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Home > Nepal: Post Election Developments: Update No. 356

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By Dr. S.Chandrasekharan

There has not been much by way of an official response from India to the communist takeover in Nepal. It looks like a policy of “wait and see” and that is good.

There was speculation in Nepal Media as what the new dispensation in Nepal will be after the leftist take over. One of the UML leaders stated clearly that the new government will be a “communist” government. Labels do not matter but what is important to note is that the new government for many reasons need not be anti Indian though one may argue that they came to power on an anti Indian platform.

One of the top UML leaders- the Deputy General Secretary gave an interesting and a sober response on the future of relations with India. He said that it will be a challenge for the new government in handling relations with India. He added that they should address legitimate concerns of India but ensure that India does not impose illegitimate concerns on them. He made a plea that the new government should reach out to the Indian establishment, Indian public, the press, civil society and intelligentsia and convince them that Nepal intends no harm.

With this opening, it should be possible to re calibrate Indian policy towards Nepal. It should be left to Nepal to decide on what kind of relationship it wants with India. The Indo Nepal Friendship treaty with its security provisions has become outdated and there will be pressure from Nepal to either cancel or modify it. In the current globalized environment, the treaty itself is an anachronism that needs to be thoroughly reviewed or given up. Bilateral arrangements as is the norm could be a better alternative provided there is reciprocity.

One of the first acts done by the Prime Minister in waiting- K.P.Oli was to visit the Nepal China border at Rasuwa and examine the facilities available with the intention to make it an international trading point with other infra structural facilities. The idea is not to depend on India but

to diversify trade with China as much as possible.

Since Nepal is intent on diversifying trade which it should as a sovereign country, particularly after the alleged Indian blockade, there is a need to float the Indian rupee. There has been a suggestion on the same lines from the Nepalese media too. There will be call for work permits for Indians working in Nepal. These are bilateral issues that can be discussed and solved bilaterally to mutual satisfaction.

Delay in the formation of the new government:

According to Article 76 (8) of the Constitution the formation of a new government has to be done within thirty-five days of the declaration of results of the election. It follows that procedures for the appointment of Prime Minister has also to be done not later than thirty five days.

Current Prime Minister Deuba in normal circumstances should have tendered his resignation soon after the elections and in fact going by the rout the party had, he should have resigned from the chairmanship of the party too. . Instead he is sticking onto the government on the technical ground that elections to the National Assembly should also be completed before he could hand over the government.

Technically Deuba may be correct but his refusal to hand over power appears to be against all democratic forms. It is also surprising that except for Shekhar Koirala there is hardly any call from senior leaders of the Nepali Congress for a complete revamping of the party after the rout!

The issue of delay in the formation of the government after the elections relates to the mode of election to the National assembly which the Nepali Congress wants by the method of "single transferable vote." The UML on the other hand wants the election on the FPTP mode- (first past the post as is done in direct elections to the Parliament).

An ordinance for the procedure of a single transferable vote system has been pending with the President for the last two months, The President has not put her assent on the ordinance as it has been objected to by both the UML and CPN-Maoist Centre. Instead the President has asked Deuba to make the ordinance acceptable to the two major political parties.

Deuba instead of meeting the leaders of the two parties to arrive at a consensus has been running to constitutional experts to stay on! Deuba should remember that in one of the elections, Girija Prasad Koirala took over without waiting for the National Assembly!

The problem is that the Nepali Congress is set to gain a few seats in the assembly by the single transferable vote and not by the FPTP mode. Having swept the polls, the UML and the CPN- Maoist centre could also be a little more generous and avoid the present stalemate. It is certain that eventually better wisdom will prevail on all the three major parties- the UML, the NC and the CPN-MC and an agreement reached sooner for the new government to take over.

Rumblings within the Grand Alliance:

It will be interesting to see how the grand alliance of the UML and the Maoists is going to work out in running the government. For the present the Maoist centre will have to take a subordinate role but the future is uncertain. The ultimate goal for both the parties is supposed to be a complete merger, but it could still be a long way off. It is too early to say how the merger will play out in course of time.

On 19th December, the Maoist Centre claimed that they expect a “respectable share” in both the unified party and the new cabinet. On the other hand the UML has claimed that their leader Oli should lead both the party and the government. As of now, the decision of the UML which has obtained a major share of the votes may prevail

It is said there is already an informal agreement that the post of prime ministership will go by rotation between the groups.

Tags:

[Nepal Government](#) ^[1]

[Indo-Nepal Relations](#) ^[2]

[K.P.Oli](#) ^[3]

Category:

[Notes](#) ^[4]

Countries:

[Nepal](#) ^[5]

Topics:

[Political](#) ^[6]

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Links

[1] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/1815>

[2] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/1816>

[3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/962>

[4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/notes>

[5] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/nepal>

[6] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/political>