Conclusion

The Maoist Movement in Nepal is a new development in the politics of South Asian Insurgencies. It has emerged and grown in the socio-economic and political conditions of Nepal. In more than a decade it has become a major political force with the capacity to challenge the state and the country’s socio-economic fabric. It has wide ranging domestic, regional and international support base. It also has international ideological and political linkages. The Maoist movement is not an isolated phenomenon.

Nepal has experienced a prolonged political unrest for a long time. The government of Nepal, both the Monarchial and the parliamentary governments had never been able to establish a stable government with well entrenched political and administrative structures. The economic system which was mainly based on agriculture was backward and exploitative. The caste system on which rural social structure is based continues to be oppressive for the majority of the peasants and cultivators. These political, social and economic conditions provided the material conditions under which the Maoist ‘People’s War’ could flourish and grow organizationally among large sections of the Nepali society.

The ‘People’s War’, launched by the Maoists in 1996 was aimed at the overthrow of the existing semi-feudal and semi-colonial state. Later it was transformed into an armed militant uprising. Though the Communist history in Nepal could be traced to the decade of 1950’s, the ideological subscription of Maoism began after three decades of inception of the communist movement. In 1971, group of some young communist leaders influenced by the Maoist ideology and thought, provided leadership to the Jhapa uprising. However, the Jhapa uprising could not continue for long. The young participant of the Jhapa movement formed the CPN-Marxist-
Leninist, which, later played vital role in the formation of CPN-United Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) in 1990.

In 1974, after the Jhapa movement, at the fourth convention of the CPN the Maoist ideology was officially declared as the guiding ideology of the party. However, the path of armed struggle was adopted by the party in 1979 in accordance with the spirit of the 1974 fourth convention. During the period between the fourth convention and the formation of CPN-Maoist in 1995 the ideology came to be seriously challenged and contested by the various factions in the party. As a consequence the movement saw a number of splits and splinter groups breaking from the movement. The major splits took place in 1983, 1985 and 1990. The main issue behind the split however was the timing of the armed struggle against the state.

Several communist groups participated in the popular people’s movement in 1989-90 as constituent of the United National People’s Movement (UNPM), a joint front for the promotion of democracy and against the Panchayat system. Following the political transformation in 1990, several communist groups, disgruntled with the democratic system under constitutional monarchy, broke away from their parent party, the United Left Front (ULF). In order to provide a more militant and revolutionary character to the movement, they formed a two-tier organization, the Revolutionary Front (CPN-Unity Centre), and the Political Front (United People’s Front of Nepal – UPFN).

The formation of the CPN-Unity Centre in 1990 by three parties, Fourth Convention, Masal and Mashal was the first major step by hardcore Maoist to unite. This may be considered as the starting point of Maoist movement in Nepal. The equation among the left forces changed in favour of CPN-Unity centre as a consequence of the movement away from the left to the centre by the CPN-UML, while the Congress party was constantly
heading towards the right from the centre in the political spectrum of the country. Because the politics was concentrated at the centre in the game of government making and unmaking, the parliamentary parties grossly ignored the need for party building at local level. This gave the opportunity and time for CPN-M to create its own space and territory for a long ‘People’s War’.

The UPF President Baburam Bhattarai led a three-member delegation to the Simha Durbar secretariat on February 4, 1996 and handed over a memorandum to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. The Memorandum contained 40-demands. Baburam Bhattarai gave an ultimatum for the fulfillment of demands upto February 17, 1996, and threatened to start a struggle in case the government did not take any positive initiative. All this helped the Maoists in their strategy formation, objective achievement and terrorizing the state actors and ordinary people. However, four days before the expiry of that ultimatum, on February 13, 1996, the Maoists started the ‘People’s War’ and the top leaders of the CPN-M went underground.

Principal ideology of the CPN-M is Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. However, the party is guided more by the ideology of Mao-Tse-Tung. For the Maoists, “People’s War” is necessary to change society. It believed that revolt is the only path for changing society and ‘people with no army have nothing of their own.’ Hence, it preferred ‘People’s War’ to end all kind of other war. The CPN-M in the application of Maoist understanding which emphasized on the “masses as a creator of history” started to mobilize the people for a ‘Protracted People’s War’ against the state.

The Maoist Insurgency in its mid-western stronghold areas can be seen as a renewal of an old confrontation between the Thakuri Raj and the Radical left. The Thakur’s (descendants of the rulers of the old
principalities) and their clients had long dominated this area, and the nature of their rule at local level was repressive. This was in accord with the authoritarian, regime at the centre during the partyless Panchayat Regime (1962-91). Even after the restoration of democracy in 1990, the former Panchas survived, reviving their power base with a new political trademark by responding to the Nepali Congress’s policy of incorporating the traditional social and political elites in its scheme of party building during the early 1990s. However, the popular empowerment that spread after the successful 1990 Jan Andolan introduced a new power equation against the traditional forces. Both the CPN-UML and the CPN-M emerged as the most influential Left groups in the people’s fight against various forms of the Thakuri Raj in this region.

Nepal being an agrarian society, the peasants’ dissatisfaction and discontent regarding land ownership and other related issues has been utilized by the Maoists to mobilize large sections of the peasantry, particularly in more backward areas where the agricultural land is less productive, against the state. The Maoists demand for the confiscation of the land of the landlords and its distribution among the actual cultivators of the land and the landless peasants helped the Maoists to get strong support from the poor peasants.

Given the scarcity and the skewed distribution of land among the landed classes, the Maoists were able to strike a chord with the poor and landless peasants who mainly belonged to the lower castes. Their appeal for the distribution of land of the landlords to actual cultivators was able to attract these classes in large numbers into their revolutionary movement.

The CPN-M divided the process of ‘People’s War’ into three stages; strategic defence, strategic balance and strategic offence. At the start of their campaign, they declared that the ‘People’s War’ to be a difficult task,
full of twists and turns and of a ‘Protracted nature’. In February 1996, with the surprise attack on police posts in Western Districts of Rolpa, and Rukum the CPN-M entered the first stage. The first defensive stage took some five years and in November 2001 from the start of their direct confrontation with the RNA the CPN-M entered the second stage of Protracted People’s War i.e. strategic balance. The party announced launch of their strategic offensive on August 2004 and the first sub-stage was defined as a strategic counter offensive. The Maoists have moved into final stage of their armed campaign to capture state power.

The Maoists have shown good flexibility in their political tactics. Every major political force in Nepal has been used and entrapped by the strategy of the Maoist. The Maoist joined hand with the King, CPN (UML) and even some leaders of Nepali congress at different stages. The conflict between the palace and the government came to the forefront in respect of the issue of the mobilization of the army in the Maoist affected area. The case of the army mobilization led to the resignation of the Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in 2001. It is said that the King objected mobilization of army against the Maoist because of the ‘Tacit Understanding’ between the King and the Maoist. Apart from that, the Maoist succeeded in increasing inter and intra-party antagonism among almost all the major parties.

When the Maoists declared the ‘People’s War’, the initial targets of the Maoists were only the NC Cadres. Other parties like CPN (UML) and RPP supported the Maoists when it eliminated the NC cadres. These parties joined hands with the Maoists to win the elections and to defeat the NC. After 1999 the NC, which was the most affected party by the Maoist violence, was also divided into two factions in relation to the question of dealing with the Maoist.
During the ten years of the Maoist Movement, the Maoists declared several truces. The first was on July 23, 2001, which continued for almost four months. During the Truce, two round of talks were held between the government and the Maoist. The truce ended on November 23, 2001, when the Maoists attacked the headquarters of Dong, Syangja and Salukhumbu districts. It is argued that the Maoists used the truce period to strengthen their organization and spread their influence.

Another truce was reached on January 29, 2003 and lasted till August 26, 2003. During the truce period three round of talks were held. Maoist and government both tabled their agenda for political and social change. However, the truce also broke after the royal nominee government rejected the main political demand of the Maoists for election of the Constituent Assembly.

The 12-point agreement concluded in November 2005 between the Maoists and the SPA was a significant step towards heralding peace in Nepal. The Maoists who had been termed ‘terrorist’ were finally brought into the political mainstream. Their core demands – an interim constitution, an elected Constituent Assembly to frame a new constitution, a republican state – which had been termed as non-negotiable in earlier Government-Maoist talks were openly discussed and agreements concluded in that direction as well.

CPN (Maoist)’s policy is neither ‘all alliance and no struggle’, nor is it ‘all struggle and no alliance’. Rather, it combines both. It was with this sole intention that the Maoists came to the 12-point understanding with the Parliamentary parties. The strategic shift of the CPN (M) must be understood with reference to the historic meeting of its central committee, held in Chunbang village in Rukum district in September-October 2005. Important decision taken at the meeting was that the CPN (Maoist) should
forge an alliance with the agitating parliamentary parties. This was considered necessary in order to isolate and abolish the Monarchy.

The 2006 peace process was preceded by the realignment of political forces that culminated with an alliance between the SPA and the CPN-M against the king. The CPN-M entered the alliance out of a recognition that they lacked substantive presence in urban area and thus the futility of trying to capture Kathmandu militarily.

These developments, however, were possible after the CPN-M’s positive attitude towards heralding peace in Nepal. Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed between SPA and Maoists on November 21, 2006, declared an end to the ten year civil war. The agreement ended the triangular balance that existed till then with the King, the political parties and the Maoists and thus paved the way for the Maoists to transform their armed struggle to constitutional struggle. Maoists decided to join the mainstream and work from within.

The 2006 peace process is quantitatively different from previous efforts. The peace process facilitated the new alliance between the CPN-M and the SPA against the king. Key enabling factor for their development were change in CPN-Maoists perception that the real enemy was the king and not the entire political establishment. The engagement of the CPN-M also derived from the acknowledgement of their limited ability in gaining control over urban areas with a military strategy.

There are three main factors which led the CPN-M to give up their strategy of people’s war and urban insurrection, and join the political process. These are: first, the lack of economic productivity to sustain the base areas, particularly in hill areas. Secondly, the international situation as such that any urban insurrection would have precipitated the entry of
foreign imperialist troops leading to uncontrolled violence, and as the Maoists said, an “Afghanistan like situation”. Thirdly, there was need to develop a much more solid support base in urban areas, which was extremely difficult to carry out in the midst of people’s war and as an underground party.

In the final analysis it can be said that the tactics followed by the CPN-M were largely dictated by the difficulties faced by the ‘New Democratic Revolution’. Maoists were drawn into the peace process by the ruling classes in Nepal. They wanted to see an end to the growing insurgent activities led by the CPN-M. The line followed by the party and the discipline of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) had increased the popularity of the CPN-M among the masses. By joining the peace-process the ruling classes were able to halt this process. It remains an open question now after the prolonged aborted peace process going on in Nepal whether the Maoists now are in a stronger position to further its ‘New Democratic Revolution’ or it has made its task of making the revolution more difficult. The dilemma that the CPN-M confront opens up many possibilities regarding the transition.

The situation seems to have created more difficulties and problems for the Maoist in the present scenario where the three parties seems to have emerged equally strong. The revival of the monarchial forces despite the initial agreement in the peace process for a non-negotiable republican state is a new development. The non-Maoist republican political forces have also grown as a political force with the help of UN mediation. The possibility for the revival of ‘Protracted Peoples War’ in the past 2005 peace accord face greater problems of revival of the armed struggle also as a result of long period of non-revolutionary activities on the part of the CPN-M cadres and the PLA.