

Profiles

People

Mohan Baidya

With Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai (see below), Mohan Baidya formed the triumvirate that led the Maoist movement. Mohan Baidya became the General Secretary of Communist Party of Nepal–Mashal (CPN–Mashal) after the party split in 1985. He was replaced a year later by Prachanda. Although more senior than Prachanda, Mohan Baidya stayed under his leadership for nearly three decades and has continued to engage in ideological debate with him. He was one of the three Vice-Chairs of the Unified CPN–Maoist (UCPN–M) until June 2012 when he walked out of the party with nearly a third of the central committee members, accusing Prachanda and Bhattarai of revisionism. His faction was called the CPN–Maoist and, later the CPN–Revolutionary Maoist. After boycotting the 2013 Constituent Assembly (CA) election, an even more hardline faction split off from Baidya in March 2014. In May 2016, some of the senior leaders of Baidya’s party reunited with the UCPN–M to become the CPN–Maoist Centre.

Bidhya Devi Bhandari

Bidhya Devi Bhandari is the President of Nepal – the second person and the first woman to hold the post. Active in communist politics since the time she was a student, she came to national prominence after the death of her husband, Madan Bhandari, the General Secretary of the UML, in a road accident in 1993. She was elected to parliament twice from her husband’s constituency. She was defeated in the 2008 CA election but was appointed Minister of Defence in May 2009 in the government led by Madhav Kumar Nepal of the UML. She was elected president in October 2015.

Baburam Bhattarai

Baburam Bhattarai was one of the most visible faces of the Maoist insurgency. Having started his political career as president of a Nepali students’ organisation in India, he joined the CPN–Fourth Congress after the national referendum of 1980, and later the CPN–Masal. He was instrumental in the formation of the CPN–Unity Centre after the 1990 movement. He headed its political wing, the United People’s Front, in which capacity he submitted the 40-Point Demand to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in February 1996, warning of an armed struggle if the Maoists’ demands were not met. He led the Maoist side in the 2003 peace talks. In 2004 Bhattarai was stripped of all responsibilities and placed under house arrest by the party for being pro-India. He was rehabilitated after King Gyanendra seized power in 2005 and the role of India became paramount in bringing the Maoists and the Seven-Party Alliance together. Bhattarai served as finance minister in the first Prachanda government. He became prime minister in August 2011 and oversaw the dissolution of the first CA. He was Chair of the Constitutional Political Dialogue and Consensus Committee of the second CA. In a surprise move, within days of the

new constitution being promulgated in September 2015, Bhattarai quit the UCPN–M, of which he was one of three Vice-Chairs, and resigned his seat in parliament. He has since founded a new party called Naya Shakti (New Power).

Sher Bahadur Deuba

Sher Bahadur Deuba is currently President of the Nepali Congress (NC). A former student leader, he was home minister in the first post-1990 NC government (1991–94). He became prime minister in 1995 and headed the government when the Maoist insurgency broke out. When the NC came back to power in 1999, he was placed in charge of the ‘High-Level Committee to Provide Suggestions to Solve the Maoist Problem’. He became prime minister once again in July 2001 and began talks with the Maoists. Following the breakdown of negotiations in November 2001 and the resumption of hostilities, Deuba declared a national state of emergency. Internal dissension within the NC led Deuba to dissolve parliament in May 2002. He was suspended from the party as a result and formed a new party, the NC–Democratic. In October 2002, King Gyanendra dismissed Deuba for failing to hold parliamentary elections as required by law, but he was reinstated as prime minister June 2004. In February 2005, Gyanendra dismissed Deuba once again. The NC–Democratic was part of the Seven-Party Alliance that led the Second People’s Movement. The party merged with the NC in 2007, and Deuba was elected president of the NC in March 2016.

Jhalanath Khanal

Jhalanath Khanal was one of the founding members of the CPN–Marxist-Leninist (CPN–ML) in 1978, and was its General Secretary from 1982 to 1986. He became a minister in the interim government formed after the 1990 People’s Movement, and again in 1997. He became General Secretary of the UML in 2008 after Madhav Kumar Nepal resigned his position following his electoral defeat in the CA election. When the UML revived the post of Chairman, he was elected to it 2009. He became prime minister in February 2011 but held the post for less than seven months.

Girija Prasad Koirala

Girija Prasad Koirala was the half brother of Matrika Prasad Koirala, the first commoner to become prime minister after the end of Rana rule, and the brother of BP Koirala, the first democratically elected prime minister of Nepal. He himself was the first prime minister of post-1990 Nepal, and assumed the post three more times. His first independent foray into politics began with the 1947 workers’ strike in the Tarai during Rana rule. Immersed in NC politics following his brothers, as the General Secretary he was part of the leadership troika that took charge of the party after the death of BP in 1982. His first tenure as prime minister ended due to factionalism within the party, and he called for mid-term elections in which the NC came second behind the UML. In 1996, he was elected president of the NC, a position he held until

his death in March 2010. He led the NC to victory in 1999 and literally handed over the premiership to his old comrade, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, only to force him out within a year. Girija resigned in July 2001 in protest against the army's failure to follow his orders. The dissolution of the parliament by Sher Bahadur Deuba in May 2002 resulted from the internal tussle between him and Girija, leading to a split in the party. Girija emerged as the highest political leader following the success of the 2006 Movement and took up the position of prime minister for the fourth time. He signed the *Comprehensive Peace Accord* on behalf of the government. When the Interim Constitution was amended for the third time in December 2007 and Nepal declared a republic, he assumed the role of head of state. It is widely believed that he hoped to be the consensus choice as Nepal's first president after the 2008 CA election, but for the emergence of the Maoists as the largest party in the CA. Girija, however, was able to push through another constitutional amendment that made the removal of the prime minister easier before handing over power to Prachanda, more than four months after the CA election. He died in 2010.

Sushil Koirala

A cousin of the more famous Koiralas, Sushil Koirala was a long-time NC activist and close confidant of Girija Prasad Koirala. Elected to parliament in 1991 and 1999, he generally shunned public office. He unsuccessfully vied with Sher Bahadur Deuba for the premiership after Girija's resignation in 2001. Having served as the General Secretary and Vice-President, he was elected party President in 2010. After the NC emerged as the largest party in the second CA, he became prime minister in February 2014. He oversaw the drafting of the 2015 constitution and resigned from the premiership following an earlier undertaking to quit once the constitution was promulgated. He stood for re-election by parliamentary vote, but was beaten by KP Oli of the UML. He died in 2016.

Madhav Kumar Nepal

Madhav Kumar Nepal was one of the founding members of the CPN-Marxist-Leninist (CPN-ML) in 1978. When the party merged with the CPN-M in 1990 and came above ground, he became the Deputy General Secretary of the new party, the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML). He assumed the post of General Secretary following the death of Madan Bhandari in a road accident in 1993. He was Deputy Prime Minister in the minority government formed by the UML in 1994. He resigned his position as General Secretary upon losing the 2008 CA election in both of the constituencies that he had contested. He became prime minister of Nepal in May 2009 and served in office till February 2011 when the then Chair of the UML, Jhala Nath Khanal, replaced him.

KP Oli

KP Sharma Oli was one of the leaders of the Jhapa Andolan, a brief but violent Maoist insurrection in south-eastern Nepal. He was arrested in 1973 and spent the next 14 years in prison. He escaped from jail in 1987, and joined the underground CPN-ML. He became a minister in the brief UML government of 1994-95. After the 2006 People's Movement, he was appointed Deputy Prime

Minister. He lost the 2008 CA elections but won in 2013. He became leader of the UML parliamentary party in 2014 and later Chair of the UML. He became prime minister in October 2015 in the midst of ongoing unrest in the Tarai and the blockade by India. He took a hardline stance against both Madhesi and India and rehabilitated Panchayat-style nationalism centred on the hill 'upper-caste' culture.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda

Pushpa Kamal Dahal has led the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and its various incarnations since 1985. Using the nom de guerre 'Prachanda', he was the General Secretary of the CPN-M when the 'People's War' began in 1996, and took up the newly created position of Chair in 2001. Later that year, the CPN-M announced the formation of its People's Liberation Army (PLA) with Prachanda as Commander. After the war, he led the CPN-M to victory as the largest party in the 2008 CA elections. He gave up his position as Commander of the PLA when he became prime minister in August 2008, a position he resigned in May 2009 following differences with the president over his dismissal of the army chief. In the second CA election of 2013, the CPN-M won far fewer seats and came third overall, with Prachanda himself defeated in one constituency and barely winning in a second. He became prime minister once again in August 2016, leading a coalition government with the Nepali Congress.

Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah

Gyanendra is the second son of King Mahendra. When King Tribhuvan and his family escaped to India via the Indian Embassy in 1950 as part of the attempt to end Rana rule, Gyanendra was left behind. The Ranas declared the three-year-old Gyanendra king. His 'reign', however, was soon over with the return of his grandfather from India. Known as a hardliner, Gyanendra was involved in business and conservation work. His son, Paras, was one of the few eyewitnesses to survive the 2001 palace massacre that killed Gyanendra's elder brother King Birendra and his immediate family. Although Gyanendra was away from Kathmandu at the time, the circumstances of his accession, combined with the unpopularity of Paras, made him a suspect in the eyes of many Nepalis and undermined his legitimacy. He made a grab for power in October 2002, dismissing Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and then ruling through prime ministers he had appointed, including Deuba in mid-2004. In February 2005, he dismissed Deuba once again and began running the government himself. He lost de facto power following the April 2006 Second People's Movement, after which all his political and even socio-cultural functions were taken over by the prime minister. He was voted out in the first sitting of the CA in May 2008, a decision he accepted without protest.

Ram Baran Yadav

Ram Baran Yadav was the first president of Nepal. A medical doctor by training, he was a member of the Nepali Congress party. He served as minister of state for health in the first Congress government of 1991-94, and became minister for health in 1999. He was elected President of Nepal by the first CA in July 2008. He remained president until October 2015 and had the distinction of having had eight prime ministers serve under him. As a Madhesi, his elevation to such a high

post symbolised the transformation of Nepal. His tenure was generally without controversy except for his overturning Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda's sacking of the army chief in 2009.

Institutions

See articles on peace architecture, p.24, and political parties, p.68, for more on Nepali institutions.

Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee (JMCC)

The creation of the Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee (JMCC) was part of the *Agreement on Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies* signed on 28 November 2006. Consisting of representatives of both the Nepali Army and the PLA and chaired by the United Nations, the JMCC's role was to ensure compliance with the Agreement by both sides. It was one of the more successful mechanisms of the peace process and by the time the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) came to an end in January 2011, the JMCC had held 135 sessions, which, according to the outgoing head of UNMIN, were 'collegial, professional and confidential'. The current Vice-President of Nepal, Nanda Bahadur Pun, was a member of the JMCC.

Nepal Peace Trust Fund

The Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF) was established in January 2007 to support the implementation of the CPA. The NPTF is a joint initiative of the Government of Nepal and a group of donors consisting of Denmark, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Organisationally, it lies under the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction. NPTF's main activities have been in the management of cantonments and the integration/rehabilitation of combatants; providing support to individuals and communities affected by the conflict; enhancing security and transitional justice mechanisms through actions such as rebuilding police stations and clearing mines; and conducting peacebuilding initiatives nationally and locally. NPTF is currently in its third phase and focusing on other areas of the peace process such as transitional justice and support for conflict victims.

People's Liberation Army

The PLA was formed in September 2001, at the time of the first ceasefire between the Maoists and the government. Most of the weapons at its disposal at the time were limited to those looted in attacks against the police, although some appeared to have been procured from the underground arms market. The PLA's arsenal was bolstered greatly by its successful surprise attack on an army camp in November 2001, signalling the end of the ceasefire. In terms of organisation, the PLA claimed to have reached division strength by 2004, and set up three divisions. These were much smaller than divisions in regular armies (10,000-plus) and the true strength of the PLA was never verified. When the cantonments were set up, 32,250 showed up for registration, a number that had dwindled to 19,602 by the time of verification. In May 2009, a video showing Prachanda boasting that the PLA had been only 7–8,000 strong surfaced in public. Prachanda was the Commander of the PLA from its establishment until he became prime minister in 2008, when he handed the role over to the current Vice-President of Nepal, Nanda Bahadur Pun.

Seven-Party Alliance

Formed in May 2005 to present a united front against King Gyanendra, who had usurped power in February 2005, the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) consisted of six parties from the House of Representatives that had been dissolved in 2002 – the Nepali Congress, the breakaway Nepali Congress–Democratic, the Communist Party of Nepal–Unified Marxist-Leninist, the Nepal Workers' and Peasants' Party, Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi), and the People's Front (the political wing of the underground Communist Party of Nepal–Unity Centre-Masal), which together accounted for 95 per cent of the membership of the House – and the United Left Front (which was itself a coalition of five communist parties), but which did not have any parliamentary representation. The SPA signed the *12-Point Understanding* with the Maoists in November 2005, which paved the way for the Second People's Movement of April 2006, and later negotiated the CPA and the Interim Constitution.