

India's Nepal Hands Watch Maoist Shift

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NEW DELHI, FEB 12, [2013] -

The change in the UCPN (Maoist)'s political line, adopted during the party's seventh General Convention in Hetauda, is being observed with great interest by neighbouring India .

Describing the change as a "huge and significant shift" in the party's principles, India's Nepal hands claimed that the development would "undoubtedly have a positive impact on improving the New Delhi-Maoist relationship."

The recently concluded jamboree of the largest Nepali political force endorsed Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal's political document, which envisages embracing a 'capitalist revolution' by abandoning its previous line of 'people's revolution'.

This time around, the UCPN (Maoist) not only abandoned its traditional practice of identifying a 'principal enemy' but also did not mention a word about India—which it has long regarded as an "expansionist force" and linked "anti-Indian sentiments" with nationalism over the past two decades.

"The UCPN (Maoist) has now emerged as a pragmatic force," said DP Tripathi, General Secretary of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), which is a major ally of the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA).

KC Tyagi, Principal General Secretary of the opposition's Janata Dal and newly appointed Rajya Sabha member from Bihar, praised the Maoists for embracing a "pragmatic" policy, learning from the mistakes of history."

Senior Indian journalist Anandswaroop Verma, who had observations similar to Tripathi and Tyagi, argued that the Maoist shift is based on geopolitical realities. "Even if Mao Zedong had been in a difficult geopolitical situation like Nepal, he would have adopted a balanced policy," said Verma, who is considered an expert on Nepal's communist history.

Verma, however, argued that with the "total" shift in principles, the UCPN (Maoist) has taken a "big risk". "If the Maoists fail to clean their internal issues like corruption and address the problem of cadres being alienated from the leadership, this shift in principle could cost them a lot," he said.

Nihar Nayak, a researcher on Nepal issues at the Indian government-funded Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), observed that the "growing distance" between the Maoist leaders and cadres is a serious problem.

“Though the Maoist leadership formally declared the adoption of a new path, radicalism still prevails among cadres,” said Nayak. “It is not enough to just adopt a new policy on paper. India will continue to closely observe how these decisions will be implemented in the coming days.”

However, Tripathi argued that the new move has sent a positive message to the international community, including India. “The UCPN (Maoist) has delivered the message of its commitment to democratic practice and a national dialogue for consensus,” he said.

Posted on: 2013-02-12 03:00

[From: <http://ekantipur.com/2013/02/12/top-story/indias-nepal-hands-watch-maoist-shift/366964.html>]