

**Maoist Insurgencies in South Asia:
Security Implications**

Nihar Nayak*

*[*Dr. Nihar Nayak, is working as Research Associate in Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi, India.]*

We communists are internationalists one of our important duties is to establish strong relations with all genuine Maoist parties in the world the unity of Indias two important revolutionary organizations will definitely have a very positive impact at the international plane we will be able to intensify revolutionary guerrilla agrarian war i.e., protracted peoples war under the leadership of the new Party, to that extent new energy will be infused into the International Communist Movement.

*Kishan, senior leader,
Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist).*

South Asia is being transformed into one of the most volatile storm-centers of world Communist revolution as the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) through its path of protracted people's war, is now aiming at seizing political power through a new-democratic revolution. The Maoist strategy involves protracted People's War and surrounding of cities by occupying the countryside, where the communist-led forces establish base areas and liberated zones, expanding through the stages of strategic defence, strategic equilibrium, and strategic offensive. The Nepal revolutionary movement has now entered its strategic offensive phase and is preparing the masses by using mainstream political parties for final overthrow of the monarchy. The CPN-Maoist's unilateral declaration of ceasefire in September 2004 and its withdrawal from that on January 2, 2006 indicates that the CPN-Maoist is in commanding position in Nepal.

King Gyanendra, who fired the previous democratic government and seized power on February 1, 2005, had refused to respect the truce, saying the Maoists could not be trusted with. However, he is now in a defensive position to secure his first objective of 'restoring order' in the country. With an estimated strength of 80,000 soldiers in the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA), 17,000 personnel in the Armed Police Force (APF) and a poorly equipped Police Force comprising 47,000 men, the King simply lacks the numbers to contain the Maoist insurgency, with every one of the country's 75 districts currently affected. The Maoists have approximately cadres between 8,000 to 10,000, well-armed and trained 'regulars'; approximately 25,000 'militia' armed with relatively primitive weapons such as pipe guns and crude bombs, backed by a substantial number of 'sympathizers', officially estimated at about 200,000 in 2003, who can, under certain circumstances, be mobilized – voluntarily or coercively – for violent action.

Since the collapse of unilateral truce Nepal witnessed 21 violent Maoist related incidents in which a total of 11 persons including eight security force personnel, two civilians and one Maoist died and 12 persons were injured. Nepal will experience more violence and Human rights violation in the coming days because the CPN-Maoist 'Chairman', Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias Prachanda, has announced, "The Royal Nepalese Army has compelled us to end the cease-fire. It was not only impossible, but also suicidal for us to extend it." Stating that all future actions would be targeted against the 'dictatorial government,' ...we are compelled to go on the offensive not only for the sake of peace and democracy but for self-defence.

However, reacting to the Maoists' statement, the RNA spokesperson, Brig Gen Nepal Bhusan Chand, said, "RNA will continue to play its role," and added that "should it confront any hostility, it will act in self-defence".

International Concern

Meanwhile, international community has expressed its concern over the January 2, 2006 development in Nepal and appealed to both the parties to shun violence. The UN Human Rights Commissioner, Louise Arbour has urged the Nepalese government and Maoist rebels to stop fighting and end their abuse of civilians. In a statement Arbour said "It is a tragedy for the people of Nepal that full-scale armed conflict may now resume". "But there need not and must not be the same gross violations of international humanitarian law and human rights standards that have been perpetrated during previous phases of the conflict."

The United States condemned the bombings of government office buildings outside Kathmandu by Maoists and has expressed deep concern at the Maoist's announcement ending the unilateral ceasefire. In a statement issued, US State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack also urged the government in Nepal to reach out to all political parties and find a way back to democracy with a view to restoring peace in the country. "The United States is deeply concerned by the Maoists' announcement January 2 ending their unilateral ceasefire. We condemn the Maoist bombings of government office buildings outside Kathmandu," McCormack said.

The European Union (EU) also expressed disappointment over the government's refusal to reciprocate the ceasefire. In a statement, the EU said the end of the ceasefire was a retrograde step. It also said it was deeply disappointed by the government's failure to match the rebel truce. The EU urged both parties to immediately end hostilities and start a dialogue to peacefully resolve the long-running conflict.

However, India, with no clear foreign policy towards Nepal said that the termination of truce by the Maoists has disappointed it. "We have consistently called upon the Maoists to abandon violence, accept the discipline of multi-party democracy, and work

for a political settlement that contributes to the political stability and economic prosperity of Nepal.”

Country Profile

Nepal, a buffer country between India and China, occupies an area of 147,000 square km (57,000 square miles) and has a population of about 27 million people. It is the world's only Hindu kingdom, where many people view the king as a reincarnation of the god Vishnu. Almost 90 percent of its people are Hindus, with the balance including Buddhists, Muslims and Christians.

Nepal is one of the world's poorest countries and its economy depends on aid and tourism. More than 80 percent of the people earn their livelihoods from agriculture. Western aid, at \$450 million in 2004, was nearly 30 percent of the annual budget. Tourism accounted for about 4 percent of the country's \$6.3 billion Gross Domestic Product in 2004.

Unfortunately, the tourism sector will hit hard due to the call off of the truce. The tourist gateway town of Pokhara was hit by several bomb blasts, shortly after the ceasefire expired. According to the Nepal Tourism Board in the year 2005, the number of tourists to Nepal slipped (277,129 tourists), as visitors were scared off over Maoist activity down nearly 4 percent from the year 2004. However, the Maoists have so far avoided targeting tourists, choosing instead to demand “taxes” from trekkers in remote areas.

Brief History of Maoist Movement

More than 12,500 people, half of them civilians, have died in the Maoist insurgency that aims to dethrone the King and establish one-party communist rule. Maoist guerrillas have been opposing Nepal's feudal caste-based system and Monarchy since 1996. King Gyanendra, ascended the throne in June 2001, sacked the government of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in February 1 2005, declared a state of emergency and assumed absolute power, saying the move was needed to crush the Maoist revolt. The king has assured his subjects and international community to returning Democracy (king's Democracy) by holding elections for 58 municipalities in the country on February 8, 2006 and then to the House of Representative in April 2007.

Reciprocating the Kings announcement, the Maoists have vowed to derail the polls and the seven main political parties, pressing the king to restore democracy, have announced a boycott. Even, the Central Working Committee meeting of the Nepali Congress-Democratic on January 3 decided to omit 'constitutional monarchy' from its party statute, following two other major political parties, the Nepali Congress (NC) and CPN-UML.

Maoists and Democracy

The Maoists, including CPN-Maoist, do not believe in any kind of political system. The CPN-Maoist 'Chairman', Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias Prachanda, in a statement said the restoration Parliament could not resolve the present crisis in the country. One should not be impressed upon the CPN-M's recent joint operations with the political parties for the establishment of democracy in Nepal. This is a temporary strategy of Nepalese Maoists. Once they dethrone the monarchy, gradually they would dismantle the coalition government and establish 'New Democracy' in Nepal. Even the parties, which had signed the 12 memorandum of understanding on November 22 in New Delhi, had made it clear that they could not work together with the Maoists so long as they did not renounce violence permanently.

In fact, Maoists ultimate goal is to capture power through armed revolution. Mao Tse Tung believed that "...any thinking that relaxes the will to fight and belittles the enemy is wrong." Interestingly, CPN-Maoist is a member of RIM (Revolutionary Internationalist Movement) and RIM believe in ultimate victory against Imperialism, feudalism and globalization and establish communist society. The CPN-Maoist's 'People's War' aims to establish a 'New Democracy' in Nepal and constitutes an "historical revolt against feudalism, imperialism and so-called reformists."

Moreover, the CPN-M was formed in 1995 following a split in the Communist Party of Nepal-Unity Centre denounced the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninists) or the CPN (UML) and other mainstream communist factions as 'renegades' and 'revisionists' due to their participation in the parliamentary process. So, what is the guarantee that CPN-Maoist would not take similar decision in future?

India's Concern

Neighboring India has to be very clear in its stand that which one (Maoists or Monarchy) is immediate threat to its 'national interest'. Obviously, the Maoists pose more danger than Monarchy. Any kind of success to the Maoists in Nepal will provide impetus to Indian Maoists to intensify movement against Parliamentary Democracy. In joint statement on September 1, 2004, senior leaders of the CPN-Maoist of Nepal and CPI-Maoist of India declared that "...Maoist parties solemnly appeal to the entire oppressed masses, the world over, and Nepal and India in particular, to raise voice against every evil design of imperialism and expansionism to repress the revolutionary cause of the oppressed people in Nepal & India... we pledge to fight unitedly till the entire conspiracies hatched by the imperialists and reactionaries are crushed and the people's cause of Socialism and Communism are established in Nepal, India and all over the world".

Alarmingly, there is a strong links between the Indian and Nepalese Maoists. The Nepalese Maoists are mostly trained and educated in India. Intelligence sources

indicated that the Nepalese Maoists are being trained by the erstwhile Maoist Communist Center (MCC) of India at the Jhumra hills and Saranda forests of Jharkhand. The Nepal government sources allege that the Nepalese Maoists are getting sanctuaries in India and a well-coordinated logistical support from Indian Maoists, especially the erstwhile People's War (PW). The statements and documents attributed to the Nepalese Maoists repeat the old Maoist formulations aiming to balkanize India. The PW and the MCC also appear to have worked out a strategic alliance with the CPN-Maoist to carve out a Compact Revolutionary Zone (CRZ) comprising areas under the influence of the CPN -Maoist in Nepal with those of the MCC (In Bihar and Jharkhand) and the PW in Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Reports indicate that the Nepalese Maoists and the CPI-Maoist have also formed the Indo-Nepal Border Region Committee to coordinate their activities in North Bihar and along the India-Nepal border.

The Nepalese government on December 22, 2005 said Nepal's Maoist guerrillas took advantage of the ceasefire called by them in September to buy arms from India. The authorities said the information was given to the Royal Nepalese Army by an ex-Maoist "combatant". "The group had been purchasing arms from India during the ceasefire and still holds around 25 children in their camps." Available information suggest that CPN-Maoist procure arms and ammunition from criminal gangs in the neighbouring Indian states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, with whom Nepal shares an open border, as well as insurgent groups in India. Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil, on December 21, 2005 told in Indian Parliament that Maoists and Naxalites do indeed have "ideological" and "training" collaboration.

The primary route used by the CPN-Maoists for smuggling weapons and explosives from the Indian border is the Belauri checkpoint of Kanchanpur district and Melauli checkpoint at the border of Dadeldhura and Baitadi districts then to Bajura district and finally to Achham district. The Maoists are purchasing explosives in nearby India. Army officials said that the Maoists are also smuggling arms and explosives from the Tibetan border via Jharganda and Taklakot (Humla). In the eastern part of the country the weapons are imported from Bihar (India). The rebels smuggled large numbers of camouflage uniforms through Taratal and Kotiaghat of Bardiya district, which shares border with Uttar Pradesh (India). The arms were purchased in the open weapon market of Lucknow, the state capital of Uttar Pradesh and Magadh region of Bihar.

Arms are being smuggled into India, yet Maoists confirmed that the arms are usually Chinese and Russian made. A Maoist's statement said: "Usually we get arms through Nepal and sometimes through Tibet, but our main procurers are ULFA and LTTE. Here are so many arms dealer all over the world. They are sitting in China, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and even in India. I am not in the position to say much on this subject."

However, the merger of two dangerous left wing extremist outfits, the erstwhile MCCI and the PW on September 21, 2004, poses a threat that goes beyond internal security, and imperils India's Parliamentary Democracy. According to a CPI-Maoist press release issued by Muppala Lakshman Rao alias Ganapathi, the 'General Secretary' of the Party, the unity was aimed at furthering the cause of "revolution" in India. The new party also pledged to work in close collaboration with the CPN-Maoist. As part of its strategy, the CPI-Maoist would fiercely oppose the Central Government. Ganapathi also announced the formation of a 'People's Liberation Guerrilla Army' and extended support to "revolutionary struggles" in Nepal, Peru, the Philippines, Turkey and "other places.

The merger now makes the CPI-Maoist a pan-Indian revolutionary group, and brings the Maoists closer to their objective of 'liberating' their proposed CRZ. The intention is to have a continuous stretch of territory under their influence and control, with the ultimate goal of eventually "liberating" the entire zone. Once achieved, the CRZ will virtually drive a wedge through the vital areas of the country, and would help crystallize linkages with other Maoist groups operating in South Asia, including the CPN-Maoist and the Communist Party of Bhutan-Maoist (CPB-M).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and economic liberalization in China the Maoists of India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan, Peru, Turkey, Haiti, Italy, Tunisia, Bangladesh, Colombia Iran and USA have formed a new International body named Revolutionary International Movement (RIM). In July 2001, about 10 Maoist groups in South Asia formed the Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organization of South Asia (CCOMPOSA), in which the Nepalese Maoists, PW, Maoist Communist Center of India (MCCI), Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Bangladesh), Communist Party of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and other Indian left-wing extremist outfits became members to unify and coordinate the activities of the Maoist parties and organisations in the subcontinent. India is one of the main targets of this international grouping. The Nepal Maoists openly declare that unless the Maoists of the South Asian region work jointly to counter 'the pernicious role of India' final victory would elude them.

The merger assumes more threatening proportions in view of the CPN-Maoist's rampage across Nepal. The CPN-Maoist has long maintained that unless the Maoists of the South Asia region work together to counter India's 'pernicious role', 'final victory' would elude them. Intelligence sources indicate that, if the Maoist insurgents achieve their objective in Nepal, a sudden spurt of cross-border terrorism along the 1,751 kilometer Indo-Nepal border would be a certainty, as the Maoist groups focus on the consolidation of their CRZ.

In Nepal, less than a decade, the CPN-Maoist control more than half the country and their influence extends to almost all 75 districts, including Kathmandu. This has resulted in the near collapse of state institutions and the breakdown of the rule of law in violence-affected areas. These movements constitute grave risks to security, not only for

Nepal, but for India as well, as the Maoists develop linkages, not only with ideologically sympathetic groups in India, but with a number of other subversive groups on a purely opportunistic basis.

Another Himalayan Kingdom (Bhutan)

The expanding Maoist networks have serious security implications for Bhutan. The Maoists have incited Bhutanese refugees in the Jhapa and Morang district of south-eastern Nepal, and the formation of the Communist Party of Bhutan - Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (CPB-MLM) has heightened security concerns. However, the threat of an armed struggle by the refugees against their home state is growing visibly. The emergence of CPB-MLM which distributed a pamphlet announcing its birth on April 22, 2003, and urged all the 'victimized' citizens of Bhutan to join a 'people's war' to overthrow the Bhutanese monarchy and establish a people's republic sent alarm bells ringing across Bhutan.

There is evidence that the CPB-MLM was set up with the active support and collaboration of the Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist, as well as Indian Maoist groups, and the language and content of their various declarations closely reflects the perspectives of their mentors. Significant strategic threats also emerge from the current situation, compounding the many strong anti-establishment insurgent movements that plague the whole region - Nepal, Bhutan and India's Northeast. Any significant population movement at this time has the potential to destabilize and endanger all three countries.

However, the much waited constitution, which was supposed to be a solution to the refugees' problem in the country was silent on the refugees. There are chances of Maoists exploiting the situation as there are too many frustrated youths now who have no employment and are uncertain of their future. The regions surrounding the seven camps are all hot beds of communist activity. There is unconfirmed information that over two hundred youths have joined the Maoists. The youths in camps at Goldhop and Beldangi are being forced to join their ranks. According to Nepal News Bhutanese refugees have decided to assemble at the Mechi bridge along the Nepal-India border every Friday calling upon the Indian government to exert its influence to help resolve the 15-year-old refugee impasse. About 80 refugees from different camps under the banner of National Front for Democracy in Bhutan (NFDB) gathered at the bridge on January 6, 2006 and shouted slogans, demanding the intervention of the Indian government to mediate between Nepal and Bhutan for their resettlement.

There is a concern over the attempts by Maoist organisations to unify, consolidate and expand their movement through bodies like the CCOMPOSA and the RIM. A recent escalation of Maoist campaigns against India has heightened concern. In September 2004, the Maoists, through hand-written pamphlets, warned of the use of suicide bombers to attack Indian leaders if India went ahead with plans to provide

military assistance to Nepal. While Maoists openly declare joint action to counter 'the pernicious role of India' the later has shown incoherence in policy towards Maoists active both inside and outside the territory. India should not forget that China has already made its stand clear on Nepalese Maoists and rewarded hugely by bagging an arms deal with Nepalese government. Nepal's anger on India's hosting Maoists and political parties meeting in New Delhi is already visible. In a statement on January 6, Nepalese Consul General at the Royal Nepal Consulate General Office in Lhasa, Leela Mani Paudyal said, "China never interfered our internal affairs". "Unflinching support of China to the Nepalese people, irrespective of whoever sits in power, is really commendable." Apart from counter Maoist insurgency, India should work out on peace in Nepal. For a mature state its foreign policy objective should be the achievement of 'National Interest'. And the national interest should be achieved in the regional context.