

## **ISAS SEMINAR**

# **FROM REBELS TO RULERS : THE TRIUMPH OF THE MAOISTS IN NEPAL**

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# **From Rebels to Rulers: The Triumph of the Maoists in Nepal**

**Nishchal Nath Pandey**

# An Epoch-Making Election

- ◆ Fulfilled a 57-year old promise of the people being allowed to choose their own destiny
- ◆ 60 percent voter turnout, 80,000 national / international observers
- ◆ Polls put off at only 33 out of 20,000 booths
- ◆ Only 8 died - a relatively small number in South Asian standards

# CPN(Maoist)-Single Largest party

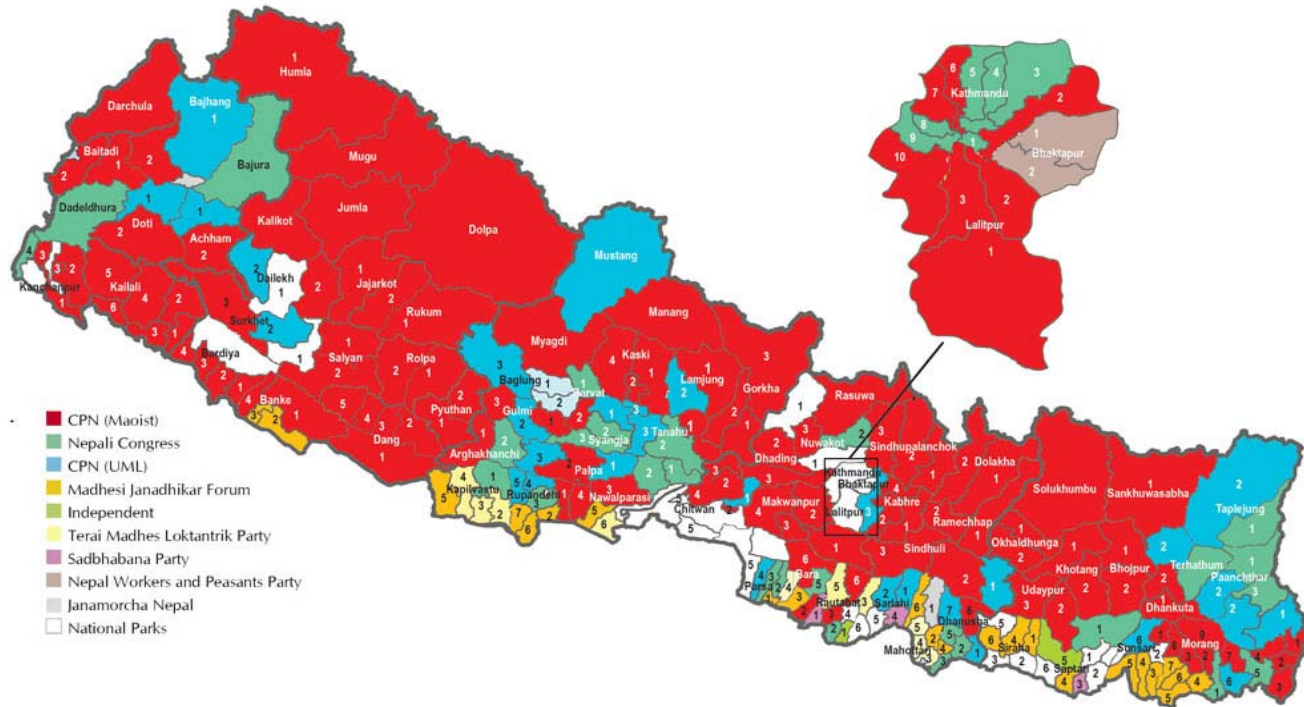
- ◆ Maoists surprise everyone and become single largest party
- ◆ All their top leaders triumph, secure 120 seats in direct elections
- ◆ They get 100 more seats in proportional representation



# What the Votes Mean?

- ◆ In an Assembly of 601, CPN(Maoists) have only 220 members
- ◆ This makes it imperative to align with other parties to form a government
- ◆ But all other parties, minus the Maoists, too cannot hope to form a government
- ◆ Provisions of the Interim Constitution is further complicating the process
- ◆ PM Koirala doesn't want to resign and has demanded post of the first President

# Constituency-Wise Maoist Strength



# Poor Show by the Nepali Congress

- ◆ Its entire leadership except ex-PM Deuba routed in the polls
- ◆ Won 110 seats, has become weakest in its history
- ◆ Possibility of the Koirala family losing its traditional hold over the party



# CPN (UML)'s Battle for Survival

- ◆ CPN(UML) also did poorly in the polls- just 103 seats in the CA.
- ◆ General Secretary resigns, pressure from the cadres not to join govt.
- ◆ Party is battling for survival; Presence of a 'moderate left' is becoming redundant



# End of the Monarchy

- ◆ Abolishing the 240-yr. old monarchy by the CA is now almost certain
- ◆ King Gyanendra has said he will stay in Nepal
- ◆ Pro-monarchy & Right wing Hindu groups unhappy



# Emergence of Terai parties

- ◆ MPRF, TMLP and SP together have 80 seats
- ◆ They could either join the govt. or stay in the opposition
- ◆ All terai based parties want an autonomous terai state
- ◆ 14 killed, 30 abducted, 15 incidents of blasts since April 10



# Maoist's Economic Policies

- ◆ Prachanda took initiative and called a donor's meeting at UN House
- ◆ Mahara says investment will be protected, they believe in a market economy
- ◆ Problems related to labour, donations, corruption, closed industries to be resolved



# Maoist's Standpoint on India

- ◆ Abrogation of unequal treaties, border encroachment, agreements on river water, regulating the porous border, stopping Gorkha recruitment were some of the issues stated in their election manifesto.
- ◆ But lately Prachanda has said, "Without taking cooperation with India forward, we cannot do anything for Nepal"
- ◆ Rhetoric apart, Maoists are likely to be practical with regards to their India policy

# India's Position on Maoist-led govt.

- ◆ Initially surprised with election victory but will accept verdict of the Nepali people
- ◆ The Indian Left feels that it will be a friendly govt. able to “sell” pacts with India among the people. Also, this will “inspire” Indian Naxalites to join mainstream politics
- ◆ BJP, RSS feel that it will be ‘anti-Hindu’ and will instead promote Naxal terror in India
- ◆ Security agencies & Indian Army will closely monitor Security Sector Reforms and fate of Nepal Army rank and file

# China and a Maoist led govt.

Beijing has nothing to lose from a Maoist party coming to power in Nepal

Extremely worried of almost daily protests by Tibetan refugees, has demanded tighter control by the police

- ◆ Maoists want to give an economic orientation to Sino-Nepal relations – railway, roads, pipeline, etc.

# The American Dilemma!

- ◆ Still hesitant to take the ‘terrorist’ tag off the Maoists
- ◆ Critical of Maoist behaviour and the YCL
- ◆ Amb. Nancy Powell has met Prachanda for the first time, some improvement has been seen
- ◆ Is very concerned about PLA-NA merger

# UNMIN – Time to Go



- ◆ Term expiring on July 22
- ◆ Indication that Nepal doesn't want it to continue
- ◆ India unhappy with certain UNMIN activities
- ◆ Arms monitors reduced from 186 to 82

# Prognosis & Approach

- ◆ Bloodshed and turmoil if Maoists not allowed to form a govt.
- ◆ The CA needs to draft a new Constitution without unnecessary delay
- ◆ Maoists must form an inclusive govt. and take experienced hands; retribution against security forces will have dangerous fall-outs

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