party, which benefited the Maoists.

In 2005, when the Maoists reached their “Strategic Offensive” phase, the political power of the country was distributed equally among the three stakeholders: 1) The Monarch, with Royalist supporters, had control over state resources and security. 2) The Maoists, with their party organization, controlled the rural areas. 3) The democratic political parties, with stronger international support but marginal public support, were hardest hit among the three; however, with strong international support, they held an equal power in the Nepalese politics.

Mathematically the power equation looked like all three stakeholders shared the same amount of authority. Mathematically one side would be out-manuevered only when the other two sides aligned to outweigh the third. Although the Maoists had claimed to be in strategic offense, they lacked the capability to win the war militarily over the state, which they had realized.

Although the Maoists claimed to have control over 70% of the total land, there was not a single place that the army could not go and launch an operation at the time of its choosing. Therefore, the Maoist claim of control meant the absence of security forces in all the places at all the time. The situation of Nepal was not like that of Sri Lanka, where geographic boundaries were divided between the rebels and the government.

For the army it was impossible militarily to eradicate the insurgency in the country and to be everywhere at all times to provide security. However, they were strong and motivated enough to launch an operation anywhere in the country at their will. In terms of total control, broadly speaking, it was difficult—rather, impossible—for the security institutions to have a total control over the country because of geographical diversity, lack of poor modern communication and weak administrative arrangements. Lack of government control in some areas, by definition, must be in someone else’s control.

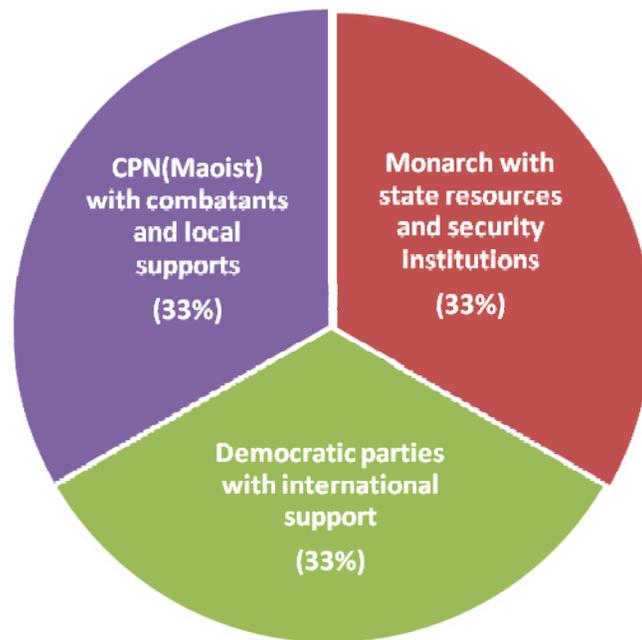


Figure 2. Power distribution among the stakeholders in 2005

Initially, the CPN (Maoist) and the King had been said to be working on a plan to share power in the government. There were rumors that a venue had been fixed for the meeting between the King and the Maoist leadership, but the timing and agendas were not yet fixed. Due to this equation being discussed in the party, the Dr. Bhattarai faction had a strong reservation against this solution. For his disagreement to accept the party decision to align with the King, Dr. Bhattarai, his supporters, and his wife, Hisila Yami, were kept in custody. Dr. Baburam advocated making alliances with other democratic parties to abolish the Monarch from Nepal.

Unfortunately, for the King, the Royal takeover of the executive power of the country on 1 February 2005 generated suspicion among Maoists about the King's intention and his future course of action. Furthermore, the arrest of top leaders of major political parties, including the serving prime minister, raised more doubt over the King's motives. The Maoists were unsure of the King's motives. After rigorous discussions among the Politburo Members and Central Committee Members during the Chunbang

meeting, the Maoist leadership decided to align with the political parties to oust the King from the power. The decision was followed by signing the 12-point agreement in Delhi, India, with Seven Party Alliances (SPA) in 2005.

With this equation shift, the King had mathematically lost his battle even before entering the battlefield. The unified (Maoists and Seven Party Alliance) effort of 66.6% strength could outmaneuver the 33.3% strength (King) that lacked international support. The Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance opposed the King's direct rule; he was forced to return power to the parliament in April 2006, which, in turn, reduced the King's status to that of a ceremonial monarch. He continued as such until 28 May 2008, when he was peacefully deposed, and Nepal became a federal republic.

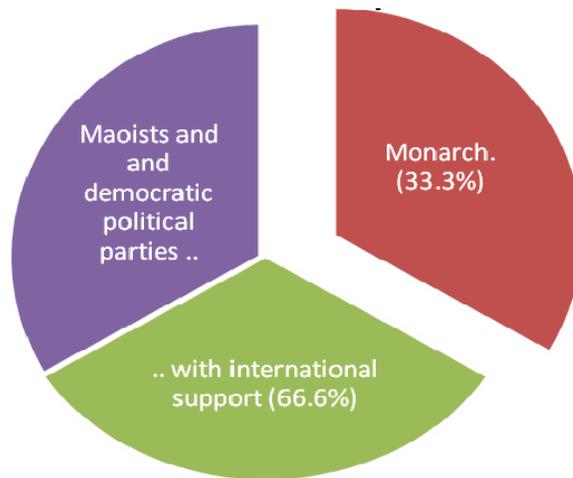


Figure 3. Power shift after alliances among Maoist and Democratic political parties

## 6. Prachanda As a Prime Minister and Out of the Government

Prachanda's credibility, fame, trust, and importance started their fall a few months after he went public. His first public appearances and his address to the Nepalese people were appreciated in the initial stage of his public life. He was considered a person who was successful in convincing others to accept his agendas of insurgency (Roy, 2008). He

was able to convince other political parties, especially the Seven Party Alliance, to shoulder the Maoist agendas, to change Nepal into a republic, and to hold a Constituent Assembly to write a new constitution.

It is claimed that Prachanda was successful in leading his insurgency to a peaceful settlement in which his party became the second-largest party in interim government—and the largest after the constituent assembly elections. All the major demands for which they had initiated an insurgency were fulfilled—except their ultimate aim: “to achieve communism by waging Cultural Revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

However, people and political leaders became uneasy when the Maoist party started acting without accepting other’s existence. Prachanda, declaring himself as the first President of the Democratic Republic of Nepal even before finalizing the date of election, gave an egotistic signal to the people and to other political parties. Prachanda sent a further message, which made the people fear a communist rule when he formed the Young Communist League (YCL) and authorized members, who were seen in the street of Kathmandu and other cities of the country, to engage in coercive activities.

Although these actions might have given the Maoist cadres a sense of power in society, ultimately these actions damaged the images of the Maoist leadership, especially Prachanda. People were tired of intimidation, coercion, and extortion. These activities carried on even after the peace process had begun and the Maoists were considered to be a responsible political party.

Politically, when the Maoists became the largest party in the Constituent Assembly, Prachanda became the prime minister of the country. On August 18, 2008, the first Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal—the Maoists’ Supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal “Prachanda”—was sworn into office. His premiership, in brief, can be summed up as, “Although he was the head of a coalition government, his actions during his brief nine-month tenure were ones of a man who believed he had received a Marxist mandate from the entire country, which was clearly not the case. His inexperience as a governmental leader showed. A series of divisive missteps ensued” (Dunham, 2010).

Right from the first day of his premiership, Prachanda's daringness took him toe-to-toe with India. He broke the tradition of choosing India for his first foreign visit. Instead, he organized a visit to the Beijing Olympics and claimed that it was an apolitical decision. He said he was going to China to support his nation's athletes.

Prachanda was accused of attacking state institutions, such as the judiciary and media houses. The ministries started posting members of bureaus according to their will on the basis of political closeness and personal relations rather than abiding by the existing norms and laws (although similar practices had been exercised by other political parties in the past).

Prachanda's government attempted to have the Indian high priests removed from Nepal's most sacred Hindu temple. Pashupatinath came under heavy criticism within Nepal and from India. Prachanda had underestimated the staying power of Hindu traditionalism, and highly charged street demonstrations forced Prachanda to back down from his unpopular decision (ICG, 2010).

In the process of attacking national institutions, Prachanda miscalculated the strength of the army, which led to his resignation from the government. As Mikel Dunham argues,

His greatest blunder was when he decided that he was securely positioned to oust Nepal's Army Chief, General Rookmangud Katawal. It became a rallying point for most of the ruling parties. They lined up against Prachanda and, on May 4, 2009, Prachanda resigned. Overnight, the Maoist party switched from being the main player in the Constituent Assembly to the antagonists of the Constituent Assembly. (Dunham, 2010)

In addition, Prachanda lost the trust and confidence of national and international audiences by the release of his Shaktikhor video speech. In the tape, he had personally submitted a statement explaining how the Maoist had been smartly able to misguide the international community on the number of combatants. He further said in the video that they were able to raise the number from about five to seven thousand combatants to nearly thirty-two thousand. Even if one-half of them were disqualified, the remaining

number of the combatants would still be double their original strength. This video release was the issue that increased doubt on Prachanda's motives, ethics, and trustworthiness (Dunham, 2010).

The Maoists' behavior in the parliament and outside did not serve them well—the critique of their actions made regular headlines in the national newspapers. Their continuing actions of murder, extortion, and intimidation were out in the public; moreover, their cosmetic apologies could not change the public sentiment.

Continuous obstruction of parliaments, regular street protests in the name of civil supremacy, and demands for the Prime Minister's resignation were adding to the negative sentiments against the Maoists. During one of the Maoists' protests that aimed to paralyze the nation by calling an indefinite strike, the strike was countered head-on by the people. On the sixth day of the strike, tens of thousands of people from all walks of life poured onto the streets of Kathmandu, wearing blue or white shirts (to distinguish themselves from the red-shirted Maoists), demanding that the Maoists lift the strike. The crowd represented civil society members, businessmen, lawyers, doctors, engineers, professors, journalists, artists, and intellectuals. Courageously, they ignored the threats by the Maoists, and demanded that “enough was enough” (Dunham, 2010).

The above-mentioned series of miscalculated actions irritated the public. The people were suspicious that the Maoists' present actions were part of their struggle for power rather than a fight for the people's welfare. This led to mistrust of the Maoist intentions; this indirectly damaged the overall trust and confidence in Prachanda.

The outcomes of above-mentioned actions were clearly noticed during (the present) three failed Prime Minister's elections. With the Maoists being the largest party in the Constituent Assembly, Prachanda has lost thrice in Prime Minister's elections; moreover, there have been voices raised within the party and outside for a different party candidate than Prachanda—most likely Dr. Baburam Bhattarai. This sentiment against Prachanda, which rose to the level of looking for an alternative to him, can put a question mark on his leadership in open competitive politics, which requires a statesman armed with qualities other than a barrel of a gun.

## 7. Visit to China

Traditionally, a first international visit of the Nepalese Prime Minister had been to India. India has been very influential and detrimental in the major political changes (1950, 1960, 1990, and 2006) in Nepal. Even the CPN (Maoist) were using Indian soil as a safe haven, and lots of support was coming from the public that supported the Maoist insurgency in Nepal (Roy, 2008). Moreover, the 12-Point Agreement was signed in Delhi with direct support from some of the members of the Indian political parties. It would have been difficult—rather, impossible—for the political parties to abolish the monarchy if the Indian two-pillar policy (*monarchy* and *democracy* are two stabilizing pillars of Nepalese politics) towards Nepal had not changed. At a later stage in the movement, India did not recognize the Monarchy as a stabilizing factor. This paved the way to indicate that the Monarch was isolated, even by India.

Prachanda's Olympic visit to China was taken negatively by India 1) because it broke the tradition to visit India first for the new Minister of Nepal, 2) because of India's concern about closer relations between CPN (Maoist) and China; 3) and because India does not want increasing Chinese influence in its back yard. Moreover, India was the first country to invite Prachanda for an official visit.

The Maoists decided not to cancel Prachanda's Beijing trip despite an Indian invitation to visit India first. The suggestion that Prachanda should defer his trip to Beijing, along with an official invitation to visit India, was conveyed through Sharad Yadav (*Kathmandu Post*, Aug. 20, 2008). The Maoists decided not to cancel Prachanda's Beijing trip.

This incident was interpreted in diplomatic circles and in the media as a sign of Nepal's pro-China tilt and as a challenge to New Delhi's pre-eminence in the Himalayan country. This initiated a rift between Delhi and Prachanda which eventually proved damaging to Prachanda during the internal conflicts, especially when he decided to sack the Chief of the Army Staff Rookmangud Katawal. It backfired, and Prachanda had to resign from the government as his party lacked political support.

## **8. Decision to Remove the Chief of the Army Staff**

At a time when relations among the generals and the Maoist leadership were still good, Ram Bahadur Thapa, Prachanda's politburo member, became the defense minister. During his eight months' tenure in the Defense Ministry, no initiatives were taken to improve the relationship with the military. Thapa visited Army Headquarter only once.

During his brief visit to Army Headquarters, no informal communication was noticed taking place between the generals and defense minister. Despite the Maoists leading the government, the long-term, deep-rooted rivalry between erstwhile enemies seemed still in play. The visit ended with a very formal briefing by the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS); moreover, no questions or inquiries were asked by any members of the government delegation to the Army Headquarters.

The seed of rivalry among the leadership, especially between the defense minister and then-COAS General Rookmangud Katawal, was initiated when the Army was denied a new recruitment drive. The Defense Ministry's written order to cease the recruiting process and the ministry's decision not to extend the term of eight brigadier generals made the headlines in the national media, escalating an increased rift between the Army and its Defense Ministry. However, the Supreme Court decided in favor of eight brigadiers and extended the term. In these series of conflicting episodes, the Nepal Army's withdrawal from the National Games in protest of the combatants' participation added more fuel to the fire.

The three cases—the Nepal Army's refusal to halt a major recruitment drive, General Katawal's instruction to eight brigadier generals to continue office despite the government's decision not to extend their terms, and the Army's withdrawal from the National Games in protest at the Maoist's participation—pressured Prachanda to take actions against the COAS. (ICG, 2009, p. 3).

The COAS was asked to submit written clarification of alleged acts of insubordination and present himself to a parliamentary hearing committee with the

explanation. Prachanda made up his mind to sack the Chief of Army Staff, concluding that the COAS's explanation was not convincing and was against the norms of the peace process.

However, it turned out to be his greatest miscalculation when deciding he was securely enough positioned to oust Nepal's army chief. It became a rallying point for most of the ruling parties. They lined up against Prachanda and, on May 4, 2009, convinced the president to overrule the PM's decision to sack the COAS. Prachanda resigned. Overnight, the Maoist party switched from being the main player in the Constituent Assembly to the antagonists of the Constituent Assembly. General Rookmangud Katawal remained in office. "Many commentators blamed the Maoists for bringing down their own government through arrogant unilateralism" (ICG, 2009, p. 4).

However, the lack of trust towards the Maoist leadership and concerns for stability were the cause of supporting General Katawal—more so than any great respect for him. As claimed in the International Crisis Group report (2009):

But the real actor, as ever, was New Delhi....as India had been intimately involved in planning the downfall of the government. ... Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee played an important role, telephoning Jhalannath Khanal in China and advising him to return to Kathmandu and withdraw support to the Maoist. (ICG, 2009, p. 5)

Interestingly, the newly appointed acting COAS, General Kul Bahadur Khadka (alleged to be close to the Maoist leadership), was retiring after nearly a month. If General Khadka did not make the COAS within this timeframe, he would retire automatically. The third person in line, General Chattraman Singh Gurung, would become the next chief. The only way General Khadka, if he had the motive and could manipulate the Maoist leadership, could become Army Chief was by sacking the present Army Chief and securing the appointment by political decision.

International Crisis Group's report (2009) claims:

Khadka had clearly been in discussion with UCPN (M) over steps he could take to assist them. Many commentators allege he was willing to integrate all of the Maoists' UN verified combatants and also to appoint

former PLA commanders to senior positions. Such claims may be true but while Khadka could have reduced NA (Nepal Army) opposition to Maoist policies, decisions on integration still rested with the multiparty Army Integration Special Committee (AISC) and officers posts were not in his gift. (p. 4)

“What went wrong?” As ICG (2009) argues,

First the Maoists underestimated the strength of resistance that Katawal and his backers would put up. Second, they stalled on taking action and gave their opponents enough time to outmaneuver them. Both mistakes suggest the skills that had served them well during the conflict have dulled: they failed to respect their enemy and lacked decisiveness. (p. 4)

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#### **IV. WHERE ARE THE MAOISTS NOW?**

McCormick (2007) argues, “It is frequently the inability to win that drives the two sides to the negotiating table and a compromised settlement” (p. 322). In the Nepalese case, initial negotiation did not take place between the government and the insurgents; but the insurgents, realizing winning militarily was unlikely. Therefore, they forged an alliance with other democratic forces to negotiate and topple the King’s regime. Prachanda and his party were given the credit for opting for a negotiated peace settlement with other political parties. This alliance of Seven Political Parties and the Maoists was then able to force a deal with the King’s regime.

Since signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the political and social changes in Nepal have been quite rapid and unprecedented, although the two ideological rivals—the Maoists and democratic parties—still disagree on the core subject of writing a constitution and on the kind of political system that the country is going to adopt.

The main architect of this revolutionary change, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)—CPN (Maoist)—is said to have undergone ideological, strategic, and organizational transformations during this transitional period (Ogura, 2008). Theoretically, they have changed themselves from a party waging guerilla warfare to establish a communist state into a party that has participated in the Constituent Assembly election; they secured the largest number of Constitution Assembly members in the election.

In terms of the organization’s size and electoral victory, the CPN (Maoist) in Nepal is the largest party in the Constituent Assembly. However, strategically CPN (Maoist) seems indecisive. They are unable to end the debate over whether the party should still struggle for proletarian dictatorship or accept a multiparty democratic system. It is still believed that the Maoists have used the political alliances with the other political parties as just a means to defeat the Monarch and that their end remains the same. There is an increasing distrust among the political parties about whether the Maoists are committed to democracy. International Crisis Group argues that the Maoists’ critics

suggest that they will never change: whatever promises the Maoists have made are only cosmetic, designed to sow confusion while they covertly pursue the same strategy of seizing power and establishing totalitarian rule (ICG, 2009, p. 7).

As the leadership of the CPN (Maoist) tried to change according to the prevailing strategic environment of the country, there was a stiff resistance from the hardliner faction within the party (ICG, 2010). The fault lines between the key leaders, namely, Pushpa Kamal Dahal “Prachanda,” Dr Baburam Bhattarai, and Mohan Vaidya “Kiran,” were visible distinctly as the political discourse unfolded after the Jana Andolan II (Jha, 2009).

Initially, the Maoists waged a war against the incumbent government to establish a proletarian dictatorship in Nepal. However, realizing that military victory was impossible, the Maoists made a peace deal with the Seven Party Alliances and joined the mainstream politics of the country. It has been noticed that there was resistance and debate within the party over whether to give up arms and join the democratic forces in a democratic system against which they had waged the war.

This action indicates that the faction seeking peaceful settlement won the debate at that particular time. Maoists concluded that a dictatorship winning militarily in Nepal was unlikely or they thought if they prolonged the armed struggle they were going to lose popular support.

Whatever the reason may be, the Maoist decision to join mainstream politics by giving up arms was vastly welcomed by the people of the country. This decision can be one of the reasons to explain the Maoist victory in the Constituent Assembly elections. The people of Nepal were frustrated with insecurity; they wanted peace at any cost. However, presently internal ideological differences and external lack of trust in the Maoists by the Nepalese people and international stakeholders has put the CPN (Maoist) on the brink of a split, as well as of becoming a declining political power in the country.

## **A. POLITICALLY**

Politically, in terms of electoral victory in the Constituent Assembly election and number of active members in the party, the Maoists are the largest party in the country. Even though the CPN (Maoist) is the largest party in the Constituent Assembly, they have not been able to win the trust and the confidence of Nepalese people, other political parties, and international powers. Due to the above-mentioned reasons, they had to resign from the government and are not able to form a government under their leadership. Although they have signed various commitments and agreements to behave and act as a responsible political party, their actions, such as abduction, intimidation, capturing private properties, and killing of innocents, as well as their coercive actions to impose authority over the population, have contributed to their unpopularity. As Skar reports, “.. 22 persons were killed and 772 people were abducted since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement by the Maoist youth wing, the Young Communist League” (Skar, 2008, p.6).

Being the largest elected political party in the Constituent Assembly (Maoist won 120 seats out of 240 seats in the direct election of the CA), the Maoist-led government had to suddenly resign from the government as other coalition partners refused to support a decision to sack the army chief. The Maoist think that they should naturally lead the government as well as the peace process as they are the ones who brought about the radical political changes in the society, conducted 10 years of “people’s war” and 19 days of the popular movement against the Monarchy, and got the largest backing from the people in the country.

After Pushpa Kamal Dahal “Prachanda” stepped down, the Maoists started a program to protest against the decision of the President to reinstall the army chief. The Maoists called this an “unconstitutional” move of the President. The protest program culminated as the nationwide general strike and mass rallies were organized from 1 May 2010. The general strike had to be called off a week after its launching by the Maoists as it started becoming counterproductive; people started attacking the Maoists physically, and large public rallies started coming out in the street against their protest.

At present within the Maoist party, there are two distinct schools of thought about how to go ahead politically. A faction, led by Mohan Vaidya “Kiran,” still advocates radically changing society and still believes in capturing the state power through forceful means. This group still advocates mass movement and city-based agitations to achieve its ends. The second faction, led by Baburam Bhattarai, who advocates for a logical and honorable conclusion of the peace process, seems to have a more liberal image within the party. This faction also wishes to participate actively in the constitution-making process and improve the Maoist party’s image internationally.

An intense debate is taking place within the Maoist party between these two factions. The chairman, Prachanda, however, has been successful in remaining in the leadership position by playing one group against the other. As Jha argues, “Within the Maoists, Dr Bhattarai and his line prevailed but Prachanda continues to remain central to any deal-making” (Jha, 2010, p. 12).

The divide between Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai was even more visible during the present PM election process. Prachanda did not want Baburam Bhattarai to be a candidate from his party for the prime minister’s post. Bhattarai’s group wanted the option for the prime minister’s candidate to be kept open with the hope that the other major political parties would agree to support Baburam in case he stood as the candidate for a prime minister. After the first round of contests, in which the Constituent Assembly was unable to elect a PM, Baburam gave an interview to the *Kantipur Daily* saying he is not power hungry, but if his candidacy could garner the support for consensus government, which he thinks is very much essential to take the peace process to its logical end and to make the constitution on time, he is ready. Baburam’s remark brought ripples in the Nepalese political circle, and Prachanda’s followers reacted very aggressively against his views.

As the transitional period is delayed, the popular support for the Maoist party is waning day by day. When Prachanda went public and signed the Peace Accord in Baluwatar in 2006, his popularity was at its height. The performance of Prachanda’s nine-month government unmet expectations of the PLA combatants and the families of

the dead combatants, and the involvement of combatants and YCL in criminal activities, smuggling, and assassinations were all in contradiction to Prachanda's words and deeds.

While in the government, as Jha (2010) argues, the Maoists used the state to extend patronage and protection to their cadre, and make money as well as make symbolic gestures to show they would be different from the older parties. The use of the state to expand party influence grew after the Maoists took over the government in August 2008. These actions further deteriorated their popularity.

The Maoists' support base in Terai had shrunk after the emergence of Terai-based parties and the splitting off of Matrika Prasad Yadav's group from the Maoist Party. In fact, most of the leaders who launched the Madhesi movement in the plains were ex-Maoists; a similar trend is visible among the other ethnic groups. During this transitional period the popularity of the Maoists may be spiraling downwards (Jha, 2010).

Maoists are desperately trying to establish themselves outside and inside the country as a responsible political party with respect for the rules of the game. However, their own internal differences and conflicts are getting so complicated even Prachanda is now being seriously challenged within his party. Also due to his dubious character, there is very little trust from other political parties and international stakeholders in him.

Although they are the largest party in the Constituent Assembly, their coercive actions, lack of commitment in fulfilling signed commitments, and periodic rhetoric that they are in the path to capture state power have made the people and international powers distrust them. Furthermore, their internal conflicts among the top leaders have made the party weaker internally and externally. This indicates their lack of leadership in managing the party and external political environment in an open political context.

Chairman Prachanda has been for the first time challenged by two of the party's standing committee members. The recent differences among the top three leaders (Prachanda, Baburam, and Kiran) after presenting three separate conflicting papers at the Central Committee Meeting is a serious concern for the party's unity and Prachanda's leadership. It is noticed that all three leaders are going against the party direction not to gather cadres and giving orientation on certain documents issued by the standing

committee. They have been secretly massing their factions at different levels and trying to give orientation on their papers to garner support.

If the Maoist party cannot prepare a common document from among these three documents, and voting takes place to choose a paper from among the three in the extended plenum, then the chances for the party to split are very high.

If the Maoist leadership had behaved and acted according to their commitments to build a corruption-free Nepal and had gotten rid of nepotism and the parochial system, then they could have harnessed an opportunity to gain and build the trust of the people. A lack of specific policy plans, or lack of statesmanship in an open political environment, has degraded the party as well as made the party unpopular. While in the government, similar to other political parties of the past, the Maoists failed to fulfill the aspirations of the people. They abused the state resources to expand their party while in the government, which could be clearly seen by the people (Jha, 2010). These aforementioned weaknesses and internal conflicts have seriously weakened the Maoist party politically to a point where their previous political position would be very difficult or be unlikely to be regained.

## **B. STRATEGICALLY**

Strategically the Maoists were very successful during the insurgency as well as at the initial stages of the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. However, the more they became open to democratic political environments and got exposed to external dealings, the more their status declined. They made many commitments and agreements which hardly got fulfilled. Their promises and actions were contradictory; many national and international stakeholders were suspicious. Their strategic moves and actions seriously backfired on them to a point that, if not withdrawn, they would face serious consequences from the same public that had “supported” them during the people’s movement.

The biggest question is whether the Maoists have genuinely embarked on the path of peaceful politics. Their critics suggest that they will never change: whatever promises

they have made are only cosmetic, designed to sow confusion while they covertly pursue the same strategy of establishing totalitarian rule in its place (ICG, 2009, p. 7).

Their motive of capturing power through force has been continuously practiced since the beginning of the agreement to present day. These raises the questions: Can the Maoists do politics without their coercive apparatus and is the Nepali Times right when it states: “The right of Maoists to hold on to their coercive apparatus must be enshrined in any new constitution if we want to have a true democracy” (*Nepali Times*, 2010, p. 512). Their true motive has confused the public more because of the organizational structure and because of YCL, which is militarily organized from the central to village level.

After the Kharipati meeting in 2008, the CPN (M) had two clear divisions in the political thoughts in the party: The hardliner leader Kiran presented a document that claimed that a suitable time had come for popular uprising and setting up a people's republic. The hardliner leader's view was contrary to Chairman Prachanda's, who produced a document stating that the party should move ahead with creating a new statute in favor of Democratic Party politics. The hardliners blamed the current Maoists' leadership for betraying the spirit of the people's war and being more into luxury after holding power and also for sidelining the revolutionary leaders from important positions of the party and filling those positions up with those who support his steps.

Currently, the two factions supporting Dr. Bhattarai and Vaidya have more or less come to a point of understanding against their current chairman, which could be seen in the recent Central Committee meetings, where the chairman had to face a tough challenge regarding the current political strategy and nomination of the PM candidate. “Dahal will try to block Baburam Bhattarai, even if it means sitting in the opposition again. But the balance of power in the party has shifted to Bhattarai and today he is in a stronger position than he was six months ago” (Jha, 2010).

For the Maoists, the current interim period is a transitional phase to destroy the “old mechanism” and build a new state structure through the CA constitution-making process (ICG, 2007). If this succeeds, they will declare the “peaceful revolution” a

victory for their new strategy. If the process is derailed, they will try to lead a more traditional “revolution” in the form of a mass insurrection, but not the return to full-scale insurgency (ICG, 2007).

The Maoist’s present anti-Indian rhetoric has been taken very seriously by New Delhi. Furthermore, India is concerned about the issue of a recent tape scandal that showed Mahara, who heads the foreign section of the party, talking to a Chinese nationalist and explaining a requirement of 500 million rupees (about US\$ 7 million) to form a new Maoist government and to neutralize the south. On top of that, the visit of a high-level delegation to Nepal immediately after the telephone scandal may have signaled India about China’s concern in Nepal.

Considering the Maoists’ present position nationally and internationally, it can be argued that due to their strategic failures to convince the people, the political parties, and the international stakeholders of their true motives, the Maoists are strategically sidelined. Prachanda is having difficulties managing the internal games and balancing the external ones, which in turn is weakening the organization internally and externally.

### **C. STRUCTURALLY**

After their decision to give up armed struggle, following the successful April 2006 movement, the Maoists went through structural changes in the party organizations, among the combatants, and in the People’s government (Ogura, 2008). Before Jana Andolan II, the Maoist organization was focused to support the rural-based People’s War they had been waging. After the ending of the People’s War, they carried out structural changes to suite the “peaceful development of the revolution.” To suit their changed strategy, they become more focused on urban centers (Ogura, 2008). Major structural changes carried out during this transitional phase are: 1) they dissolved the People’s government, as demanded by the major political parties and the international communities; 2) they have kept their PLA combatants in the UN–designated Cantonments as per the CPA; 3) many PLA political commissars were transferred from the military apparatus to the party organization (Skar, 2008); 4) they have expanded and strengthened the YCL, which has become the coercive tool of the Maoists and is more or

less structured like their combat organization (Skar, 2008); 5) after the merger with CPN (Unity Centre), Maoists have expanded their Standing Committee to 16 members, Politburo to 46 members, and Central Committee to 139 members to accommodate the leaders from Unity Centre.

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## V. CONCLUSION

The Nepalese Maoist Insurgency under Prachanda's leadership, without strong visible external support and without achieving a military victory over the state, rose extensively in a very short time. It is Prachanda's ability (as a political entrepreneur) to balance the "inside games" and "outside games" to maneuver through oppositions and constraints that yielded the Maoist insurgency rise to power in Nepal. However, Prachanda failed to demonstrate a similar kind of leadership ability once his party formed a government. His leadership became less popular in an open democratic political environment, and failed to address a variety of issues that required the trust of the people and the confidence of other political parties in the Maoists actions.

This study does not particularly focus on the reasons of the Maoists' failure to remain in power after securing political victory in the Constitution Assembly election and even after forming a government under its leadership. However, it opens a door to interested scholars to investigate the reasons for its failure even after securing a political victory and forming a government under its leadership. The CPN (Maoist) failed to remain in power as well as was unable to deliver the promises that it had made during the insurgency; furthermore, it abused the state resources, in similar ways as previous political parties, to expand its bases in the areas where its influence was less and to recruit its cadres into different government and non-government institutions.

To prepare to rebel, Prachanda had made an in-depth evaluation of the overall conditions of the country as well as advantages and disadvantages of the Maoists' launching an insurgency. He had also categorically differentiated the social groups that were easy and those difficult to motivate. The strengths and weaknesses of the government and their party were also analyzed and considered in advance. By evaluating the overall political, geographical, and social environment of the country, the leadership concluded: 1) the geographical situation is the most favorable for waging guerilla war with a direct link with the people; 2) Nepalese armed struggle cannot take the form of a direct or positional warfare against the enemy at the beginning; 3) initiate and develop

guerilla wars in different parts of the country by taking peasant revolution as the backbone; 4) people's support will increase if the tactics are pursued carefully; and 5) mobilize the people abroad, especially in India, for logistical purposes.

In the process internal disputes and external constraints were sure to exist. However, there seemed very few issues that came out of the party's control. This suggests that Prachanda was able to manage these internal games efficiently without letting them grow out of proportion. The internal differences within the party were managed very successfully by Prachanda during the insurgency. The most serious issue that concerned the party leadership and attracted outside attention was in Chubang in 2005, which eventually ended with a compromise between Prachanda and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai.

Prachanda's leadership qualities facilitated the Maoists' growth in Nepal. They gained political success without military victory and eventually won an electoral victory in the Constituent Assembly. Internally, Prachanda was able to wage a war against a democracy that was witnessing a positive economic growth, and he was successful in bringing an electoral victory to his party. However, in an open democratic political environment Prachanda is challenged internally as well as externally. Even having the largest party in the Constituent Assembly, he was not able to convince other political parties to accept his leadership. This shows that Prachanda was successful in waging an insurgency in an environment that was conducive to rebellion, and he outmaneuvered most of the stakeholders who countered him; however, he seems less prepared to compete in an open democratic environment that seeks leadership qualities other than those needed for rebellion.

The Maoists created an environment of distrust of the Maoists' intentions by attacking media houses, religious institutions, and security organizations. The attacks, which were against the interests of peace mediation parties, took place while the Maoists were in a coalition government but without approval of their coalition partners.

The internal difference among the leadership within the Maoist party, over what kind of policy the party should adopt in this particular stage of revolution, is still very

much under discussion. There are serious discussions being held on this issue, and the party is at the moment divided into two factions. Furthermore, the Maoist party's lack of commitment to their past agreements has generated lack of trust among the people and among political parties. These events forced Prachanda to resign from the government.

The Nepalese insurgency shows that a leadership is one of the most important factors that guide an insurgency to its successful destiny. Prachanda's understanding of prevailing political, social, and cultural grievances of the country encouraged him to organize a rebel party, and he manipulated an existing environment favorable to rebellion. The leadership of the communist party planned its future actions in detail and implemented them with a workable plan and a correct strategy. The leadership was flexible enough to switch its strategy from classic communist ideology of class struggle to identity issues when it was deemed necessary.

The Maoists were shrewd enough to play on contradictions. They played one rival against another by aligning with one side for their own benefit. When military victory was deemed unlikely in the current world context, their timely switching to political settlements demonstrated a correct step that led the Maoist insurgency to a political victory in Nepal.

However, the same leadership of Prachanda that was able to facilitate the insurgency to grow from a mere 70-odd active workers in 1996 to the largest political party in 2008 is facing a dilemma over the political course that the party should adopt as well as failing to garner support and trust from within and without. A question arises: Will a rebel leadership that was successful during an insurgency fail to lead and garner support in an open democratic system that seeks compromises and adherence to commitments? The answer is yet to be known.

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