

# The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist): Transformation from an Insurgency Group to a Competitive Political Party

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Our party has adopted a resolution on the 'development of democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century' and put forward some new theses. Among others, the most important thesis has been to accept and organize a multiparty competition within a stipulated constitutional framework even in the future socialist state. This idea of multiparty competition within a socialist state is a big step forward in the revitalization and the development of a socialist democracy.

Prachanda,  
Chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

The April 2006 movement was remarkable not only because it ended monarchical rule in Nepal but also because it marked the beginning of the transformation of the Communist Party of Nepal, Maoist or CPN (Maoist) from an insurgent group to a competitive political party.

The transformation started when the CPN (Maoist) made a categorical commitment to the multiparty system and peaceful politics, a commitment that was documented in the 12-point understanding reached between the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the CPN (Maoist) in November 2005.

This understanding provided the basis for an unprecedented 19-day-long mass movement, *Jana Andolan II*, in which four to five million people participated, and which led to a series of important political developments: the reinstatement of the dissolved House of Representatives (HOR) on 24 April; the declaration on 18 May, which called for the election of a Constituent Assembly (CA); the temporary suspension of the monarchy; the formation of the SPA government on 27 April, with G.P. Koirala as Prime Minister; the beginning of formal negotiations on 26 May between the CPN (Maoist) and government; and a series of summit meetings between the SPA and the CPN (M) that resulted in several important decisions being taken, including the signing of the Comprehensive Peace

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<sup>1</sup> Speech by Prachanda to "Hindustan Times Leadership Summit 2006", 18 November 2006.  
*European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 33-34: 39-71 (2008-2009)

Agreement (CPA) on 21 November and the promulgation of the Interim Constitution on 15 January 2007.

All these developments were instrumental in the election of the Constituent Assembly and in setting new goals for the transitional phase—the restructuring of the Nepalese state through the abolition of monarchical rule and the formation of a republic, arms management and the creation of an inclusive democracy. One of the most important parts of all the bilateral decisions and agreements that have taken place in this period relates to conflict transformation against the backdrop of a decade-long war between the Maoist combatants and the State's security forces. The CPN (Maoist) itself took several decisions to ensure its transformation from an armed rebel group to a competitive party:

- In accordance with one of the new components of its ideology and principles, it pledged allegiance to the multiparty competitive system.
- On 21 November 2006, it announced the end of the decade-long insurgency.
- It agreed to place its soldiers from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in cantonments and to lock up their weapons under UN supervision.
- Its parallel governments—from village to central levels, along with its *Jana Adalat* (People's Court)—were dissolved.
- It changed from a rebel group to a mainstream political party by scrapping its military-related organizations, abandoning its wartime strategies and re-creating its organizational setup to reflect the changes.
- It joined the Interim Legislature, with 83 representatives (the total number of members in the Interim Legislature is 330). It will soon become part of the interim government.

In one respect or another, the transformation of the CPN (Maoist) is similar to transformations that liberal political parties in the third world and communist parties around the world have undergone. Just like the CPN (Maoist), most liberal parties in third-world countries originated in one form and changed into another; just like the CPN (Maoist), they also resorted to taking up arms at one time or another to gain independence from colonial rule or liberation from a despotic regime; and just like the CPN (Maoist), communist parties throughout the world started out with the ideology of class struggle and armed revolution, but later accepted

bourgeois democracy, which they had at one time unsuccessfully tried to overthrow. Liberal democracy, which is known as bourgeois democracy in Marxist vocabulary, has now become the ultimate destination of many communist parties in the world.

But in other respects, the changes in the CPN (Maoist) and the party's role on the Nepalese political scene are unique. Unlike many other communist insurgent groups around the world and unlike the previous communist rulers of Eastern Europe, the influence the CPN (Maoist) has had on political processes and on the populace in Nepal has never diminished.

In many developing countries, such as Indonesia and Peru, communist parties, which were once the most powerful forces, have turned into insignificant political entities; but the CPN (Maoist), despite completely abandoning its policy of capturing state power solely through an insurgency, has emerged as one of the most potent forces likely to shape the future of Nepal.

The salient features of the CPN (Maoist)'s transformation are given in the table below. Two important documents referred to in the table are the 'Common Minimum Policy and Programme' of the CPN (Maoist)'s United Revolutionary People's Council, September 2001, and the 'Broad Political Agreements made between the SPA and the CPN (Maoist)' in November 2006, which the CPN (Maoist) consider to be a "victory document".

On the basis of literature reviews, documentary analyses, media reports and personal interviews with some of the CPN (Maoist) leaders, this paper will attempt to trace the trends and events that led to the fundamental transformation of the CPN (Maoist) from an insurgent group to a party competing for state power through peaceful means<sup>2</sup>. The theoretical proposition of party transformation stipulates that the development of a party from birth to maturity is characterized by changes in the party's goals and activities, and that eventually, the party acquires new characteristics, i.e. de-ideologization, downgrading of the role of party members, increased access to a variety of interest groups, and a deemphasizing of the class grade.<sup>3</sup> A transformation from the genetic phase to organizational maturity follows, with some transitional characteristics—from a system of solidarity to a system of interest, from adherence to the party's manifest ideology to concentration on organizational survival, from domination of the environment to adaptation to the environment, and from leaders having a maximum

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<sup>2</sup> Interviews with Baburam Bhattarai (19 April 2006 and 13 May 2006), Krishna Bahadur Mahara (4 June 2006), Suresh Ale Magar (11 December 2006) and Khim Lal Devkota (12 December 2006).

<sup>3</sup> O.Kirchheimer, 1966: 177-200.

freedom of choice to restrictions being placed on the leaders' freedom of manoeuvrability<sup>4</sup>. A previous study of party transformation in Nepal found that the Nepali Congress party (NC) and the CPN (UML), in the course of their transformations from grass-root movements to contenders for state power, acquired new characteristics: the parties grew in size and organizational complexity; they watered down their more strident ideological strains; they became involved in divisive politics; they appropriated state resources for the benefit of party-clients, etc.<sup>5</sup>

This paper is divided into five sections. The first section briefly examines the details of the CPN (Maoist)'s transformation, drawing on comparative experiences and party-transformation theory. The second section provides a narrative picture of the origin and evolution of the CPN (Maoist) vis-à-vis other communist parties of Nepal. The third section provides a glimpse of the Maoist insurgency. The fourth section analyzes the national and international situations that forced the CPN (Maoist) to review its ideological goals and strategies. The last section examines whether the transformation of the CPN (Maoist) into a competitive party is reflected in the party's current configuration, organizational structure, ideology and support base.

### **The Origin and Evolution of the CPN (Maoist)**

The Maoist insurgency (February 1996 – May 2006) could be viewed as one of three paths that broader communist movements have taken in Nepal. The other two paths that communist parties have taken are:

- i) participation in the parliamentary process without fully accepting liberal democracy (this was the path taken by some small communist parties such as the United People's Front (UPF) and the Nepal Workers and Peasants' Party (NWPP) in the post-1990 period);
- ii) the transformation of a hard-line communist party into a parliamentary party that also accepted all the mechanisms of liberal democracy as achieved by the CPN (UML) during the post-1990 political setup.

According to Path One, a non-conformist but participatory approach, the communist party was to adhere to the wider communist philosophy and goal, but at the same time, participate in the bourgeois democratic process. The communist movement in Nepal began with this approach, which was similar to the Bolsheviks' aims before the October Revolution.

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<sup>4</sup> A. Panebianco, 1988.

<sup>5</sup> K. Hachhethu, 2002.

Table 1: The Transformation of the CPN (Maoist)

Contents of ideology	Common Minimum Policy and Programmes	Broad Political Agreements
Core ideology	Marxism-Leninism-Maoism	Democracy, peace, prosperity; state restructuring; progressive social and economic transformation; independence, integrity and sovereignty of the state
Key strategy: Prachanda Path	A fusion of the Chinese model of protracted people's war in the countryside and the Soviet model of urban armed insurrection	Arms management: placing the Maoist combatants in cantonments and locking up their weapons (reciprocated by the Nepalese army)
People's government	At village, area, district, regional and national levels	Dissolved. Interim local bodies will be formed at district, city and village levels on the basis of agreements between the SPA and the CPN (Maoist)
Political system	New People's Democracy based on the Chinese model created by Mao, under the leadership of peasants and workers and a dictatorship of the proletariat	Commitment to a multiparty competitive system, civil liberties, fundamental rights, human rights, freedom of the press, rules of law and other standards and democratic values
The Monarchy issue	Communist Republic	Determine the fate of the monarchy as an institution during the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly through a simple majority vote
Model of inclusion	Federalism on the basis of ethnicity and region, and right to self determination; end of all forms of patriarchal exploitation; abolition of untouchability; special rights for women and Dalits	Establish an inclusive, democratic and forward-looking state by abolishing the centralized and unitary structure of the state
Economy	End of feudalism and exploitation of backward groups; nationalization of state resources; revolutionary land reform to end feudal land ownership	End of feudalism and exploitation of backward groups; land reform to end feudal land ownership; protection and promotion of national capital, industries and resources
Religion	Secular	Secular

When it was founded in 1949, the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) —the parent organization of all communist parties in Nepal— proclaimed that its main goal was to establish a ‘New People’s Democracy’ (NPD), a derivative of Mao’s Chinese model. NPD was, as written in Mao’s *Red Book*, ‘a political system established by a broader united front of labour, farmers, national capitalists, the middle class, intellectuals, youth, women and students, on the basis of unity between workers and peasants and the leadership of proletariat’.<sup>6</sup> The CPN also adopted core components of Marx and Lenin’s communist ideologies, i.e. class struggle, armed revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat; but it added its own native contents, i.e. land reform, instituting a republic, nationalism based on anti-India and anti-West sentiments, and non-conformism with the Westminster system. The CPN upheld both the theoretical and native contents of communism in Nepal.<sup>7</sup> Yet at the same time, it participated in the first experiment with democracy (1951-1960) and obtained four seats in parliament at the time. The main strategy in Path One involved the communist parties’ abiding by bourgeois democratic processes until favourable conditions emerged for an armed revolution.

In the early 1970s, with the formation of the CPN (Fourth Convention), the CPN ceased pursuing Path One. The CPN (Fourth Convention) was the immediate parent organization of all radical communist groups professing Maoism or Maoist thought in Nepal—among others, CPN (Masal, Mohan Bikram group), CPN (Mashal, Mohan Vaidya group), and CPN (Unity Centre). The CPN (Unity Centre) —consisting of several Maoist splinter groups, including the present CPN (Maoist), before its split in 1995— initially continued to pursue Path One methods during the post-1990 period. Through its political wing, the UPF (later renamed the People’s Front [PF] because of the party’s split and realignment) the CPN (Unity Centre) contested all three parliamentary elections and two local elections held in the 1990s. It won a minimum of six seats (in 1999) and a maximum of nine (in 1991) out of the 205 seats in the HOR. Its proclaimed aim for becoming involved in the electoral and political process was to ‘expose the sham of parliamentary democracy’.<sup>8</sup> And in a move that was antithetical to the armed revolution, all those championing Path One, i.e. the CPN in the 1950s, the CPN (Fourth Convention) in the 1970s and 1980s, the CPN (Unity Centre) in the 1990s and even the CPN (Maoist) advocated an alternative course, demanding the election of the CA. But the CPN (Maoist)

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<sup>6</sup> *Excerpts of Mao Tse Tung’s Speeches* (in Nepali) (Peiking: Bideshi Bhasa Press, 1972)

<sup>7</sup> *Text of the First Manifesto of the CPN, September 1949*

<sup>8</sup> K. Hachhethu, 1992.

finally emerged as a separate party when it refused to abide by the methods outlined in Path One and opted for the course of armed revolution. The Maoist insurgency was, therefore, a rejection of both Path One and Path Two, paths that were taken up by other communist parties in Nepal.

Path Two, the transformation of a communist party into a parliamentary party, called for the party to depart from some core principles of communism such as armed revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat, nationalization of national resources, and commitment to one-party communist rule. The CPN (UML) chose this path. The CPN (UML) originated as a Naxalite group in the early 1970s, committed to Mao's NPD ideology. After initially working to annihilate class enemies, the CPN (UML) turned into a mainstream party committed to the 1990 constitutional arrangement, which championed constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. Besides abandoning its previous goal of instituting a one-party communist system in favour of the multiparty system, it also changed its strategy for achieving its political aims—from its initial aim of using an armed revolution to one of engaging in peaceful political competition. At its fifth national convention, in 1993, the CPN (UML) adopted a new ideological programme called *Janatako Bahudaliya Janbad* (People's Multiparty Democracy, or PMD). The PMD has adopted all major components of liberal democracy, i.e. fundamental and human rights of citizens, peaceful competition among political parties, periodic elections, majority party rule, supremacy of the constitution, separation of powers and rule of law.<sup>9</sup> Path Two was a post-1990 phenomenon. The path has been condemned by many radical leftists, including the CPN (Maoist), as a revisionist and deviationist approach. As stated above, on the eve of their armed insurgency, the CPN (Maoist) also rejected Path One.

Path Three, armed revolution, meant that the communist party would resort to *Janabadi Kranti* (people's revolution), in accordance with Mao's prescription of using the three magic weapons for mounting an NPD revolution: i) creating a disciplined party infused with the Marxism-Leninism doctrine; ii) creating a disciplined army to work under the party's leadership; and iii) creating a united front of all parties and groups willing to unite and work under the control of the communist party.<sup>10</sup> In 1995 a faction of leaders and workers among the communists decided that it was time to put these ideas into action and carry out a fully fledged movement based on these ideas. That group, which subsequently became

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<sup>9</sup> *Text of Organizational Report Passed by National Congress of CPN (UML) 1993*, Kathmandu: CPN (UML) Office, 1993

<sup>10</sup> *Op. Cit* 6 .

the CPN (Maoist), split from the CPN (Unity Centre) and formally established itself as a separate party. The party members who wanted to continue working through parliamentary processes inherited the party name CPN (Unity Centre), and the splinter-faction, which advocated implementing an armed revolution, named itself the CPN (Maoist).

The CPN (Maoist)'s implementation of Path Three was, however, not the first instance of a communist party in Nepal taking this path. Long before the CPN (Maoist) insurgency started, Path Three had first been experimented with for a short period in the 1970s by another communist party known as the Jhapali group. Against the backdrop of the Cultural Revolution in China and the Naxalite uprising in India, the Jhapali group followed the Naxalite dictum of class annihilation, which resulted in the killing of eight landlords. But the Jhapali group was suppressed by the then *Panchayat* establishment; and eventually, with the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, the group turned into a parliamentary party with a new name —the CPN (UML). But unlike the unsuccessful revolution by the Jhapali group, the CPN (Maoist) was able to stir up a sizable movement because the party was able to exploit people's discontent with the post-1990 political system, which was based on constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy; the CPN (Maoist) launched a full-scale armed revolution in February 1996.

The CPN (Maoist) insurgency could, therefore, be viewed as a revival of Path Three. The CPN (Maoist) vowed to dismantle the prevailing political structure through an armed revolution and replace it with a new political system known as the NPD. This goal was clearly stated in a resolution passed by the CPN (Maoist) on the eve of their insurgency. 'This plan of initiation of the people's war will be based on the principle that everything is an illusion except state power. While remaining firm on the principal aim of the armed struggle to capture political power for the people, the party expresses its firm commitment to wage a relentless struggle against all forms of deviationist thoughts and trends, including economism, reformism and anarchism'.<sup>11</sup>

When tracing the genesis of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, we have to take into account the role that the current leader of the CPN (Maoist), Prachanda, has played in keeping alive the more vehement forms of communist ideology. In the years leading up to the insurgency, the Maoist groups led by Prachanda never wavered from their non-conformist stance regarding the post-1990 political setup, and they have continuously

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<sup>11</sup> *Text of Plan for the Historic Initiation of the People's War adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in September 1995.*



adhered to the ideology of class war, as evidenced by the stands Prachanda's parties have taken since 1990.

- The United National People's Movement, a coalition of hard-left parties, of which the Prachanda-led faction (then known as Mashal) was a part, wanted to continue the 1990 mass movement until a New People's Democracy had been created in Nepal; this aim was different from the United Left Front (ULF)'s aim, which was to restore the multiparty system.
- Mashal (Prachanda), like other Maoist parties, showed its antipathy to the monarchy and democracy by refusing to make suggestions to the Constitution Reformation Commission (1990).
- The CPN (Unity Centre), along with Prachanda's faction as a partner, condemned as reactionary the new 1990 constitution, which implemented a system based on parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy.
- The political report adopted by the Unity Congress of the CPN (Unity Centre) in December 1991 stated, 'Our political strategy is to establish a new democratic republic of Nepal with a people's democratic dictatorship against feudalism and imperialism and on the basis of an alliance of peasants and workers under the leadership of the proletariat. ...For this, it is a must to adopt the line of a protracted people's war with a strategy of encirclement of the city from the countryside.' This Unity Congress elected Prachanda as General Secretary of the CPN (Unity Centre).
- The Prachanda faction of the CPN (Unity Centre) boycotted the 1994 parliamentary elections, and it adopted a new name, CPN (Maoist), in February 1995. The third expanded meeting of the party's central committee, held in March 1995, decided to launch the protracted people's war, which started in February 1996 and rapidly gained momentum.

### **A Glimpse of the Maoist Insurgency**

The CPN (Maoist)'s armed insurgency was the most powerful anti-establishment movement that Nepal has ever seen.

The first armed movement launched by the Nepali people in 1950-51 against the 104-year oligarchic Rana regime ended after the NC's *Mukti Sena* (liberation army) captured more than 50 per cent of Nepali

territory.<sup>12</sup> The 1990 *Jana Andolan* (mass movement), which ended the three-decade-long authoritarian partyless *Panchayat* system (1960-1990) and restored the multiparty system, was largely an urban and middle-class based movement.<sup>13</sup> But the CPN (Maoist)'s People's War was nothing like the previous insurgencies and movements that had occurred in Nepal. The People's War started in February 1996 with a ragtag army of a couple of hundred insurgents, but within a short time span, it spread to all of Nepal; and except for the two districts of Manang and Mustang, which remained unaffected, the armed conflict between state security forces and the Maoist guerrillas affected everyone. At least 13,000 persons lost their lives during the insurgency.

According to the Maoists, the insurgency, passed through the strategic defence and strategic balance stages, and in 2005, reached the strategic offensive stage. With the advancement of the insurgency, the military capacity of the Maoists also increased. In 1996, the Maoists had only 200 very active cadres. But the number of soldiers in their people's army alone was reportedly 35,000 in 2005. Its PLA had seven divisions. The PLA was 'one of the largest non-state military formations in the world'.<sup>14</sup>

The Maoists not only increased their military strength but also expanded their own administrative areas. They claim that they had seized most rural parts of the country, limiting the presence of the 'old regime' to the capital and district headquarters. The CPN (Maoist) had four tiers of government: central (United Revolutionary People's Council), regional (nine autonomous regional governments), district and village/city.

As outlined in the blueprint of insurgency prepared by the CPN (Maoist) a year before the insurgency started, it predicted a successful outcome to the insurgency on the following accounts.<sup>15</sup>

- The geographical situation (of Nepal) is favourable for waging guerrilla war.
- A good mass base for guerrilla war can be created from the members of ethnic groups who have been oppressed.
- There is no possibility of a direct military clash with the enemies who hold political power. The people's armed forces could take advantage of this to seize a definite area.
- By using peasant revolution as the backbone of the insurgency, by centralizing activities in rural areas and by relying on and uniting

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<sup>12</sup> P. R. Uprety, 1992: 183.

<sup>13</sup> K. Hachhethu, 1990: 190-92

<sup>14</sup> D. Kumar, 2004: 12 (unpublished)

<sup>15</sup> *Text of Strategy and Tactics of Armed Struggle in Nepal, Adopted by the Third Expanded meeting of the Central Committee of the CPN (Maoist) in March 1995.*

with poor peasants, guerrilla warfare can be initiated and used in different parts of the country.

- The people's support for the insurgency will carry on increasing if the revisionists of the right are thoroughly exposed and if the tactics of armed struggle are painstakingly pursued.
- The pace of development of the armed struggle to establish the people's alternative revolutionary power would be faster and inspires us to undertake bold tactics to achieve the same.
- Nepalese people working in foreign countries —mainly those working in India— would be mobilized if we were to conduct political work among them and if we were to use the Indian territory for providing logistical support for the armed struggle in Nepal.

This well-thought-out blueprint for insurgency indicated that the Maoists could advance their armed struggle if they utilized Nepal's topography and its geographical proximity with India and if they mobilized the peasants and the excluded ethnic groups and employed guerrilla tactics carefully. Yet there were others factors, such as social injustice, unemployment, underdevelopment, problems of exclusion, lack of good governance etc. to fuel the insurgency.<sup>16</sup>

All these indicators encouraged the Maoists to launch their people's war, which started on 13 February 1996 with attacks on police stations in the remote areas of Rolpa, Rukum and Sindhuli districts. Initially, the Maoists limited their attacks to remote areas where the state's presence was minimal, and they targeted schools, health posts, agricultural banks, NGOs, police stations, Village Development Committees (VDC), and village level organizations of parliamentary parties. Thabang village in Rolpa district, which was designated as the Maoist headquarters, could be viewed as the sort of locale that the Maoists wanted to establish their bases in: Thabang village was far away from the headquarters of its district; it did not have motorable roads; it had forests; it was inhabited by members of deprived communities who had long suffered from poverty and unemployment; and it was a stronghold of communist ideology. In fact, the conditions in most villages in remote areas in Nepal are not very different from those of Thabang village.

Cleansing opponents was the main strategy the Maoists used for creating their own territory, base areas. They killed civilians considered to be 'enemies of the people', such as party workers, elected representatives,

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<sup>16</sup> For details see, A. Karki and D. Seddon (eds.), 2003; M. Hutt (ed), 2004; D. Thapa and B. Sijapati, 2003; D. Thapa (ed), 2003; S.D. Muni, 2003; A. Karki and B. Bhattarai (eds.), n.d..

landlords, businessmen, moneylenders, 'exploiters', and police informants. The Maoists launched the people's war in a most organized way and adopted a uniform plan of action everywhere: they would first disarm local people by seizing their weapons and then in broad daylight kill people they accused of being 'anti-people'. The brutality of their methods was explained by a witness: 'People have been killed while they were eating, after being dragged out of their house into the courtyard and killed in the presence of family members; victims have been tied to trees, hacked and their bodies shot in various places so that they die in excruciating pain'.<sup>17</sup> The Maoist strategy was to create a reign of terror. Their next targets were banks, NGOs and INGOs. Consequently, the people's representatives for local elected bodies and parties' local cadres fled to district headquarters for their own safety. The offices and activities of NGOs and INGOs shut down. The number of police stations was reduced substantially in Maoist-affected areas.

Along with cleansing opponents, the Maoists also sought to broaden their support base. This two-pronged strategy of broadening their support base and cleansing opponents produced swift results. By late 1998, the CPN (Maoist) had started to form its own government at village and area levels. The CPN (Maoist) started instituting district-level governments from December 2000. The party also formed a United Revolutionary People's Council (central level government) in September 2001. The formation of the Maoist government at local and central levels had been synchronized with the amplification of the state-Maoist armed conflict from low to middle intensity. The Maoists' attacks escalated from isolated assassinations of rural-based party workers to regular assaults on police stations. The Maoist offensive war against the police reached a climax when the guerrillas seized Dunai, the headquarters of Dolpa district on 24 September 2000, where the Maoists killed 14 policemen. In November 2001, the Maoists attacked an army barracks in Dang, and this attack marked the start of their high-intensity war against the state.

The government retaliated by declaring a state of emergency and mobilizing the army to counter the insurgency. The army launched Operation Romeo in November 1995 in Rolpa district and Operation Kilo Sierra 2 in 1997-98 in 18 districts around the country; the army launched counter-insurgency operations throughout the country from November 2001 to May 2006, in which they conducted mass arrests and resorted to indiscriminate killings that took the lives of many innocent people. The state's ruthless suppressive actions proved counterproductive and instead contributed to 'spark[ing off] (...) an expanding insurgency'.<sup>18</sup> The Maoist

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<sup>17</sup> M. Kattel, 2003: 60.

<sup>18</sup> Thapa, 2003: 90.

strength increased with each infamous operation conducted by the state: out of the 23 major attacks carried out by the Maoists during the period November 2001 to January 2003, they were defeated in only five instances. The Maoist guerrillas were successful in attacking and capturing the district headquarters of Dolpa, Syangja, Solukhumbu, Dang, Achham and Jumla districts. In every big raid, the Maoists managed to capture huge caches of modern arms and ammunitions from state security forces.

The Maoists gained strength by exploiting the weaknesses of the state. During the initial phase of the insurgency, the state's capacity for dealing with the insurgency was severely constrained by a division among the mainstream parties in their perceptions of and strategies suggested for dealing with the Maoists. Worst of all, the mainstream parties sought to exploit the Maoist insurgency to fuel their own petty agendas against other parliamentary parties. The NC welcomed the ascendant Maoists as a countervailing force against the other dominant communist party, CPN (UML); during the initial phases of the insurgency the Maoists had mainly targeted NC workers, and thus the CPN (UML) too tried to cultivate a rapport with the Maoists because they figured that the Maoists' actions would weaken the NC, the CPN (UML)'s main electoral rival. Furthermore, the state's capacity to deploy armed forces against the Maoists was also limited by the fact that the army was not under the control of the civilian government, and the hostility between the party and the military was compounded by factors of historical legacy<sup>19</sup>, constitutional ambiguity<sup>20</sup>, and non-cooperation between the political parties and the army.<sup>21</sup> The relationship between the government and the military was further complicated by the palace's separate dealings with the Maoists. Maoist leaders, Prachanda and Babu Ram Bhattarai, claimed that they had an *aghsit karyaat ekta* (undeclared alliance) with late King Birendra, and they said that King Birendra was not in favour of the government's plan to

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<sup>19</sup> The army was used by the late king Mahendra to stage a coup in 1960 against the NC government and multiparty system. The army had also been used time and time again to suppress movements against the partyless *Panchayat* system (1960-90).

<sup>20</sup> The 1990 Constitution has a separate provision for military mobilization; the Security Council (consisting of the Prime Minister, Defence minister and Chief of Army Staff) can only recommend it while the king takes the final decision.

<sup>21</sup> Non-cooperation by the army was felt widely, particularly during the Maoist's capture of Dunai, the headquarters of Dolpa district in September 2000. The then Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala resigned obviously because of the army's betrayal over the Holeri incident. The army disobeyed the government's decision to counter the Maoist guerrillas after they held 76 policemen in hostage on July 12, 2001 at Holeri in Rolpa district.

mobilize the army during the People's War.<sup>22</sup> The army had deliberately and consciously distanced itself from the elected government, as if its primary duty was only to protect the palace.

The monarchy took centre stage after the royal takeovers in October 2002 and February 2005, and in the second round of negotiations held between the royal regime and the CPN (Maoist) in April-October 2003. The NC and UML took a non-cooperative stance that resembled the same stance the palace and the military had taken during the first round of negotiations between the elected government and the CPN (Maoist) in August-November 2001. The CPN (Maoist) acquired power by taking advantage of the weakness and internal contradictions of the state rather than through any concerted effort to gain political capital. The CPN (Maoist) encouraged and abetted the squabbling among the state actors, particularly the conflicts between the treasury and the opposition, and between the palace/army and political parties (the divide between the palace and the parties was most acute during the immediate periods after the royal takeovers in October 2002 and February 2005).

### **Situations that led to the transformation of the Maoists**

Many observers within and outside the country found it surprising that the CPN (Maoist) halted their insurgency even though it was going strong: the insurgency had indeed advanced to the 'strategic offensive' stage from the 'strategic defence' and then 'strategic balance' stages; the number of Maoist combatants had risen to 35,000; and the Maoists were implementing the Prachanda Path, which was a mix of the Chinese model of protracted war in the countryside and the Soviet model of armed insurrection in urban areas.<sup>23</sup>

But the Maoists knew what they were doing when they abandoned their insurgency. The Maoists could not have overlooked the military supremacy of the state security forces (95,000 army personnel, 25,000 Armed Police Force personnel and 40,000 civilian police personnel) that were backed by international anti-communist and anti-terrorist support. The Maoists, as Prachanda once said, 'did not foresee the possibility of capturing state power at the centre through armed revolution alone'.<sup>24</sup> Some experts had long before predicted that the war between the state and Maoists was un-winnable militarily.<sup>25</sup>

The LTTE's experience with armed revolution in Sri Lanka, for example, shows that full military victory is impossible for an insurgent

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<sup>22</sup> *Kathmandu Post*, June 4, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> For details, see A. N. Chamlagai, 2006 :13-30.

<sup>24</sup> *Text of Speech by Prachanda in a Press Conference on 8 November 2006*.

<sup>25</sup> L. Philipson, 2002: 19.

group. Civil war can be sustained only if it is confined to a certain territory, but as soon as it spreads throughout the country it becomes vulnerable from within: when the CPN (Maoist) grew from a small group to a large party, it had to face a variety of internal problems; during the expanding insurgency, the CPN (Maoist) had to deal with confrontations within the party on five occasions.<sup>26</sup>

The latest confrontation between the Prachanda faction and the Baburam Bhattarai faction became so intense that it could have, according to the party's own assessment, vertically split the party if the confrontation had not been successfully managed in time.<sup>27</sup> The crux of this confrontation was shaped by the different views the warring camps had over who the 'main enemy' was —India or the monarchy— and over what strategy to take against the enemy.

To resolve the conflict, the party decided to adopt a strategy that called for waging an all-out struggle against the monarchy and possibly seeking India's assistance to start collaborative political efforts with mainstream Nepalese parties. This new strategy ultimately drove the CPN (Maoist) to the idea of fusing the insurgency with a peaceful mass movement. Besides, the history of the CPN (UML) had already shown that a gradual modification of earlier party aims and a toning down of the party ideology could prove a pragmatic decision that would bolster the party's organizational strength.

The CPN (UML) had given up its Naxalite aims in 1982, dropped its Maoist ideal in 1989, and participated in the movement for the restoration of democracy in 1990; and it had officially declared its support for the multiparty system of democracy in 1993. The same logic applied by the CPN (UML) to transform itself is probably being used to determine the transformation of the CPN (Maoist) from an insurgent group to a competitive party.

Although the CPN (Maoist)'s transformation is being witnessed now, the party had actually pushed for political settlement as an alternative to insurgency time and time again: it did in fact sit down to negotiate with the civilian government in 2001 and again with the royal regime in 2003, but the CPN (Maoist) reverted to its insurgent ways after both meetings, as its demand for the election of the CA —its bottom-line demand— was not entertained by the Establishment at the time.

The Establishment, for its part, was obsessed with the notion that the negotiations were mere tactical moves by the CPN (Maoist), rather than proof of true Maoist commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The CPN (Maoist) had, after all, taken advantage of the truces and

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<sup>26</sup> R. Baral, 2006: 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Historical Documents of CPN (Maoist)*, 2005, pp. 318-320.

negotiations in the past to expand its organizational base and enhance its military capacity. The CPN (Maoist) was also not as optimistic as its opponents about the negotiations leading to a solution.

The first negotiations were held before the conflict had escalated into a high-intensity war, and so the Establishment had been less willing to meet the CPN (Maoist)'s demand regarding CA elections. According to one of its central leaders, the CPN (Maoist) withdrew from the first round of negotiations because the party sensed that the government was preparing to intensify its military attacks on the Maoists.

The situation at the time of the second round of negotiations in 2003 was favourable to the Maoists because the division between the palace and the parties after the royal takeover in October 2002 was at its starkest. Yet it was also the time when the international community's support for the political parties, and the international backlash against the CPN (Maoist), was gaining momentum.

In fact, so strong was the antipathy that the international community had for the CPN (Maoist) and so strong was their support for the post-October 2002 regime then, that the state was able to procure many sophisticated weapons and military gadgets from the USA, the UK, India and other countries.<sup>28</sup> The CPN (Maoist) thus needed to take part in the second round of negotiations because they needed to offset international pressure.

The CPN (Maoist) was also in a position to gain more political leverage against the royal regime, which was waging a political battle against the political parties, and whose legitimacy was being questioned by the Nepali people. But by agreeing to negotiate with the royal regime, the CPN (Maoist) tarnished its anti-monarchical credentials and had to resort to using the state's refusal to grant the creation of a CA as an excuse to withdraw from negotiations.

The upshot of it all was that the CPN (Maoist) ended up intensifying its armed insurgency, acquired an even more republican tenor and toned down its criticism of the political parties. Presumably, the CPN might have retained its ideological image if they had instead settled their differences through the agency of the political parties.

The royal coup of February 2005 paved the way for the CPN (Maoist) to finally strike up a partnership with the political parties, which eventually launched a process of negotiated settlement to the armed conflict. King Gyanendra's ambitious attempts to become an active monarch had changed the role of political equation in the country —from an ally championing the cause of constitutional monarchy in the past, the political parties had become proponents of republicanism.

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<sup>28</sup> For details, see D. Kumar and H. Sharma, nd.



In the days that followed, the CPN (UML) passed a resolution to declare Nepal a *Loktrantik Ganatnatra* (democratic republic), and the NC deleted the phrase 'constitutional monarchy' from its party constitution. Both parties also further changed their earlier demands for constitutional amendment to demands that called for an election of the CA. In the post-February 2005 coup period, the mainstream parties had been moving closer to the CPN (Maoist)'s long-standing demands for the country to be transformed into a republic and for the election of the CA.

Earlier in November 2001, the CPN (UML) and other left-wing parties had rejected the Maoist proposal to form a loose left-wing coalition that was to champion the republic agenda and the demand for a constituent assembly. Yet after February 2005, all the communist parties and the NC exhorted the CPN (Maoist) to join their struggle against the royal regime.

The CPN (Maoist) had earlier tried to cultivate mainstream parties, albeit inconsistently, in its quest for a political resolution of the armed conflict. It had maintained contact with the top leaders of the mainstream parties since the beginning of 2002, in reaction to the state of emergency declared by the Sher Bahdur Deuba government. In the aftermath of the February 2005 royal coup, frequent clandestine meetings among the leaders of both sides resulted in the development of a common strategy and goal—the ending of absolute monarchy.

Although the CPN (Maoist) was aware of the dismay it would cause its most radical supporters by forging an alliance with the mainstream parties, it knew that sticking to its NPD ideology and PW strategy was not politically germane. And the bottom-line demand put to the CPN (Maoist) by the mainstream parties, should the CPN (Maoist) want to forge a coalition, was that the CPN (Maoist) would have to mainstream itself, give up its violent revolution and accept the multiparty system.

The CPN (Maoist) actually used the party's transformative moment to strike a bargain with the political parties—Baburam Bhattarai reportedly told the parties, 'You accept republicanism and we will accept multipartyism.'<sup>29</sup> In striking up an alliance with the mainstream parties, the CPN (M) revised its immediate goals from that of a quest to set up an NPD to a Completion of Bourgeois Democratic Transition (CBDT). In its proposed transitional arrangement, called 'Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', which was chalked up in June 2003, the CPN (Maoist) cited the acceptance of the multiparty system as one of its key features.

Putting an end to the monarchy is the central goal behind the CPN (Maoist)'s new proposal regarding the CBDT. Earlier, the CPN (Maoist) had harboured an ambivalent position vis-à-vis the monarchy—initially it championed the formation of a republic, yet it was later willing to adopt a

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<sup>29</sup> B. Bhattarai, 2002.

tacit approval for conserving the monarch as a ceremonial head. However, after the royal massacre, it had called for an end to the monarchy<sup>30</sup>.

After the failure of the second round of negotiations with the royal regime in 2003, the CPN (Maoist) became more anti-monarchical, and it seriously began working on developing an alliance with the political parties. Its new commitment to remain faithful to the multiparty system widened the scope for the launching of a joint struggle by the mainstream parties and the CPN (Maoist) against the monarchy. As a consequence of the concerted efforts made on both sides, the seven-party alliance (SPA) and the CPN (Maoist) drew up a 12-point understanding in November 2005; this was a landmark event because it not only united all the popular forces in their struggle against absolute monarchy, but also because it allowed mainstream parties to endorse the demand for an election of the CA. The CPN (Maoist) reciprocated by embracing multiparty politics. This understanding provided the basis for the April 2006 movement.

The changes in Nepal's relationship with the international community following the royal coup of February 2005 was regarded as an encouraging development by the CPN (Maoist), a situation that it regarded as appropriate in its quest to transform the state of armed conflict through a political resolution. In the past, as stated earlier, the international communities had backed the post-October 2002 royal regime because they had preferred a military solution to the insurgency.

In fact, India and the USA had slapped a 'terrorist' label on the Maoists. But the international communities reviewed their position on two grounds. Firstly, the king had failed to take the parties into his confidence, and the Royal Nepal Army had been unsuccessful in putting an end to the Maoist insurgency. Secondly, they realized that King Gyanendra, in all his ambitiousness, had overplayed the position of advantage that he had with the international community and had overreached himself with his political manoeuvres.

When the king dismantled the democratic setup after the royal takeover of February 2005, the members of the international community completely reconfigured their relationship with the monarchy—from active supporters of the monarchy, they instead became opponents of the monarchy. Consequently, the members of the international community supported the anti-regression struggle launched by the political parties, and they also used their influence over the mainstream parties to start a dialogue with the CPN (Maoist).

The members of the international community became proximately involved in the process of building confidence between the SPA and the CPN (Maoist). This reverse situation regarding the international

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<sup>30</sup> B. Bhattarai, 2001.

community's relations with the palace thus prompted the CPN (Maoist) to abandon their strategy of armed revolution.

India's changing role and perception vis-à-vis the CPN (Maoist) has been one of the main factors that have shaped the CPN (Maoist)'s transformative arc. India has always worried about the implications that the escalation of the conflict in Nepal would have on Indian Maoists. Earlier, India used to hold the view that any development that weakened the Nepali Maoists would prove demoralizing for their Indian counterparts, and in the former political setup, India backed the royal regime. But after the royal coup of February 2005, India could not pursue its earlier stance and had to come up with a new strategy for dealing with the Nepali Nepalese Maoists: India now sought to establish a rapport with the CPN (Maoist) in the hope that such a relationship between the Indian state and the Nepali Maoists would help dissociate Nepalese Maoists from Indian Maoists.

A noted expert on the matter summed up the new strategy thus: "Maintaining its two pillar approach —constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy— India tried to impress on the king to reverse his course by accommodating political parties. Its unequivocal support for the regime to quell the "terrorists" (Maoists) by force changed following the February coup, resulting in opening dialogues with the Maoists on the one hand, and supporting the political parties against the King on the other."<sup>31</sup>

India now played a crucial role in bringing the mainstream parties and the CPN (Maoist) together, a partnership that was crucial for fortifying the latest resurgent movement to instil democracy in Nepal. And by responding to India's new-found attitude towards the Maoists and to the help India provided in creating the 12-point understanding between the SPA and the CPN (Maoist), Prachanda changed his party's line regarding India (previously India was portrayed by the CPN (Maoist) as being expansionist).<sup>32</sup> Yet the goodwill of the international community that the CPN (Maoist) now enjoys and the international community's proximate involvement in creating a new political environment in Nepal hinges on the agreement that the CPN (Maoist) will ultimately give up its ideology of armed revolution and that it will also abide by the universal principles of democracy.

### **Reflections on the CPN (Maoist)'s Transformation**

The April 2006 popular uprising was a landmark event in the transformative journey of the CPN (Maoist) —the success of the uprising

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<sup>31</sup> L. R. Baral, 2006: 185-209.

<sup>32</sup> M. Dahal, 2006: 23.

spurred on the party to change from an insurgent group to a party competing for state power. The party changed its earlier strategy of using armed insurgency to embracing peaceful negotiation in order to reach its goals.

The CPN's goals have also changed: before it sought to capture state power, but now it advocates restructuring the state. The process of restructuring the Nepalese state is driven by three core contents —end of monarchical rule, transformation of armed conflict into peace building and inclusive democracy. In the wake of the April 2006 mass movement, the restructuring process has become the central political development in Nepal, and the CPN (Maoist) is one of the key actors involved in the process. This change in the CPN (Maoist)'s goals —from that of capturing state power by force to advocating restructuring the state, in partnership with the other political parties— means that the CPN (Maoist)'s political roadmap henceforth has also changed.

### **Ideology**

With the country's new political reality after the April 2006 mass movement, the CPN was primed to make overhauls in its ideology. The CPN (Maoist)'s proclaimed ideology has been Marxism, Leninism, Maoism and the Prachanda Path. But the party has been willing to modify its ideology to suit the changing times; in June 2003, the party passed a resolution called 'Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', which featured an insert that supported multiparty democratic competition. This new insert reflected the transmutation of the party's goal from NPD to CBDT, which was later renamed 'Democratic Republic'.

The CPN (Maoist)'s proposal regarding CBDT or a 'Democratic Republic' is clearly a revision of its earlier Maoist belief; but the party regards the CBDT as a temporary transitional goal to be attained, one which when accomplished will prepare the stage for instituting a true NPD. The nucleus of Maoism is the establishment of NPD only through a People's War, and there is no space for multiparty competition in that model. The NPD and the People's War therefore constituted mutually coherent components.<sup>33</sup> The CPN (Maoist)'s 'Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' proposal, on the other hand, champions political resolution. It should also be mentioned here that the 'Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' proposal was first made public around the time that the second round of negotiations took place in 2003 (the first round of negotiations was held in 2001). The ideas of CBDT and political resolution therefore constitute mutually coherent ideas, just as NPD and PW were mutually coherent

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<sup>33</sup> C. Mishra, 2004: 47.

ideas. The CPN (Maoist) defended this revision in their ideology by citing Lenin: 'Marxism is not a lifeless dogma, not a completed readymade immutable doctrine, but a living guide to action.' The spirit of such rhetoric has been used to defend the proposal for 'Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'.

There is no doubt that the idea for 'Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' resulted from the CPN's quest to find a political resolution, but the CPN (Maoist) claims that such ideological refinement was introduced because the party had studied the behavioural trends of communist states in which the communist parties deteriorated after they had captured state power. The CPN (Maoist) says that it made the changes in its ideology because it realized that a party in power and a party in the midst of a revolution were two different entities; it says that changes were made to prevent the professionalization of the Red Army, to prevent the Red Army from shoring up undue privileges in a post-revolution milieu, and to introduce a system of popular control over a communist party that endorsed the competitive multiparty system.<sup>34</sup> Prachanda confirmed this new mode of thinking when he said: 'Only through this way the inherent monopolistic and bureaucratic tendencies of communist parties in power can be checked and socialist democracy institutionalized. Moreover, a suitable mechanism must be found and put into practice to ensure constant control, supervision and intervention of the masses in state affairs. Only then can it be a true democracy in the sense of rule of the people.'<sup>35</sup>

Two months before the CPN (M) officially adopted the 'Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' proposal, the party's endorsement of the multiparty system was incorporated in its document put forward for negotiation in 2003. 'Universal democratic and civic rights including multiparty competition, periodic elections, universal suffrage, rule of law, freedom of speech and press, fundamental and human rights, etc. should be guaranteed. Such unconditional support for the multiparty system was, however, not well received when the party officially adopted a resolution on democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Instead the party stood only for a limited multiparty system by a provision prohibiting the rights to those labelled as 'reactionary, feudal and pro-imperialist'. In one respect, this is a continuation of the CPN (Maoist)'s previous proposal that in NPD -to be achieved through people's war- 'full freedom will be granted for various patriotic, democratic, and leftist parties on the basis of mutual cooperation and supervision with the communist party for a long time. However, the people of reactionary classes who would play a reactionary

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<sup>34</sup> *Op. Cit.*27, pp. 242-257.

<sup>35</sup> *Op.Cit.*1

role during the people's revolution and act against the cause of the country and people shall be deprived of all political rights for a definite period.<sup>36</sup> The CPN (Maoist)'s endorsement of the multiparty system has different meanings for different people. For the rank and file, it is true to the ideology of a dictatorship of the proletariat. For others, the CPN (Maoist) has reaffirmed its unconditional support for the universal notion of liberal democracy as is documented in the 12-point understanding and in all other important subsequent agreements made between the (Maoist) CPN and the SPA.

The ambiguous attitude shown by the CPN (Maoist) towards the multiparty system makes it hard to discern whether the party's show of support for liberal democracy is merely a tactical ploy or a sign of a new found faith. Those who closely observe left-wing movements in Nepal know that communist parties' show of support for a multiparty system is initially just part of their tactics, but that eventually, they become fully committed to the democratic cause.

In the early phase of the post-1990 movement, for example, the CPN (UML) espoused the idea of limited multiparty democracy in which they said that 'reactionary, feudal and pro-imperialist' forces would not be given a chance to compete in the political processes. But ever since the party passed the PMD resolution in 1993, the party has become fully committed to the universal principles of the multiparty system. Similarly, the CPN (Maoist) supported only a limited form of the multiparty system as long as it was primarily an armed group. But once it had prepared to change its means of politics from an armed revolution to peaceful politics, it became more committed to the multiparty system. The CPN has not deviated from its commitment to a multiparty system since its signing of the 12-point understanding with the SPA in November 2005. It has also reaffirmed its faith in the universal principles of liberal democracy by signing all subsequent important agreements. In the preamble to that broad political agreement—which was made public the day the CPN (Maoist) celebrated as victory day—the party clearly supports the 'commitments to competitive multiparty democratic system, civil liberties, fundamental rights, human rights, press freedom, rule of law and all other norms and values of democratic system'.<sup>37</sup> In the post-April 2006 period, the CPN (Maoist) behaves exactly as the CPN (UML) did before. In fact, a daily paper reported that 'Prachanda admitted that Prachanda Path has similarities with Mandan Bhandari's ideology of *Bahudaliya Janbad*.'

Table 2 compares the CPN (Maoist)'s model of Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with the CPN's model of People's Multiparty Democracy. The

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<sup>36</sup> *Some Important Documents of CPN (Maoist)*, 2004, p. 160.

<sup>37</sup> *Full Text of the Decisions of the SPA-Maoist Summit Meeting*, 8 November 2006.

table shows that the contents of both proposals are the same in substance as far as their assessment of the characteristics of the Nepalese state and their proposal for radical reformation on socio-economic issues are concerned. The differences in the nature of the proposed revolution—the CPN (Maoist) for an armed revolution and the CPN (UML) for a peaceful and parliamentary one—no longer hold because in the transitional period after the April 2006 movement, the CPN (Maoist) through a formal declaration in November 2006 revised its strategy in favour of a peaceful struggle.

The CPN (Maoist)'s proposed inclusive democracy with due representation of the excluded groups in the state apparatus complies with the main demands at the time, but an analogous proposal is missing in the CPN (UML)'s PMD programme. When the CPN (UML) adopted the PMD programme, ethnic and regional movements were not as powerful as they are today, and this explains why the issue was not formally documented in the PMD. Yet today the CPN (UML) has also taken up the cause of excluded groups; for example, in their recommendations to the Interim Constitution Drafting Committee, where the CPN (UML) suggests that a federal system should be adopted.

The CPN (Maoist)'s proposal of 'Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' has been deemed one of the chief components of *Prachanda Path*. The two other features that define this path are a fusing of the plans for a protracted people's war with a plan for an urban armed insurrection, and ethnic autonomy with the right to self-determination.

The fusing of the plans for a protracted People's War with a plan for an urban insurrection is no longer valid because the CPN (Maoist) has already declared an end to its their insurgency. Thus *Prachanda Path* has recently been redefined as 'a blending of armed revolution, mass movement, peace negotiation and diplomacy'.<sup>38</sup> The party has consciously inserted the phrase relating to an armed revolution in its revised version of *Prachanda Path* not because it intends to revive the armed insurgency, but because it seeks to commemorate the past insurgency as a glorious event that contributed to bringing a sea of change in Nepali politics. The CPN (Maoist)'s support for the third component of *Prachanda Path*—ethnic autonomy with the right to self-determination—can be discerned from Prachanda's own words; he has said that the CPN (Maoist) '... would lose its identity if it did not remain firm on its agenda of ethnic autonomy. We will no longer remain Maoists if we forget the agenda of ethnic autonomy, through which we gathered strength and support from the masses'.<sup>39</sup> This quote shows how the party would like to project its image in the changed

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<sup>38</sup> *Op.Cit* 27. p. 332.

<sup>39</sup> *The Himalayan Times*, 30 November 2006.

**Table 2. CPN (Maoist)'s Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and CPN (UML)'s People's Multiparty Democracy**

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century</b>	<b>People's Multiparty Democracy</b>
Characteristics of the Nepali state	Semi-feudal and Semi-colonial	Semi-feudal and Semi-colonial
Post-1990 political set-up	Exploitative and reactionary	Multiparty system with limited democracy
Strategic goal	Democratic republic	Multiparty people's republic
Nature of Revolution	A fusion of protracted people's war in countryside and urban armed insurrection	Peaceful and parliamentary
Characteristics of proposed political system	Multiparty system, periodic elections, rule of law, freedom of speech and press, guarantee of human rights, education, health and employment as part of fundamental rights (revised)	Supremacy of constitution, rule of law, separation of power, guarantee of human rights, pluralistic society, competitive party system, periodic elections, government of majority, and minority in opposition
Legislature	Elected Assembly with proper representation of all classes, nationalities, Dalits, women, linguistic and religious groups, regions and distinguished personalities	Parliament as provided by the 1990 constitution
Characteristics of proposed economic system	Land to the tiller, redistribution of land, protection/promotion of national capital and resources, self reliant national industrialization, proper balance of private, joint and collective ownership	Mixed economy, protection of national capital and industry, ownership of industry by state as well as private sector, encourage foreign capital and technology, land ceiling and compensation for acquisition of excess land, landownership by individual, encourage cooperative farming
Religion	Secular state	Secular state
State	Caste/ethnic and regional based autonomy with right to self-determination	Equal status and treatment for all linguistic and cultural groups
Foreign policy	Repeal unequal treaties with India	Repeal unequal treaties with India

context of competitive politics in the aftermath of the April 2006 movement.



### **Image and Support Base**

The identity of a political party is the image it portrays in citizens' minds. A party's image is a composite idea, shaped by its history, ideology and objective, along with the images projected by its leaders and workers. The CPN (Maoist) has multiple identities; the dominant one is associated with the past insurgency. Unlike the CPN (UML), which concealed its past record of involvement in violent activities, the CPN (Maoist), after April 2006, has been willing to have its insurgency presented as a glorious event that contributed to bringing radical changes to Nepali politics. In order to satisfy its many activists who were recruited during the insurgency and also to prevent the possibility of internal splits in the party on ideological grounds, the Maoist leadership will probably continue hawking its communist ethos and credentials. In the changed context, its rank and file have been socialized in such a way that the class struggle is being carried out through more peaceful methods. And the party's proposal of 'Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' is still being touted as only a transitional phase that will ultimately lead to instituting the NPD.

Besides, the CPN (Maoist) has been lumped together with all the other Nepali communist parties who are supposed to be 'radical, nationalist and pro-poor' forces; while in the new political realm, it has to compete with the other left-wing parties, the CPN (UML) in particular, to wrest that mantle solely for itself. Left-leaning and progressive ideologies, which have been monopolized by the communist parties of Nepal, are popular among the people of Nepal. To be a leftist or a communist in Nepal means to advocate for the people's right to have access to basic necessities, to support radical and revolutionary change, and above all, to stand for absolute economic equality, even at the cost of political liberty. That leftist and progressive ideologies have gained strength in Nepal is clearly evident by the fact that while the CPN won only 4 of the 109 seats in parliament in 1959, the combined total of seats won by the different communist parties in the post-1990 period was 82-95 out of a total of 205 seats in the HOR. The percentage of popular votes for communist parties stood at around 40 per cent in all three parliamentary elections held after the restoration of democracy. Today, the CPN (Maoist) is seen as one of the most dominant communist parties, and it has a relative advantage among the electorate because of its long-standing demands for the election of the CA and the formation of the republic—the central demands that defined the new wave of national agendas in the period following the April 2006 mass uprising. And while it is true that almost all political parties now support the call for a CA election and a restructuring of the Nepali state—with the attendant demands for secularism, republic,

federalism and inclusion— the CPN (Maoist) is considered to be the catalyst for bringing about and translating these issues into a reality.

Like other major political parties, the NC and the UML, the CPN (Maoist) is a broad-based pluralistic party, in terms of the caste/ethnic composition of its leadership; and this feature of its leadership could go a long way to widening its support base among the different segments of Nepali society. Besides, it has always enjoyed solid grass-root support from the people of the excluded groups ever since the insurgency began. By contextualizing the ideology of class war with poverty, injustice and exploitation, and through ethnicizing the insurgency, the CPN (Maoist) has been able to appropriate a large number of people belonging to the poor and excluded groups. In fact, most of the people who participate in the rallies and mass meetings organized by the CPN (Maoist) are youngsters from poor families living in rural areas. As for its image as a pro-poor party, one foreign anthropologist working in Dhorpatan, Baglung district, observed, “People hear that communism is about the redistribution of wealth, and as most people in the area are extremely poor, this notion is very appealing, especially to disillusioned youth who turn to Maoism because it promises to better their living conditions.”<sup>40</sup>

The CPN (Maoist)’s ethnicization of class ideology has also helped the party cash in on the post-1990 ethnic upsurge. The restoration of democracy in 1990 saw the emergence of ethnic activism. Discontent towards domination by the hill high castes is the central issue of the emerging minority movements in Nepal. The CPN (Maoist) concerted efforts to blend ethnic activism and class war is evident from the party’s forming ethnic and regional based frontier organizations.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, based on ethnicity and regionalism, the CPN (Maoist) proposed a federal structure with its nine autonomous regional governments.<sup>42</sup> The restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990 synchronized with ethnic revival, and among the forces competing to cash in on the post-1990 ethnic uprising, the Maoists seem to have been the most successful, both

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<sup>40</sup> C. Millard, 2002: 293.

<sup>41</sup> Several ethnic and regional based front organizations of the Maoist party are: 1) Magar National Liberation Front, 2) Tamang National Liberation Front, 3) Tamuwani National Liberation Front, 4) Limbuwan National Liberation Front, 5) Nepal Dalit Liberation Front, 6) Tharuwan National Liberation Front, 7) Madheshi National Liberation Front, 8) Karnali Regional Liberation Front 9) Thami Liberation Front, 10) Majhi National Liberation Front, and 11) Newa Khala.

<sup>42</sup> These are: 1) Seti-Mahakali Autonomous Region, 2) Bheri-Karnali Autonomous Region, 3) Tharuwan Autonomous Region, 4) Magarat Autonomous Region, 5) Tamuwani Autonomous Region, 6) Tamang Saling Autonomous Region, 7) Newar Autonomous Region, 8) Kirant Autonomous Region, and 9) Madhesh Autonomous Region.

in accumulating political capital and in creating a political framework for the main ethnic demands—autonomy and federalism.

In the new context of competitive politics since the April 2006 mass movement, the CPN (Maoist) has retained its image as a pro-poor party and a force that champions the ethnic cause. However, in order to expand its support base and its legitimacy in other areas/constituencies—the urban and Tarai populace, the middle and upper classes, and international communities, among whom the CPN (Maoist) does not enjoy the same support as other parties, the party will probably try to acquire a new identity. The party's promise to abide by the universal principles of multiparty democracy and its assurance that it will not revert again to insurgency are examples that show that the CPN (Maoist) leadership is trying to forge a new image for the party. To respond to the new situation, the party has gradually put the party's ideological NPD goal on hold, and has brought to the fore its agenda for state restructuring. Strains of communist rhetoric that contravene the notion of multiparty system and peaceful competition have been limited to internal debates, and in the public forums, from now on, the party will probably push the agenda for state restructuring and muffle its communist rhetoric. Radicalism would be blended with state restructuring agendas rather than with the Marxist philosophy. The recent central committee meeting of the party has pointed out the key issues for public campaigning: democratic republic, federal autonomy, revolutionary land reforms, and an end to feudal land ownership.<sup>43</sup> The CPN (Maoist)'s quest for a new identity, along with a revision in its ideology, calls for the new party organization to match the new context.

### **Organization**

To make the transformation from an underground organization to a mainstream competitive political party, the CPN (Maoist) will have to make substantial changes to its party structure. During the insurgency period, the CPN (Maoist) had four sets of organizational structures.

1. Party organization top down: Party Headquarters, Standing Committee, Politburo, Central Committee, 3 Regional Commands (east, middle and west), 11 Regional Bureaus, District Committee, Area Committee and Village Committee.
2. *Jana Sarkar* (parallel government/administration) top down: Central Government, 9 ethnic and regional based Autonomous

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<sup>43</sup> *The Himalayan Times*, 21 December 2006.

- Governments, District Governments, Area Government and Village Government
3. Military organization, chain of command from Supreme Commander, 4 Deputy Commanders, 7 Divisions, Brigade, Battalion, Company, Platoon and Section
  4. *Jan Adalat* (People's Court)

Today, the last three organizational structures have become redundant because the members of the PLA have been placed in cantonments and because the CPN (Maoist) has agreed to dismantle its parallel governments and people's courts of justice. Since the organizational structure framed in the past to serve the war strategy is no longer valid in the new context, the CPN (Maoist) has come up with a new organizational setup. Its Central Committee meeting, held recently in Bhaktapur, sought to reorganize the party structure from a military model to a civilian one. Taking into consideration the election of CA, the party has, by and large, adopted the official territory division while restructuring its party organizations at different levels. In addition to a structural chain from Politburo/Central Committee at the top to District and Village Committee at bottom, the CPN (Maoist) has introduced some central and regional units.

One-third of the most strategically important positions—the high commands, the central secretariat, the regional commands and the bureau—is occupied by leaders from different ethnic groups. Such ethnic make-up is also reflected in the party's composition at central level. Although the CPN (Maoist) has accommodated more members of minority groups in the party's central structure than the NC and the UML have, the levels of representation still fall short of the model of inclusive democracy that has been touted for the plan to restructure the Nepali state. The absence of or only the token presence of Dalits, women, Madhesis, Tharus and members of other excluded groups is evident from the composition of the party's newly introduced central and regional party apparatuses. Thus all the major political parties in Nepal, including the CPN (Maoist), are still dominated by the hill high caste Brahmins and Chetris.

Nevertheless, the CPN (Maoist) has continued to activate its ethnic platforms for the expansion of party support bases. The success of the April 2006 mass movement has been followed by conventions of its caste (Dalit), ethnic and regional (Madhes) based organizations at different levels, from district to central levels. It is worthwhile mentioning here that out of the CPN (Maoist)'s 73 representatives in the Interim Parliament (excluding its ten other nominees) 74 per cent of its representatives are members of excluded groups (*Janajatis*, *Dalits* and *Madhesis*), and of these 40 per cent are women. Since it decided to pursue a strict policy regarding

Table 3: The CPN (Maoist)'s New Organizational Apparatus

High Command	Regional Command	
1. Prachanda 2. Mohan Vaidya 3. Baburam Bhattarai 4. Ram Bahadur Thapa 6. Krishna Bahadur Mahara 7. Dina Nath Sharma 8. Dev Gurung 9. Nanda Kishwor Pun	Ram Bahadur Thapa	Eastern Command (Mechi, Koshi and Sagarmath zones)
	Ananta	Central Command (Narayani and Bagmati)
	Top Bahadur Rayamajhi	Western Command (Gandiki, Dhaulagiri and Lumbini)
	Posta Bahadur Bogati	Mid-west command (Bheri, Karnali and Rapti)
	Netra Bikram Chand	Far-west command (Seti and Mahakali)
	C.P Gajurel	International
	<b>Bureau Incharges</b>	
	Gopal Kirati	Mechi
	Ram Karki	Koshi
1. Prachanda 2. Mohan Vidya 3. Baburam Bhattarai 4. Krishna Bahadur Mahara 5. Dev Gurung 6. Ram Bahadur Thapa 7. Ananta 8. Top Bahadur Rayamajhi 9. Posta Bahadur Bogati 10. Netra Chand 11. C.P Gajurel	Hari Bol Gajurel	Sagarmatha and Janakpur
	Matrika Yadav	Mithila belt
	Sonam	Narayani
	Agni Sapkota	Bagmati
	Hit Man Shakya	Kathmandu valley
	Devendra Poudel	Dhaulagiri
	Pampha Bhusal	Lumbini
	Hit Raj Pandey	Gandaki
	Hemanta Prakash Oli	Rapti
	Shakti Bahadur Basnet	Bheri and Karnali
	Lekh Raj Bhatta	Seti
Kamal	Mahakali	
Hari Bhakta Kandel	India	

the distribution of party membership, the CPN (Maoist) has called upon its sister organizations to recruit new members. In line with a decision taken at a meeting held in Punjab (immediately after the April 2006 mass movement) and in the spirit of a decision taken at a Kamidanda meeting to 'mobilize as many people as possible', the CPN (Maoist) has mobilized other frontier organizations, made up of students, women, trade unions, etc., in aggressive campaigns to enlarge the party's support base. The CPN (Maoist) has also created populist organizations such as the Janasewa Samiti (committee to provide service to the people) in urban areas, and these committees are occasionally called upon to perform civic duties such as cleaning cities. Such activities have served to highlight the success of the party's drive to expand and diversify the organization; for example,

in Kathmandu, 'the Maoists claim to have some 1,500 full-time political activists, compared to the 70 they had before April 2006'.<sup>44</sup>

### Conclusion

With its endorsement of the multiparty system, revision of its ideological goal from NPD to 'Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' and change in its central means for harnessing political power –through the ballot instead of the bullet– the CPN (Maoist) has shifted to Path Two (transformation into a parliamentary party) from Path Three (armed revolution). Such transformations must inevitably undergo certain awkward initial phases, and, to some extent, weather the ambivalent attitudes towards the change of party members indoctrinated according to the tenets of the original party ideology; to avoid an ideologically based split, the party leadership has to assuage the grievances of the militant cadres who may not take kindly to the new political reality. But except for the show of dissent by a small faction led by Rabindra Shrestha, who was expelled from the party before the April 2006 mass movement, there have been no signs of internal discontent from party leaders toward the revised party ideology. This lack of overt infraction, however, does not mean that there will be no dissenting voices within the party. Within most communist parties, internal voices of opposition against incumbent leaders and against revised ideologies usually come to the surface whenever the parties call a national convention. And the CPN (Maoist) will be no exception. At the moment, there is no one in the party to challenge Prachanda's leadership and the party's decisions to revise its ideology or political strategies. For now, the CPN (Maoist) must first find a way to resolve the problem of reining in the behaviour of its party cadres who do not behave in a manner consistent with the party's new ideology. At the recent central committee meeting that the party held in Kamindanda, members of the committee confessed that the lower-level cadres of the party were still using force in their political campaigns.

In the course of its transformation, the CPN (Maoist) will have to take up a more politically pragmatic position that may not reflect the spirit of the high-sounding promises the party has made in the past to the excluded groups, i.e. the ethnic groups and the *Madhesi* community in particular. Two factions of the Tarai Jantantrik Morcha, one led by Goit and another by Jwala Singh, have already splintered off from the CPN (Maoist) party; these parties justify their existence and their armed activities on the grounds that their parent organization, the CPN (Maoist), has given less weight to the cause of the *Madhesi* people. There are

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<sup>44</sup> ICG, *Nepal's Peace Agreement: Making It Work*. 15 December 2006, p. 19.

altogether 11 caste/ethnic and regional-based frontier organizations within the folds of the CPN (Maoist) collective, and if the CPN (Maoist) cannot properly address the issues of the excluded groups in its campaign to restructure the Nepali state, the possibility that these groups may begin to openly air dissenting opinions cannot be ruled out. Furthermore, the CPN (Maoist) has been subjected to tremendous pressure from non-Maoist ethnic organizations as none of the agreements made between the SPA and the CPN (Maoist) clearly spelled out the particulars of a caste/ethnic based federalism.

The success of the CPN (Maoist)'s graduated transformative process will depend on the party's ability to coax the SPA government to make a smooth transition to the election of the CA. Since the State is by nature a conservative institution, the SPA will continually seek to withdraw from its earlier commitment to share power with the CPN (Maoist) and refrain from adopting radical contents to expedite the transitional process. Through its role in the transitional government, the CPN (Maoist) has been urging the mainstream parties to speed up the transitional process, but if the partnership between the SPA and the CPN (Maoist) were to break down, and if the process for the election of the CA were to be derailed, the CPN (Maoist) would have to face unsettling internal problems. The party may not revert to its insurgent form, but it would find it difficult to continue its current trajectory of party transformation, and it would prove much more difficult for the party to achieve its aims of restructuring the Nepali state according to the mandates of the new constitution of the CA. Thus, an ongoing partnership between the SPA and CPN (Maoist) is necessary to ensure that the former insurgent group genuinely morphs into a responsible mainstream party whose legitimacy is unquestioned both within and outside the country. To gain that legitimacy, the CPN (Maoist) is expected to launch a campaign of socialization of its rank and file to bring them into line with the party's new roles and responsibilities.

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