



Journal of Social and Political Sciences

Puri, R. P. (2025), A Dialectical Analysis of the Nepali Communist Movement: Historical, Ideological, Organizational, and Social Realities. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 8(4), 129-149.

ISSN 2615-3718

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1991.08.04.607

The online version of this article can be found at:
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:
The Asian Institute of Research

The *Journal of Social and Political Sciences* is an Open Access publication. It may be read, copied, and distributed free of charge according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

The Asian Institute of Research *Social and Political Sciences* is a peer-reviewed International Journal. The journal covers scholarly articles in the fields of Social and Political Sciences, which include, but are not limited to, Anthropology, Government Studies, Political Sciences, Sociology, International Relations, Public Administration, History, Philosophy, Arts, Education, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies. As the journal is Open Access, it ensures high visibility and the increase of citations for all research articles published. The *Journal of Social and Political Sciences* aims to facilitate scholarly work on recent theoretical and practical aspects of Social and Political Sciences.



ASIAN INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH
Connecting Scholars Worldwide

A Dialectical Analysis of the Nepali Communist Movement: Historical, Ideological, Organizational, and Social Realities

Ram Prakash Puri¹

¹ Ph.D. scholar, Department of History, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Abstract

This article presents a dialectical–materialist analysis of the Nepali communist movement, examining its historical trajectory, ideological evolution, organizational dynamics, and socio-political impact. Through qualitative analysis of party documents, leadership accounts, and scholarly literature, the study identifies persistent factionalism not as an organizational aberration but as a constitutive feature arising from unresolved structural contradictions. The research highlights the core tension between revolutionary Marxist–Leninist–Maoist ideology and the pragmatic demands of parliamentary politics—a contradiction that manifests in the gap between the movement’s emancipatory promises and its frequently oligarchic, exclusionary practices. The article argues that factionalism serves a dual function: it is both a symptom of systemic weakness and a mechanism for ideological negotiation and strategic adaptation. Key findings reveal that formal adherence to “democratic centralism” often devolves into personalized leadership cults, while social inclusion rhetoric rarely translates into representative internal structures. The post-conflict integration into competitive multiparty democracy has further widened the parliamentarism–revolution divide, compelling communist parties to dilute class-based politics in favor of electoral and developmental agendas. Ultimately, the study concludes that the future of the Nepali communist movement hinges on its ability to reconcile these dialectical tensions. It faces a critical choice between renewal—through genuine internal democratization, ideological coherence, and meaningful social representation—and decline—through continued fragmentation, ideological ambiguity, and the erosion of its transformative legitimacy. The article contributes to broader debates on left politics in post-conflict societies, illustrating how revolutionary movements navigate the fraught transition from insurgency to institutional governance.

Keywords: Nepali Communist Movement, Factionalism, Democratic Centralism, Oligarchy, Parliamentarism–Revolution Contradiction, Dialectical Analysis, Social Inclusion, Post-Conflict Politics

1. Introduction

The Nepali communist movement has been one of the most decisive forces shaping the political, social, and ideological landscape of modern Nepal. From its early anti-Rana mobilizations in the mid-twentieth century to the Maoist insurgency and the republican transformation of the twenty-first century, communism in Nepal has served as both a source of radical challenge to the status quo and a deeply contested arena of internal ideological, organizational, and strategic struggle. While the movement is formally grounded in Marxism–Leninism and Maoist thought, the actual historical evolution of Nepal’s communist parties reveals a complex interplay of ideology, organizational structure, leadership behavior, socio-cultural context, and geopolitical pressures

(Hachhethu, 2002; Baral, 2004). This interplay has produced both moments of revolutionary strength and long cycles of fragmentation, factionalism, and ideological dilution.

The movement's origins trace back to 1949 with the establishment of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN), which articulated a bold transformative project aimed at dismantling entrenched hierarchies, relations of exploitation, and the concentration of political and economic power. This early vision of systemic transformation drew directly from Marxist-Leninist doctrine, imagining a future socialist order defined by collective ownership of productive forces, an egalitarian social structure, and ultimately, the withering away of the bourgeois state (Pokhrel, 2023; Gellner, 2007). Yet, from the outset, the movement was shaped as much by its commitment to revolutionary ideals as by the constraints of Nepal's shifting political regimes and deeply stratified social structure.

During the Panchayat period (1960–1990), the communist movement operated largely underground, oscillating between clandestine organization and episodic mass mobilization. These years helped cultivate both ideological militancy and organizational resilience. However, the same conditions also generated intense intra-party competition, as different factions interpreted Marxist–Leninist principles through divergent strategic lenses. The lack of open political space fostered factional tendencies, producing splits that revolved around questions of strategy, leadership, and the appropriate degree of engagement with the monarchy and parliamentary institutions (Hachhethu, 2002).

The decade-long Maoist insurgency (1996–2006) reconfigured the movement's trajectory. The People's War expanded the communists' influence dramatically through village-level organization, mass participation, and the politicization of marginalized groups (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). At the same time, the insurgency highlighted the inherent tensions between revolutionary ideology and pragmatic strategy. Disagreements over timing, tactics, organizational style, and negotiations with the state became recurrent sources of internal conflict. The insurgency was thus both an apex of communist mobilization and a period characterized by leadership disputes, strategic disagreements, and ideological recalibration.

Ideologically, Nepali communist parties have long navigated between orthodox revolutionary doctrine and the practical demands of political adaptation. The post-1990 democratic opening challenged the movement to integrate parliamentary participation with revolutionary values. For many factions, this integration produced ideological compromises that diluted the class-conscious project central to Marxist–Leninist and Maoist theory (Hachhethu, 2002; Baral, 2004). Generational divides compounded these tensions. Older cadres framed ideological purity as essential to revolutionary continuity, while younger leaders increasingly invoked pragmatism, electoral strategy, and organizational modernization. These frictions illustrate what may be termed the “dialectic of ideological reproduction”—the tension between maintaining doctrinal coherence and adapting to rapidly changing political conditions.

Organizationally, Nepal's communist parties have exhibited persistent contradictions between the Leninist principle of democratic centralism and the actual practice of leadership-dominated centralization. Although democratic centralism is designed to balance internal democracy with unified discipline, in practice it frequently devolves into oligarchic control wielded by dominant leaders, mirroring what Michels (1915) described as the “iron law of oligarchy.” This structural tendency not only restricts internal debate and accountability but also provides fertile ground for factionalism, as leaders build personal bases of support that compete with institutional authority. Factionalism in Nepali communist parties thus stems not only from ideological differences but also from organizational design, personal rivalries, contested legitimacy, and the pressures of political survival within a competitive multiparty environment.

The socio-cultural landscape further shapes the internal dynamics and public legitimacy of the movement. Nepal's deeply stratified society—characterized by entrenched caste hierarchies, regional inequalities, gender discrimination, and ethnic marginalization—presents a fundamental challenge to a movement that aspires to egalitarianism. Communist parties that fail to incorporate Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, women, and peasants into meaningful political leadership experience weakened mass mobilization and declining ideological credibility (Upadhyay, 2023; Adhikari, 2024; Khatri & Paudel, 2025). Conversely, periods of strong inclusion, particularly

during the early years of the Maoist insurgency, bolstered grassroots trust and expanded the movement's sociopolitical reach. This demonstrates that social representation is not a peripheral concern but a structural determinant of both organizational stability and revolutionary legitimacy.

External pressures also play a significant role in shaping the movement's trajectory. State repression during the Panchayat years, democratic openings after 1990, international ideological currents, India–China regional politics, donor influence, and the constraints of electoral competition have all intersected with internal dynamics to reshape strategic priorities (Sharma, 2004). These forces continually mediate the movement's ability to sustain ideological fidelity while negotiating the realities of governance, coalition politics, and geopolitical alignment. The persistent tension between parliamentary engagement and revolutionary ambition exemplifies these dialectical pressures. For many parties, attempting to balance state power with revolutionary identity has produced both political influence and internal contradiction.

Viewed historically and analytically, the contemporary reality of Nepal's communist movement is therefore profoundly dialectical. On one side lies the ideological aspiration toward class transformation, collective ownership, and social equality. On the other lies the organizational, structural, and strategic constraints that have repeatedly generated fragmentation, leadership conflict, and ideological drift. The movement's empirical trajectory reveals persistent gaps between doctrine and practice, between revolutionary ideals and political pragmatism, and between organizational principles and leadership behavior. These gaps have produced an internally heterogeneous movement marked by theoretical–practical contradictions, structural fragilities, economic limitations, and sociopolitical constraints.

Understanding these complexities is crucial for analyzing factionalism, strategic decision-making, ideological reinterpretation, and the long-term evolution of communist politics in Nepal. The present study is situated within this broader context and seeks to examine the historical, ideological, organizational, and socio-cultural foundations of internal disputes and recurrent splits within Nepali communist parties. It adopts a qualitative and interpretive–critical approach, drawing from primary and secondary sources and employing triangulation as the central method of analysis. Rather than merely describing organizational patterns or behavioral tendencies, the study situates internal conflict within a broader epistemological and socio-political framework.

The study pursues three interrelated objectives. First, it analyzes how historical, ideological, and organizational contradictions interact dialectically to shape the movement's evolution, transformation, and recurrent divisions. Second, it examines how organizational structures—particularly the adherence to and deviation from Leninist principles such as democratic centralism—produce structural tensions, leadership competition, and factional outcomes. Third, it explores how socio-cultural representation and internal knowledge-production processes—such as ideological interpretation, cadre education, and epistemic framing—affect legitimacy, cohesion, and the emergence or mitigation of splits. By integrating these dimensions, the study aims to provide a multidimensional understanding of fragmentation within the Nepali communist movement and to contribute to broader debates about ideology, organization, and political change in post-revolutionary contexts.

2. Research Questions

- How do historical, ideological, and organizational contradictions interact dialectically to shape the evolution, transformation, and recurrent factionalism of the Nepali communist movement?
- In what ways do Nepali communist parties' organizational practices—particularly their adherence to (or deviation from) Leninist organizational principles—produce structural tensions, leadership rivalries, and factional outcomes?
- How do social–cultural representation and internal epistemic processes (knowledge-making, ideological interpretation, cadre education) influence legitimacy, internal cohesion, and the emergence or resolution of factions within Nepali communist groups?

3. Research Objectives

The current research will:

- To analyze how historical, ideological, and organizational contradictions have interacted dialectically to shape the evolution, transformation, and recurrent factionalism of the Nepali communist movement.
- To examine how Nepali communist parties' organizational structures and their adherence to—or deviation from—Leninist organizational principles generate structural tensions, leadership conflicts, and factional outcomes.
- To explore how social–cultural representation and internal epistemic practices (knowledge-making, ideological interpretation, cadre education) shape internal legitimacy, party cohesion, and the emergence or resolution of factions within Nepali communist groups.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a **qualitative, interpretive–critical research design** to investigate the dynamics of factionalism within the Nepali communist movement. This methodological orientation is grounded in the premise that factionalism is not merely a behavioral or organizational phenomenon, but a *deeply epistemic, socio-historical, and ideological process* embedded in competing interpretations of Marxist–Leninist–Maoist doctrine, strategic orientations, and political identity. The interpretive–critical approach enables the study to examine *how communist actors construct, negotiate, and contest knowledge*, and how these epistemic struggles intersect with structural contradictions, organizational cultures, and historical legacies. Given the complexity, multidimensionality, and context-specific nature of factionalism, a purely quantitative approach would be insufficient for capturing the underlying **dialectical tensions**, interpretive disputes, and lived experiences that shape the internal dynamics of Nepal's communist parties. A qualitative–critical framework therefore provides the depth, flexibility, and analytical rigor required to illuminate factionalism as a socially constructed, ideologically mediated, and historically situated process.

3.1. Data Sources and Materials

The study draws on a diverse corpus of **primary and secondary sources**, allowing for a robust and triangulated understanding of factional processes. Primary sources include party constitutions, political reports, organizational resolutions, central committee decisions, theoretical treatises, and strategic documents. These materials provide insight into formal organizational structures, the official articulation of ideological lines, and the codification of internal norms and disciplinary mechanisms. They also reveal how party leaderships justify their claims to ideological correctness and organizational legitimacy during periods of internal conflict.

In addition, personal writings, memoirs, interviews, and speeches by key communist leaders are analyzed as critical epistemic sites. These sources uncover **subjective interpretations**, internal criticisms, and competing narratives that illuminate the contested terrain of knowledge production within the movement. Secondary sources—scholarly monographs, peer-reviewed journal articles, historical accounts, and political analyses—complement the primary data by offering theoretical framing, contextual depth, and comparative insights into factionalism, party organization, ideological struggles, and political transitions in Nepal.

3.2. Analytical Strategy and Theoretical Orientation

Data analysis is guided by the principle of **methodological triangulation**, enabling the cross-verification of information across multiple types of sources and interpretive layers. Triangulation enhances the **credibility, reliability, and analytical validity** of the findings by mitigating biases inherent in individual documents, perspectives, or institutional narratives.

The analysis employs a combination of **thematic**, **structural**, and **epistemological coding**. Thematic coding identifies recurring patterns in factional alignments, leadership disputes, organizational tensions, and ideological debates. Structural coding highlights organizational mechanisms—such as democratic centralism, cadre deployment, and disciplinary procedures—that influence the emergence or suppression of factional tendencies. Epistemological coding foregrounds processes of knowledge creation, interpretation, and contestation, examining how actors invoke Marxist–Leninist–Maoist theory, historical memory, and political legitimacy to justify divergent ideological lines or organizational strategies.

The overall analytical lens is informed by **dialectical materialism**, which allows the study to examine how contradictions among historical experiences, productive relations, class compositions, leadership practices, and social structures produce shifting patterns of unity and division. This framework enables the identification of both long-term structural determinants and short-term contingencies that shape factional outcomes. It also illuminates how ideological interpretations evolve in relation to changing material conditions, political opportunities, and internal power relations.

Researcher reflexivity is explicitly integrated throughout the analytical process. The study critically reflects on how the researcher’s theoretical orientation, positionality, and interpretive choices shape the framing of questions, selection of sources, and interpretation of evidence. This reflexive stance is particularly important in studying a movement that is itself deeply engaged in ideological interpretation, epistemic contestation, and debates over political truth.

3.3. Integrating Internal Dynamics with External Contexts

The methodological design recognizes that factionalism within Nepali communist parties cannot be understood solely through internal organizational dynamics. The analysis therefore incorporates key **external variables**—including democratic openings after 1990, state repression during different political regimes, electoral incentives, shifts in international communist thought, and regional geopolitical influences. These contextual factors are examined as part of the **broader dialectical environment** in which internal tensions escalate, stabilize, or transform. By integrating internal and external dimensions, the study avoids reductionist explanations and advances a holistic understanding of factionalism as a multi-layered, historically evolving, and contextually embedded phenomenon.

3.4. Methodological Contribution

This research methodology enables a nuanced and multidimensional examination of factionalism as an **N-dimensional process** shaped by ideology, history, organization, socio-cultural representation, leadership behavior, and external pressures. It contributes to scholarly debates by demonstrating how factionalism in communist parties is not merely an organizational pathology but a form of political knowledge-making, ideological negotiation, and strategic adaptation. Moreover, the methodology bridges the study of internal party dynamics with broader questions of political transformation, revolutionary identity, and democratic engagement in contemporary Nepal.

4. Literature Review

The scholarship on Nepal’s communist movement, social inclusion, conflict transformation, and local governance reveals a complex interplay between ideological commitments, organizational structures, identity-based marginalization, and post-conflict political realignments. The body of literature ranging from classical theoretical texts (Lenin, 1902/1961; 1917/1970s; 1920/1975) to contemporary analyses of Nepal’s Maoist insurgency (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003; Lawoti & Pahari, 2010; Lecomte-Tilouine, 2013; Muni, 2010) and recent socio-political studies (Pokhrel, 2023; Adhikari, 2024; Kandel, 2023; Maharjan & Shrestha, 2025) collectively illustrates the multidimensional nature of political contestation and institutional transformation in the Nepali context.

4.1. Ideological Foundations and Revolutionary Doctrine

Marxist–Leninist thought remains central to understanding the ideological motivations underlying communist mobilization in Nepal. Lenin’s classics—*What Is to Be Done?* (1902/1961), *The State and Revolution* (1917/1970s), and *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (1920/1975)—constitute the backbone of vanguardist organization, democratic centralism, and revolutionary discipline. Lenin argues that proletarian consciousness must be produced through systematic political education and that the revolutionary party must function as a disciplined, ideologically unified organization that directs mass struggle.

These theoretical formulations influenced both the CPN (UML) and the Maoists. As Eck (2010) illustrates in the context of Nepal’s insurgency, Maoist cadre training deeply internalized Leninist imperatives of ideological education, political indoctrination, and disciplined organization. Maoist political pedagogy fostered the construction of revolutionary identity, enabling cadres to articulate class grievances and commit to long-term political struggle.

The ideological literature emphasizes that communism is not merely an economic program but a transformative project aimed at dismantling class hierarchies and creating egalitarian relations of power. However, as Michels (1915) famously posits in the “Iron Law of Oligarchy,” even movements committed to radical equality tend to reproduce internal hierarchy and centralize authority. Subsequent Nepali scholarship confirms this paradox: party centralization, leadership dominance, and factional contestation repeatedly reappear within communist organizations (Hachhethu, 2002; Baral, 2004).

4.2. Party Organization, Leadership Patterns, and the Dynamics of Conflict

Organizational scholarship on Nepali parties foregrounds the interaction between leadership behavior, cadre structure, and political mobilization. Hachhethu’s (2002) comparative study of the Nepali Congress and CPN (UML) demonstrates that communist parties claim democratic centralism but often exhibit hierarchical decision-making and weak internal deliberation. Leadership consolidation, strategic factionalism, and personal rivalries emerge as defining features.

Baral (2004) further identifies parliamentary behavior, party cohesion, and inter-party bargaining as key determinants shaping Nepal’s unstable political order. These works collectively reveal that the structural logic of party-building in Nepal tends toward oligarchic patterns resembling Michels’s theoretical model.

In the Maoist case, organization takes on a more militarized form. Thapa and Sijapati (2003) provide a foundational account of the insurgency, showing how ideological clarity, grassroots mobilization, and decentralized command structures enabled the Maoists to expand from remote districts to national prominence. Pettigrew (2013), through ethnographic analysis, examines how revolutionary practices reconfigured everyday life during the People’s War, highlighting dual processes of empowerment (especially among women and marginalized groups) and the reproduction of new hierarchical structures under wartime command.

Lawoti and Pahari’s (2010) edited volume synthesizes interdisciplinary findings on the insurgency, showing that Maoist success derived from its ability to articulate grievances around exclusion, class oppression, and state neglect. This aligns with Coser’s (1956) classical thesis that conflict, when properly institutionalized, can serve positive social functions by generating group solidarity, stimulating political awareness, and realigning power structures.

Yet, the shift to post-conflict politics created new contradictions. Kandel (2023) and Mallik (2024) show that the peace process institutionalized Maoist influence but simultaneously exposed strategic tensions between revolutionary ideology and pragmatic participation in a competitive multi-party environment. Their research suggests that while the Maoists achieved significant political power, their ideological coherence weakened during the transition from insurgency to parliamentary politics.

4.3. Social Exclusion, Inclusion Policies, and Structural Inequalities

A major strand of Nepali scholarship focuses on caste-, ethnicity-, gender-, and region-based inequalities and the role of political movements, including communists, in addressing them. Gurung (2010), Tamang (2011), and Maharjan & Shrestha (2025) articulate the structural and historical roots of exclusion, identifying entrenched caste hierarchies, patriarchal norms, and uneven state development as foundational causes.

Gurung (2010) argues that while “inclusive policy discourse” advanced significantly after 2006, practical implementation remains uneven due to bureaucratic inertia, elite capture, and incomplete institutional reform. He shows that social inclusion policies—affirmative action, representation quotas, and targeted programs—emerged largely because of political pressure from historically marginalized groups and the empowering effects of the Maoist movement.

Dalit studies demonstrate an especially persistent pattern. Adhikari (2024) highlights that Dalit representation in local governance has improved since federal restructuring, but meaningful participation is still constrained by entrenched caste norms, lack of political capital, and tokenistic representation. Upadhyay (2023) further shows that Dalit women face compounded marginalization due to gender, caste, and class intersecting, limiting their ability to influence local political decision-making.

These works collectively reveal that communist mobilization—especially during the People’s War—played an important role in raising political awareness among Dalits, women, Janajatis, and Madhesis. However, the institutional achievements of inclusion remain fragile and uneven.

4.4. Women’s Participation, Gendered Exclusion, and Local Governance

The literature increasingly emphasizes gendered dimensions of political power. Khatri and Paudel (2025) examine barriers to women’s participation in local governments, identifying structural constraints such as patriarchal household norms, party-level gatekeeping, limited mobility, and economic dependence. Their study shows that even with constitutional quotas, women’s effective political agency remains limited by the broader socio-cultural environment.

Pettigrew (2013) and Lecomte-Tilouine (2013) document the significant involvement of women during the insurgency—many of whom took up leadership roles in local committees, militias, and political organizations. Yet, as both argue, the post-conflict period witnessed a retreat from revolutionary gender gains, as parties reverted to male-dominated leadership structures and conservative social norms reasserted themselves.

The tension between insurgency-induced empowerment and post-conflict marginalization is a consistent theme: revolutionary movements temporarily disrupt gender hierarchies, but peacetime institutionalization often reinstates earlier forms of exclusion.

4.5. Conflict, Peacebuilding, and Post-War Political Transition

The Maoist conflict and peace process receive extensive scholarly attention. Muni (2010) outlines the insurgency’s origins in state failures, socio-economic inequality, and ideological disenchantment. His analysis emphasizes that the Maoists succeeded because they addressed grievances ignored by mainstream parties, particularly landlessness, caste oppression, and rural neglect.

Upreti (2010) examines the transition from war to peace, arguing that post-conflict Nepal remains constrained by deep-rooted structural inequalities, power struggles among elites, and uneven implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Accord. He highlights the persistence of impunity, weak state institutions, and slow transitional justice as factors impeding sustainable peace.

Kandel (2023) builds on this by examining contradictions within the peace process itself: ideological dilution, elite bargaining, factional splits, and the tension between revolutionary commitments and pragmatic governance. Mallik (2024) similarly documents that while the conflict empowered marginalized groups and helped dismantle monarchical authoritarianism, it also produced economic disruptions, displacement, and social fragmentation.

Together, these studies show that while conflict catalyzed profound political transformation, peacebuilding has been slow, contested, and incomplete.

4.6. Identity, Power, and the Changing Terrain of Nepali Politics

Pokhrel (2023) offers a contemporary theoretical contribution by conceptualizing the “social character” of Nepali communist parties. His analysis demonstrates that parties often articulate class politics while simultaneously reproducing caste, regional, and gender hierarchies within their internal structures. This duality reflects the broader contradictions of Nepali left politics: revolutionary rhetoric coexists with patronage networks and elite bargaining.

Hoftun, Raeper, and Whelpton (1999) provide essential historical context, showing how democratization, party competition, and global ideological currents shaped Nepal’s political transformations throughout the twentieth century. Their account situates the later Maoist insurgency within longer-term patterns of state–society tension and political contestation.

In the post-federal era, scholars note a gradual shift away from revolutionary politics toward developmental and identity-based agendas. The restructuring of local governance has created new institutional arenas where issues of class, caste, gender, and regional identity intersect. Yet, as multiple sources indicate, deep-rooted hierarchies persist underneath new political structures.

Existing literature on Nepal’s communist movement and social transformation reveals several interconnected themes that illuminate both theoretical and empirical dimensions. First, ideological–organizational contradictions persist, as communist parties that advocate equality and collective leadership often reproduce oligarchic and factional tendencies (Michels, 1915; Hachhethu, 2002). Second, conflict has functioned as a transformative force, with the Maoist insurgency disrupting entrenched structural inequalities and politicizing marginalized groups, consistent with Coser’s (1956) notion of conflict’s generative functions (Eck, 2010; Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). Third, post-conflict regression is evident, as many revolutionary gains—particularly for women and Dalits—stagnated once parties transitioned into formal politics (Pettigrew, 2013; Lecomte-Tilouine, 2013; Upadhyay, 2023). Fourth, enduring social exclusion remains a critical challenge, with structural inequalities deeply embedded despite policy reforms (Gurung, 2010; Maharjan & Shrestha, 2025). Fifth, local governance has emerged as a new site of contestation: Dalit and women’s participation has expanded but continues to face significant cultural and institutional barriers (Adhikari, 2024; Khatri & Paudel, 2025). Finally, the peace process, while institutionalizing significant political change, has been incomplete in addressing historical injustices and enduring power imbalances (Kandel, 2023; Upreti, 2010; Mallik, 2024). Collectively, these insights contribute to a theoretical understanding of the dialectical tensions between revolutionary ideals, organizational practices, and the social realities of post-conflict Nepal, highlighting both the transformative potential and the persistent constraints of communist-led political change.

In conclusion, the literature collectively portrays Nepal’s political transformation as a dialectical process shaped by ideological contestation, social inequality, revolutionary rupture, and post-conflict institutional restructuring. Communist politics have played a central role in articulating grievances, mobilizing marginalized groups, and transforming state structures. Yet the contradictions between revolutionary ideals and organizational realities, between inclusion policies and entrenched hierarchies, and between conflict-driven empowerment and post-conflict retrenchment continue to define Nepal’s contemporary political landscape.

5. Research Gap

The relationship between the theoretical corpus underpinning Nepal's communist movement and its empirical trajectory reveals not a linear application of doctrine, but a profound and persistent disjuncture. This analysis, situated at the intersection of political theory, organizational sociology, and critical historiography, argues that the movement's internal dynamics and external manifestations are best understood through the dialectical tensions between its foundational texts and its lived realities. Four primary chasms emerge from this interrogation, each constitutive of the movement's recurrent factionalism and adaptive, often contradictory, evolution.

Firstly, a fundamental rift exists between revolutionary ideological orthodoxy and parliamentary pragmatism. While the movement's intellectual moorings are anchored in the transformative visions of Marx, Engels, and Lenin—emphasizing class struggle, collective ownership, and the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois state—its operational reality since the 1990 democratic opening has been characterized by electoral competition, coalition politics, and capitalist-friendly economic policies (Hachhethu, 2002). This schism manifests as a core contradiction: parties articulate socialist manifestos while engaging in governance models that perpetuate neoliberal economics and patron-clientelism (Pokhrel, 2023). The theoretical promise of a classless society stands in stark contrast to the practical imperatives of political survival in a pluralist democracy, leading to ideological dilution and a crisis of revolutionary legitimacy.

Secondly, the organizational principle of democratic centralism devolves, in practice, into oligarchic centralization, validating Robert Michels' "iron law." Although Leninist texts prescribe a balance between internal debate and disciplined action, the Nepali communist experience demonstrates a systemic tendency towards leader-dominated hierarchies, weak intra-party democracy, and the personalization of political authority (Baral, 2004). This gap between normative theory (collective, vanguardist leadership) and empirical reality (personalistic fiefdoms) is a primary engine of factionalism. Dissent, unable to find expression through formal democratic channels, catalyzes into splinter groups, transforming theoretical disagreements over "the correct line" into organizational fractures rooted in contests for power and resource control.

Thirdly, a glaring disparity persists between the emancipatory rhetoric of social inclusion and the reproduction of structural hierarchies within party apparatuses. Scholarly works on Nepal's social exclusion (Gurung, 2010; Tamang, 2011) provide a robust framework for understanding marginalization based on caste, ethnicity, gender, and region. The communist movement, particularly during the People's War, successfully mobilized these groups by championing their inclusion (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). However, post-conflict integration into mainstream politics has seen a regression, with party structures often reverting to dominant caste (Bahun-Chhetri) and male-centric leadership models (Lecomte-Tilouine, 2013; Upadhyay, 2023). Thus, while the movement's *discourse* is informed by critical scholarship on inclusion, its *internal social composition and practice* frequently contradict these very principles, undermining its claim to be a vehicle for egalitarian transformation.

Finally, the imported frameworks of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism are incessantly reinterpreted, adapted, and sometimes diluted through the prism of Nepal's unique historical junctures—the Panchayat autocracy, the post-1990 multiparty system, the geopolitics of India and China, and a deeply heterogeneous social fabric. This study, therefore, posits that the most significant "gap" is not a failure to apply theory, but the inevitable and generative process of its *vernacularization*. The Nepali communist movement is a dialectical theater where universalist doctrines clash with particularist realities, producing neither pure ideological form nor mere opportunism, but a complex, often unstable, synthesis that continues to shape the nation's political landscape. Its future coherence hinges on consciously bridging these chasms through genuine internal democratization, accountable leadership, and a praxis that aligns its egalitarian promises with its institutional and social conduct.

6. Discussion and Finding Out

6.1. *The Reality of Communist Principles and Goals*

The fundamental principles of communism, as articulated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, revolve around class struggle, collective ownership of the means of production, the just role of the state, equality, and distribution of resources according to individual needs while considering individual capacities (Marx & Engels, 1848/1976). The ultimate objectives of communism include the creation of a society free from exploitation, the establishment of collective ownership over productive resources, the abolition of class distinctions, and the eventual realization of a stateless society. Marx and Engels conceptualized society as divided between exploiting and exploited classes, arguing that historical progress unfolds through class struggle, which serves as the engine of social transformation (Marx & Engels, 1848/1976).

Collective ownership of the means of production is central to communist theory, as it seeks to abolish private property and place land, industry, capital, and natural resources under communal control. Within this framework, the state functions as an instrument to eliminate exploitation and establish social equality, ultimately paving the way for its own dissolution. Communism envisions a social order based on equality, ensuring that all individuals enjoy equal opportunities, access to resources, and benefits. While contributions are recognized according to individual capacities, the distribution of benefits is determined by need, reflecting the principle of “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.”

However, the legitimacy of communist principles hinges on their alignment with practical implementation. Historically, the gap between theory and practice has limited the sustained development of communist regimes. Even when revolutionary movements established communist states, many eventually collapsed due to this disconnect. Political critiques highlight the extreme centralization of power, the emergence of party or political elites instead of a genuinely classless society, and internal factionalism and personalistic leadership that distorted the original principles. Examples include the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea, where political realities diverged sharply from theoretical ideals (Deutscher, 1967; Service, 2009).

Economically, collective ownership often faced significant challenges. Centralized planning in the Soviet Union and China reduced efficiency, constrained innovation, and produced inequalities in agricultural and industrial output. In Nepal, communist-led reforms—such as land redistribution—improved awareness and participation among marginalized groups, but the practical involvement of workers and peasants remained limited (Pokhrel, 2023). These outcomes underscore the persistent tension between idealized economic principles and their implementation.

Socially and culturally, communist movements aimed to eradicate class distinctions and promote equality. While improvements in literacy, healthcare, and social inclusion were achieved, persistent inequalities remained. In Nepal, despite efforts to raise the status of Dalits, Indigenous Nationalities, Madhesis, and women, entrenched hierarchies and centralized party control limited the realization of full social equality (Gellner, 2007). Globally, ambitious social engineering projects, such as China’s Cultural Revolution, often led to social disruption rather than equitable transformation, illustrating the complexities of applying communist ideals in diverse societies.

From a contemporary perspective, while communist principles remain philosophically compelling, their practical realization is inherently challenging. Modern communist and leftist movements have largely abandoned revolutionary and disruptive strategies, favoring reformist approaches that pursue equality, social justice, labor rights, and economic reform within existing political frameworks. As a result, revolutionary pathways toward a fully classless society have been largely abandoned, rendering the realization of a stateless, egalitarian society a distant aspiration (Hobsbawm, 1994).

In summary, communist theory presents a coherent and aspirational framework, but political centralization, economic inefficiencies, social inequalities, and limitations on freedoms have constrained its practical application. Modern practice has only partially realized theoretical goals, emphasizing reformist over revolutionary strategies.

Consequently, the full implementation of communist principles continues to face significant theoretical and practical challenges, highlighting the need for nuanced analysis of both achievements and limitations in global and Nepali contexts.

This chapter synthesizes the findings of this study by examining the Nepali communist movement through interconnected historical, ideological, organizational, socio-cultural, and international dimensions. By applying a dialectical–materialist framework, the discussion interprets the development of the Nepali communist movement not as a linear progression, but as a dynamic process shaped by contradictions between ideology and practice, centralization and fragmentation, revolutionary goals and parliamentary realities, and structural constraints and political agency.

Together, these perspectives explain why the movement has simultaneously been a decisive force for social transformation and a site of persistent factionalism, internal conflict, and organizational instability.

6.2. Historical Reality: Struggle, Transformation, and Recurrent Fragmentation

The historical trajectory of the Nepali communist movement exhibits a pattern of significant political contributions alongside persistent internal splits. Since the establishment of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) in 1949, the movement has engaged in major struggles against the Rana regime, the Panchayat system, and monarchical authoritarianism, while simultaneously experiencing internal factionalism (Hoftun, Raeper, & Whelpton, 1999). The movement's history can be broadly categorized into four phases:

Early Phase: Rana Regime (1949–1960). During this period, entrenched land and property inequalities, class oppression, and political exclusion provided an objective basis for the communist struggle. The early leadership prioritized raising political consciousness, organizing workers and peasants, and resisting foreign influence and imperialism. Between 1951 and 1956 (2008–2013 B.S.), the CPN was banned, primarily due to its alleged support for K.I. Singh's revolt (Hoftun, Raeper, & Whelpton, 1999).

During this phase, the 1959 parliamentary elections revealed the limited mass base of the party, as it won only four seats. Furthermore, King Mahendra's 1960 royal coup, supported by some party leaders, intensified deep ideological divisions, exacerbating internal conflicts (Hachhethu, 2002).

Panchayat Era: Repression and Underground Movement (1960–1990). Political bans and state repression forced the communist movement underground. This period fostered both organizational resilience and internal factionalism.

- The party adopted armed struggle, cultural and social mobilization, and peasant-labor organizing as primary strategies.
- During the 1980 national referendum, internal divisions became pronounced: some factions participated, while others boycotted.
- Ideological disagreements fueled leadership rivalries and strategic disagreements, laying the groundwork for later splits (Baral, 2004).

Maoist armed struggle: 1996–2006. The Maoist armed struggle represents the most radical phase of the Nepali communist movement. It:

- Challenged structural inequalities, caste hierarchies, and gender oppression. Built village-level organizational structures with broad participation from women, Dalits, and indigenous communities.
- Advanced concrete initiatives for land reform, social justice, and class equality (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003).

This phase demonstrates that armed struggle combined with mass-based organization can accelerate socio-political transformation.

Democratic Transition and Post-Conflict Era (2006–Present). After the People's War, communist parties participated in constitution-making, federalism, republicanism, and social justice initiatives. However, internal leadership conflicts, ideological ambiguity, and recurrent factionalism continued.

- While democratic participation strengthened the party's institutional presence, it weakened organizational cohesion.
- Historical experience both clarified ideological positions and institutionalized patterns of factional rivalry and strategic disagreement (Hachhethu, 2002).
These historical developments indicate that the Nepali communist movement has produced dual effects:
- Positive: raising political consciousness, fostering class awareness, and contributing to democracy and social transformation.
- Negative: creating enduring patterns of factionalism, ideological competition, and leadership-centered splits.

Thus, struggle, transformation, and recurrent fragmentation constitute the core of the historical reality of the Nepali communist movement.

6.3. Ideological Reality: Dialectics of Orthodoxy, Pragmatism, and Revolutionary Values

Ideology has been a central determinant shaping both the strategic orientation and factional dynamics of the Nepali communist movement. Since its inception, the movement has operated under the frameworks of Marxism, Leninism, Mao Thought/Maoism, and scientific socialism (Hachhethu, 2002; Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). Ideological debates intensified during periods of political repression, particularly under the Panchayat regime (1960–1990), when the movement was forced underground. Such conditions generated competing interpretations of the “correct line,” resulting in recurrent factionalism and strategic divergence (Baral, 2004).

Several recurring tensions characterize the ideological reality of the movement:

- Armed Struggle versus Peaceful Political Transition – Disagreements over the appropriate means of achieving revolutionary goals frequently created schisms between radical and reformist factions (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003).
- Revolutionary Praxis versus Reformism – Leaders and cadres debated the balance between class-based revolutionary action and gradual reforms within existing political structures, generating persistent internal ideological contestation (Hachhethu, 2002).
- Generational Shifts in Ideological Interpretation – Successive leaderships have reinterpreted Marxist–Leninist–Maoist principles to suit evolving socio-political conditions, often creating friction between older orthodox cadres and younger pragmatists (Baral, 2004).
- Orthodox Marxism versus Parliamentary Engagement – Post-1990 democratic openings introduced a fundamental tension between revolutionary objectives and participation in parliamentary politics, leading to contradictions between ideological purity and practical governance (Hoftun, Raeper, & Whelpton, 1999).

The tension between parliamentarism and revolutionary values is particularly significant. While democratic participation enabled communist parties to gain institutional legitimacy, it simultaneously diluted class consciousness and revolutionary commitment (Hachhethu, 2002). In contrast, the Maoist People's War (1996–2006) represented a radical ideological trajectory grounded in armed struggle, village-level mobilization, and inclusive political participation of women, Dalits, and indigenous groups, exemplifying the transformative potential of ideologically-driven praxis (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003).

Therefore, the ideological reality of the Nepali communist movement is inherently contradictory. It simultaneously fosters unity and fragmentation, produces revolutionary momentum, and generates organizational instability. Understanding these ideological contradictions is essential for interpreting both factionalism and strategic decision-making within the movement.

6.4. *Organizational Reality in the Nepali Communist Movement: Centralization, Hierarchy, and the Logic of Fragmentation*

The organizational dynamics of the Nepali communist movement reveal a persistent tension between formal ideological commitments and structural realities, which underpin recurrent factionalism and internal instability. Theoretical frameworks, particularly Robert Michels' *Iron Law of Oligarchy*, provide a compelling lens through which to understand these phenomena. Michels (1915) posits that all complex organizations inevitably concentrate authority within a small leadership elite, generating oligarchic tendencies irrespective of initial democratic intentions. In the Nepali context, this theoretical insight illuminates why parties committed to revolutionary democracy and Leninist organizational norms repeatedly evolve into highly centralized, leader-dominated entities (Hachhethu, 2002; Baral, 2004).

Centralized Leadership and Hierarchical Control. Nepali communist parties formally endorse democratic centralism, yet in practice, decision-making authority is concentrated in central committees and elite leadership circles (Hachhethu, 2002). This centralization constrains broader participation, reduces ideological diversity, and creates organizational rigidity. Mid-level cadres or dissenting leaders often face marginalization once leadership consensus is established, leading to disciplinary measures, demotions, or exclusion from deliberative forums (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). Such practices cultivate an environment in which dissatisfied actors either comply reluctantly or establish splinter factions, thereby institutionalizing fragmentation as a structural outcome.

Personal Rivalries and the Politicization of Leadership. Factionalism in Nepali communist parties is frequently less about doctrinal disagreement than about competition over power, status, and resources. Leadership succession remains opaque, creating intense rivalries among senior cadres (Baral, 2004; Pokhrel, 2023). Personal disputes often assume ideological coloration, even when the underlying conflict is organizational. This personalization of leadership authority contrasts sharply with Leninist ideals of collective decision-making and undermines internal cohesion (Lenin, 1920/1975). Leaders exemplify personalized factions, demonstrating the hybridization of Leninist structures with patrimonial and oligarchic patterns.

Weak Internal Democracy and Structural Overload. Internal democracy within Nepali communist parties remains limited. Mechanisms such as open elections, transparent deliberation, and decentralized leadership recruitment are often nominal (Hoftun, Raeper, & Whelpton, 1999; Lawoti, 2007). Rapid organizational expansion after the 1990 democratic transition and the 2006 post-insurgency period exacerbated structural overload. Local committees frequently lacked autonomy, communication channels became congested, and leadership accountability weakened, further intensifying factional tendencies (Upreti, 2010).

Democratic Centralism in Practice: From Principle to Control. Although democratic centralism theoretically balances internal debate with unified action (Lenin, 1902/1961), in Nepali parties it often functions as a mechanism of leadership control. Rather than fostering ideological clarity, it legitimizes centralized authority and constrains internal deliberation. Consequently, the principle becomes a structural driver of splits, as dissenting factions perceive few avenues to influence decision-making. This dialectic—between centralization that strengthens coordinated action and suppressed participation that fuels fragmentation—recurs throughout Nepali communist history (Hachhethu, 2002; Michels, 1915).

Deviations from Leninist Organizational Norms. Leninist doctrine emphasizes vanguardism, professional revolutionary cadres, collective leadership, and disciplined adherence to democratic centralism (Lenin, 1902/1961; 1917/1972; 1920/1975). Nepali communist groups partially adopt these principles, yet their practice diverges significantly:

- **Democratic centralism** is formally endorsed but weakly institutionalized (Pokhrel, 2023).
- **Vanguardism is weakened by electoral pragmatism, especially after 1990 and 2006, as parties focus on broad coalitions rather than strict ideological discipline** (Eck, 2010; Lawoti & Pahari, 2010).

- **Professional cadres** have been replaced, post-insurgency, by bureaucratized structures and opportunistic entry, weakening ideological training and collective discipline (Pettigrew, 2013; Lawoti & Pahari, 2010; Thapa & Sijapati, 2003).
- **Collective leadership is weakened by personalistic and factional authority, illustrating Michels' prediction of elite concentration and oligarchic control** (Michels, 1915/1999; Hachhethu, 2002; Hoftun, Raeper, & Whelpton, 1999).

Structural factors explaining these deviations include electoral competition in a multiparty system (Lawoti, 2007), socio-cultural diversity complicating uniform discipline (Hachhethu, 2002), centralization of political culture fostering oligarchy (Pokhrel, 2023), and resource-based incentives encouraging opportunism (Upreti, 2010). These conditions produce a hybrid organizational logic that is formally Leninist but pragmatically fragmented, offering a structural explanation for the movement's persistent internal instability.

In conclusion, the organizational reality of Nepal's communist movement underscores that factionalism and leadership disputes are not merely products of individual ambition or ideological divergence but are structurally embedded within centralized, hierarchical, and oligarchic organizational frameworks. Understanding these dynamics requires moving beyond ideological rhetoric to examine institutional design, internal democracy, and leadership practices. Structural reform that decentralizes authority, strengthens participatory mechanisms, and institutionalizes collective decision-making is essential to mitigate recurrent fragmentation and align organizational practice more closely with Leninist principles.

6.5. Social–Cultural Reality: Representation, Identity, and Mass Support

The organizational stability of the Nepali communist movement is intricately linked to its ability to represent the diverse social groups of Nepal. The movement's inclusivity—or lack thereof—shapes its legitimacy, mass support, and internal cohesion. Historical evidence demonstrates that when communist parties fail to adequately integrate marginalized communities, including Dalits, Janajatis (Indigenous Nationalities), Madhesi (people of the Madhes/Terai region), women, peasants, and laborers, several negative outcomes typically arise:

- Decreased public trust, as communities perceive the party as unrepresentative of their interests (Hachhethu, 2002; Baral, 2004).
- Weakened mass participation, reducing the party's capacity to mobilize grassroots support (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003).
- Internal dissatisfaction, as cadres and local leaders advocate for greater social inclusion and representation (Hoftun, Raeper, & Whelpton, 1999).
- Formation of new factions, seeking to rectify perceived imbalances in social representation and policy priorities (Hachhethu, 2002).

Conversely, periods of strong social inclusion, such as during the Maoist People's War (1996–2006), reinforced the movement's organizational resilience through:

- Mass legitimacy, achieved by mobilizing historically marginalized groups and providing them with political agency (Lecomte-Tilouine, 2013).
- Ideological credibility, as the movement's commitment to social justice aligned with grassroots aspirations (Baral, 2004). Organizational cohesion, with integrated participation across multiple social strata, fosters unity and coordination (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003).

These patterns indicate that social–cultural dynamics are not peripheral but central to the Nepali communist movement's capacity to maintain organizational stability. Representation and identity politics mediate the interaction between ideology, leadership, and mass mobilization, determining whether the movement consolidates or fragments in response to socio-political challenges (Hachhethu, 2002; Lecomte-Tilouine, 2013).

6.6. External and International Reality: State Pressure, Political Opportunity, and Global Ideological Currents

The trajectory and internal factionalism of the Nepali communist movement have been significantly influenced by external and international factors. State repression, political openings, global ideological trends, regional dynamics, and electoral incentives have all shaped the movement's strategic positioning and internal cohesion.

State repression—including bans, arrests, and suppression of party activities—has historically constrained the movement, often forcing clandestine operation and heightening internal ideological debates (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003; Baral, 2004). Conversely, democratic openings, such as the post-1990 transition and the 2006–07 people's movement, created political opportunities that intensified internal factional struggles, as groups competed to define the movement's strategic direction and ideological identity (Hachhethu, 2002).

International ideological influences have also played a formative role. The movement's early Marxist–Leninist foundations were shaped by the Soviet model, while Maoist thought and Chinese revolutionary strategies provided alternative templates for armed struggle and mass mobilization (Lecomte-Tilouine, 2013). European socialist and communist currents further contributed to ideological debates, particularly regarding parliamentary participation versus revolutionary praxis.

Regional political developments — including cross-border influence of South Asian insurgent movements and post–Cold War changes — shaped the rise of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal (Muni, 2010; Lawoti & Pahari, 2010). At the same time, after peace and the return to multiparty democracy, electoral incentives and institutional openings compelled former insurgents to recalibrate strategy, sometimes diluting ideological purity in favor of pragmatic compromise (Kandel, 2023; Mallik, 2024)

Periods of heightened political opportunity—such as transitions to democracy, constitutional reforms, or state crises—tend to accelerate factional realignments. Competing factions reposition themselves to influence party strategy, ideological interpretation, and organizational leadership, demonstrating that factionalism emerges not solely from internal disputes but through the dialectical interaction between the party and its socio-political environment (Hachhethu, 2002; Thapa & Sijapati, 2003).

6.7. The Parliamentarism-Revolution Gap: A Central Contradiction

A critical insight emerging from this study is the persistent divide between parliamentary engagement and revolutionary values within the Nepali communist movement. This gap manifests in multiple dimensions: divergent strategic goals, weakened class struggle orientation, ideological ambiguity, organizational centralization around electoral competition, and reduced political radicalism (Hachhethu, 2002; Baral, 2004).

From a dialectical–materialist perspective, this contradiction is not merely procedural but reflects the tension between objective structural conditions—such as class inequality, caste hierarchies, gendered social relations, and unequal land distribution—and subjective political agency, including leadership decisions, ideological interpretation, and strategic planning (Lecomte-Tilouine, 2013). Parliamentary participation, while enabling communists to enter formal political institutions, often produces compromises that dilute revolutionary objectives and reduce the movement's capacity to mobilize marginalized groups effectively.

This gap also highlights the challenges of translating revolutionary ideals into institutional praxis. Electoral pragmatism tends to concentrate decision-making in the hands of leadership elites, reflecting Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy, which intensifies organizational centralization and constrains mass participation (Michels, 1915). Consequently, the movement faces an inherent tension between maintaining revolutionary legitimacy and engaging in pragmatic state politics, with factionalism often emerging as a strategy to reconcile or contest these competing imperatives.

Resolving the parliamentarism–revolution contradiction is crucial for the long-term coherence of Nepal's communist parties. It requires balancing structural constraints, strategic choices, and ideological fidelity to sustain both political relevance and revolutionary commitment in a rapidly evolving socio-political landscape.

6.8. Nepal's Mainstream Parliamentary Left: The Chasm Between Ideological Promise and Governing Practice

In Nepal's post-conflict democratic landscape, the principal Parliamentary Left parties—the CPN-UML, the CPN (Maoist Centre), and the CPN (Unified Socialist)—have anchored their electoral platforms in promises of fundamental transformation. The UML pledges to build a "socialist economy" (UML, 2022 Election Manifesto, p. 12), the Maoist Centre commits to ending "ethnic, gender, and class oppression" (Maoist Centre, 2022 Manifesto, p. 5), and the Unified Socialist champions "revolutionary change" (Unified Socialist, 2022 Manifesto, p. 4). However, a significant chasm persists between these high ideological pledges and their on-ground implementation. A sustained perception of high-level corruption (Transparency International, 2022), the stunted execution of federalism, and the continued embrace of privatization and capitalist-friendly economic models reveal a core contradiction between professed leftist ideology and practical governance, highlighting what scholars term a "pragmatist mode" of Nepali communism (Hachhethu, 2002).

This implementation gap manifests concretely across key policy domains. The UML's tenure has been marred by significant corruption scandals (Thapa, 2023) and a push for privatizing public enterprises (Adhikari, 2021), which directly undermine its socialist commitments. The Maoist Centre's stalled transitional justice process for conflict victims (Human Rights Watch, 2020 Nepal, 2020) and the persistent disparity between its rhetoric and the reality of women's representation in leadership (Sapkota, 2024) weaken its claims to social justice. Similarly, the Unified Socialists' call for "left unity" rings hollow against the backdrop of persistent internal factionalism and splits (Khabarhub 2021; The Kathmandu Post, 2025). Rajbanshi, 2022). These examples underscore how structural barriers—including a lack of intra-party democracy, leadership-centric political culture, and the imperative of electoral competition—consistently frustrate the translation of principle into practice.

The theoretical significance of this chasm is multifaceted. It exemplifies the adaptive yet contradictory nature of communist parties operating within a pluralist, democratic framework, where revolutionary manifestos serve electoral purposes but give way to pragmatic compromise in government. This is not merely a series of policy failures but a reflection of the complex interaction between leftist doctrine and political opportunism within a developing state. The future credibility and stability of Nepal's left will hinge on its capacity to reconcile this core contradiction and meaningfully bridge the persistent promise-performance gap, moving beyond electoral sloganeering to coherent and principled governance.

6.9. Dialectical Interpretation: Interconnected Realities Shaping the Movement

The various dimensions of the Nepali communist movement—historical, ideological, organizational, social–cultural, and strategic—do not operate in isolation. Rather, they constitute a dialectical whole, in which each reality both influences and is influenced by the others. This interconnectedness generates a dynamic process that continuously shapes the movement's strengths, weaknesses, and trajectories (Hachhethu, 2002).

Key dialectical interactions can be summarized as follows:

- Historical Reality \rightleftharpoons Ideological Reality

History provides the movement with experiential knowledge that strengthens ideological clarity; simultaneously, it deepens ideological splits when past strategic failures or successes are interpreted differently by competing factions (Baral, 2004; Lecomte-Tilouine, 2013).

- Ideological Reality \rightleftharpoons Organizational Reality

Ideological disagreements often manifest as organizational fragmentation, while structural instability and centralized leadership exacerbate ideological confusion, constraining coherent party praxis (Michels, 1915).

- Organizational Reality \rightleftharpoons Social–Cultural Reality

Organizational cohesion is strengthened when the party actively integrates marginalized social groups—such as Dalits, Janajatis, women, and peasants—into decision-making and mobilization efforts. Conversely, exclusion of these groups fosters dissatisfaction and encourages factional splits (Hachhethu, 2002).

- Strategic Reality \hookrightarrow Ideological and Organizational Realities

Political strategy is effective only when it aligns with both ideological commitments and organizational capacities. Misalignment among these dimensions frequently produces tactical failures and intra-party contestation (Baral, 2004).

- Representational Reality \hookrightarrow Public Legitimacy

The extent to which the party achieves mass representation directly determines whether its ideological claims are socially validated. Strong public legitimacy reinforces both organizational stability and ideological credibility, while weak representation invites internal critique and factionalism (Lecomte-Tilouine, 2013).

These dialectical interactions illustrate that the future trajectory of Nepal's communist movement is shaped by the continuous interplay of multiple forces rather than any single determinant. Understanding factionalism, organizational adaptation, and revolutionary strategy requires attention to the complex, interdependent nature of these realities.

6.10. The Favorable and Unfavorable Aspects of Nepal's Communist Movement

The historical trajectory of Nepal's communist movement began with the establishment of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) in 1949. This movement aimed to eradicate class inequality, exploitation, caste discrimination, and gender discrimination from society. Among its favorable aspects, first, it has awakened the political consciousness of the poor, workers, peasants, Dalits, women, and other marginalized groups, creating an environment for their participation in socio-political processes (Gellner, 2007; Pokhrel, 2023). Second, the movement brought the debates on land reform, social justice, and equality into the public sphere, thereby creating opportunities for social transformation (Gellner, 2007).

However, the movement's unfavorable aspects are also evident. Factionalism within the party, the dominance of personalistic leadership, and opportunism have weakened organizational unity (Mishra, 2021). (Gautam, 2021). Second, in the economic sphere, difficulties have arisen in the practical implementation of collective ownership of the means of production and a planned economy, which has reduced the real participation of the peasant and working classes (Pokhrel, 2023). Third, within the socio-cultural reality, caste, regional, and gender-based discrimination persist, and new forms of social division have been created (Gellner, 2007). Fourth, political challenges—such as multiparty democracy, constitutional implementation, and external pressures—have obstructed the full realization of the party's revolutionary goals.

Thus, the favorable aspects of Nepal's communist movement include social awareness, the participation of marginalized groups, the promotion of equality and social justice, and the development of political consciousness. The unfavorable aspects encompass organizational weakness, failure in implementing economic planning, the persistence of social divisions, and political challenges. This contradiction has forced Nepal's communist movement to confront the tension between its theoretical goals and practical actions.

6.11. Foundations for Transforming the Realities of Nepal's Communist Movement

Nepal's communist movement has accumulated decades of social, political, and economic experience through its struggles and practices. Although a profound gap between theory and practice remains, certain foundational areas present possibilities for reform and transformation.

Organizational Reform and Democratic Leadership. Factionalism, personalized leadership, and opportunistic practices within Nepal's communist parties have impeded the full implementation of their principles (Pokhrel, 2023; Gautam, 2021). The basis for reform lies in organizational restructuring. Implementing transparent decision-making processes, internal democratic practices, and accountable leadership systems can reduce intra-party factionalism and personal dominance. This increases the possibility of bridging the gap between theory and praxis.

Collective Ownership of the Means of Production and Economic Reform. Initiatives related to land reform, cooperative movements, and workers' rights in Nepal have shown preliminary progress, yet genuine collective ownership of the means of production remains limited (Gellner, 2007; Lawoti & Pahari, 2010). Mottin, 2010). Innovations in the economic system, the promotion of local production, and the implementation of inclusive economic planning can help reduce economic inequality. Ensuring the genuine participation of the peasant and working classes can advance the movement closer to its theoretical goals of economic justice.

Social Equality and Inclusive Policy. There is potential for reform in empowering Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, women, and other marginalized groups. Historically, while Nepal's communist movement has advanced some social equality, structural inequalities have persisted (Gellner, 2007; Pokhrel, 2023). Inclusive policies, equal access to education and healthcare, and guaranteed political participation can help reduce social divisions and mitigate class distinctions.

Political Participation and Coordinative Reform. Nepal's communist movement has attempted reform by adopting peaceful and constitutional methods. Democratic practices, multiparty dialogue, and respect for constitutional rights can narrow the gap between the party and society (Gautam, 2021; Pettigrew, 2013). This approach may not achieve the complete revolutionary goal of a classless society but can contribute to substantial change through a reformist perspective.

International Experience and Learning. Global communist praxis (e.g., in China, Cuba, Vietnam) demonstrates that maintaining harmony between theory and practice requires democratic processes, economic innovation, and social participation (Hobsbawm, 1994; Service, 2009). By learning from these international experiences, Nepal can introduce theoretical and practical improvements into its own movement.

In summary, the foundations for reforming the realities of Nepal's communist movement are based on organizational restructuring, reform of the production system, social equality and inclusive policies, political participation, and lessons from international experience. If these foundations are implemented effectively, they can reduce the gap between theory and practice, promote economic and social justice, and guide Nepal's communist movement toward a modern and progressive path.

7. Overall Finding

7.1. Factionalism as the Dialectical Core of the Nepali Communist Movement

The comprehensive dialectical analysis conducted in this study culminates in a central, overarching finding: The persistent and recurrent factionalism that characterizes the Nepali communist movement is not a superficial organizational flaw, but rather the constitutive and logical expression of its fundamental internal contradictions. It is the primary mechanism through which the movement's unresolved tensions between revolutionary theory and political practice are negotiated, manifested, and temporarily resolved—only to re-emerge in new forms.

This finding dismantles the conventional view of factionalism as a mere pathology or a sign of weakness. Instead, the evidence demonstrates that factionalism serves a dual, dialectical function:

As a Symptom of Structural Contradiction: It is the visible outcome of deep-seated, systemic tensions:

- Between the universalist, emancipatory project of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the particularist, hierarchical realities of Nepali society (caste, ethnicity, region).
- Between the formal organizational principle of democratic centralism and its practical devolution into personalized oligarchy (Michels' "iron law").
- Between the strategic imperative of revolutionary insurrection and the pragmatic necessity of parliamentary engagement.

As an Engine of Adaptation and Negotiation: Simultaneously, factionalism operates as a critical, if chaotic, process of:

- Ideological Clarification: Forcing debates on doctrine and "the correct line" during periods of strategic uncertainty.
- Organizational Re-alignment: Allowing for the expression of dissent and the formation of new strategic groupings when established channels are closed.
- Social Representation: Providing a voice (through splinter groups) for marginalized constituencies (Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, women) when mainstream party structures fail to integrate them meaningfully.

The movement's history, therefore, can be read as a dialectical sequence of unity-fragmentation-realignment. Each major political juncture—the fall of the Panchayat (1990), the escalation and conclusion of the People's War (1996-2006), the post-republican transitions—acted as a catalyst, exacerbating these underlying contradictions and triggering factional outbreaks as different segments of the movement proposed divergent paths forward.

Ultimately, the Nepali communist movement exists in a state of permanent dialectical tension. Its vitality and its instability spring from the same source: its enduring attempt to impose a totalizing, revolutionary ideological framework onto a complex, evolving, and resistant socio-political landscape. Factionalism is the price and the process of this attempt. Consequently, the movement's future trajectory will be determined not by the elimination of factionalism—an unrealistic goal given its structural roots—but by its ability to institutionalize these dialectics more productively. This would require transforming factional conflict from a destructive force of schism into a generative force for democratic debate, strategic innovation, and genuine social inclusion within a more flexible and accountable organizational model.

8. Conclusion

This study has undertaken a dialectical-materialist analysis of the Nepali communist movement, tracing its evolution from a clandestine revolutionary force to a central actor in parliamentary democracy. The investigation reveals that the movement's defining feature—its persistent and recurrent factionalism—is not an organizational anomaly but the logical manifestation of deep-seated, unresolved contradictions. These contradictions arise from the dynamic interplay between universalist revolutionary ideology (Marxism-Leninism-Maoism) and the particularities of Nepal's historical trajectory, social stratification, and political economy.

The research confirms that factionalism operates on a dual register: it is both a **symptom of systemic weakness** and a **mechanism for adaptation**. As a symptom, it exposes the chasm between the movement's emancipatory promises and its oligarchic, often exclusionary, practices—a reality that aligns with Michels' thesis on the iron law of oligarchy. As a mechanism, it serves as the primary channel for ideological debate, strategic recalibration, and the expression of social grievances when formal democratic channels within the party are constrained. The parliamentarism-revolution contradiction remains the most potent of these tensions, consistently pulling the movement between the poles of transformative ambition and pragmatic statecraft.

The future trajectory of Nepal's communist movement is therefore contingent, not predetermined. It faces a critical juncture defined by two potential pathways:

- **Renewal through Syntheses:** This path requires consciously bridging the identified gaps. It necessitates democratizing internal structures to transform factional conflict into institutionalized debate, harmonizing ideological principles with a coherent and transparent governance praxis, and ensuring that social inclusion moves beyond electoral quotas to reshape the very culture and composition of party leadership. Such a renewal would leverage the movement's deep roots and organizational capacity to offer a credible, principled alternative within Nepal's federal republic.

- **Institutionalization of Contradiction and Decline:** The alternative is the continuation of current patterns: the subordination of ideology to short-term electoral gains, the persistence of personalized leadership cults over collective processes, and the treatment of social inclusion as a rhetorical tool rather than a structural imperative. This path leads to further ideological dilution, public disillusionment, and potentially more fragmentation, reducing the movement to just another patron-client network within the competitive party system, its revolutionary heritage rendered merely symbolic.

Ultimately, the Nepali communist movement stands as a profound case study in the dialectics of political adaptation. Its history is a testament to the power of radical ideology to mobilize and transform a society. Its present, however, illustrates the immense challenge of sustaining that ideological core while navigating the complexities of governance, identity politics, and global capitalism. The movement's resilience has been proven in struggle; its future will be determined by its ability to reconcile its internal contradictions. Whether it can transform its endemic factionalism from a source of perpetual instability into a dynamic engine for democratic renewal remains the central, unanswered question for Nepal's left politics.

Funding: Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Informed Consent Statement/Ethics Approval: Not applicable.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies: This study has not used any generative AI tools or technologies in the preparation of this manuscript.

References

- Adhikari, H. P. (2024). *Position of Dalits in Local Governance: A Discussion*. Journal of Gurubaba, 6(2), 61–70. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jg.v6i2.82441>
- Baral, L. R. (Ed.). (2004). *Nepal: Political parties and parliament*. Adroit Publishers.
- Coser, L. (1956). *The functions of social conflict*. Free Press.
- CPN (Maoist Centre). (2022, October 31). Election Manifesto 2022. Nepal Press. <https://english.nepalpress.com/2022/10/31/cpn-maoist-centre-unveils-election-manifesto/>
- CPN-UML. (2022). Election Manifesto 2022. [Unpublished party document]. Retrieved from party website.
- CPN (Unified Socialist). (2022, April 20). Election Manifesto 2022. Nepal Press. <https://english.nepalpress.com/2022/04/20/cpn-unified-socialist-unveils-its-election-manifesto/>
- Deutscher, I. (1967). *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky 1879–1921*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Eck, K. (2010). Recruiting rebels: Indoctrination and political education in Nepal. In M. Lawoti & A. K. Pahari (Eds.), *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the Twenty-first Century* (pp. 33–51). Routledge.
- Gellner, D. N. (2007). Caste, ethnicity and inequality in Nepal. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(20), 1823–1828.
- Gurung, O. (2010). Social inclusion: Policies and practices in Nepal. *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology*, 11, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3126/opsa.v11i0.3027>
- Hachhethu, K. (2002). *Party building in Nepal: Organization, leadership and people: A comparative study of the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist)*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point.
- Hobsbawm, E. (1994). *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991*. London: Michael Joseph.
- Hoftun, M., Raeper, W., & Whelpton, J. (1999). *People, Politics & Ideology: Democracy and Social Change in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point.
- Kandel, I. P. (2023). The Maoist Insurgency and Peace Process in Nepal. *Pragya Darshan* 5(1), 23–28. <https://doi.org/10.3126/pdmdj.v5i1.52257>
- Khabarhub. (2021, June 27). *Maoist party experiences splits and internal factionalism*. English Khabarhub. <https://english.khabarhub.com/2021/27/228986>
- Khatri, S. K., & Paudel, N. (2025). Barriers and Prospects of Women's Participation in Local Governments of Nepal. *The Himalayan Geographers*, 15(1), 64–82. <https://doi.org/10.3126/thg.v15i1.81414>

- Lawoti, M. (Ed.). (2007). *Contentious Politics and Democratization in Nepal*. Sage Publication
- Lawoti, M., & Pahari, A. K. (Eds.). (2010). *The Maoist insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the twenty-first century*. London: Routledge.
- Lecomte-Tilouine, M. (Ed.). (2013). *Revolution in Nepal: An anthropological and historical approach to the People's War*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198089384.001.0001>
- Lenin, V. I. (1902/1961). *What is to be done? Burning questions of our movement*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Lenin, V. I. (1917/1970s). *The state and revolution*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Lenin, V. I. (1920/1975). *"Left-wing" communism: An infantile disorder*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Mallik, S. K. (2024). An Analysis of the Impacts of Maoist Conflict in Nepal. *Political Science Journal*, 2(1), 23–31. <https://doi.org/10.3126/psj.v2i1.75111>
- Maharjan, E., & Shrestha, S. (2025). *Structures of Marginalization: Examining Nepal's Class, Caste, Gender, and Regional Inequalities*. *Panauti Journal*, 3(01), 61–80. <https://doi.org/10.3126/panauti.v3i01.83981>
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1848/1976). *The Communist Manifesto*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Michels, R. (1915). *Political parties: A sociological study of the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy* (E. Paul & C. Paul, Trans.). Hearst's International Library Company.
- Mishra, B. C. (2021/2022). *History repeats, but with different characteristics: A case study of the two major communist trends in Nepal*. *Anusheelan* (Research Review). https://wms.edigitalnepal.com/wms/files/ws-post-files/1726574821653_a8fba9eb-98f5-412a-86b4-f49991edeb99.pdf
- Muni, S. D. (2010, July). *The Maoist Insurgency of Nepal: Origin and Evolution* (ISAS Working Paper No. 111). Institute of South Asian Studies (ISA S)
- Pettigrew, J. (2013). *Maoists at the hearth: Everyday life in Nepal's People's War*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Pokhrel, R. (2023). Social character in politics of Nepali communist parties. *Voice of History*, 31(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.3126/voh.v31i1.53788>
- Sapkota, M. (2024). Political leadership of women in Nepal: A critical observation from the local elections 2022. *Journal of Political Science*, 24(1), 1–19. <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/JPS/article/view/62850>
- Service, R. (2009). *History of Modern Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*. London: Penguin.
- Sharma, S. (2004). The Maoist Movement: An Evolutionary Perspective. In M. Hutt (Ed.), *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion* (pp. 38–57). Indiana University Press / C. Hurst & Co.
- Thapa, D., & Sijapati, B. (2003). *A Kingdom under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996 to 2004*. Zed Books.
- The Kathmandu Post*. (2025, July 18). *CPN-Unified Socialist and Bamdev Gautam's campaign merge*. <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2025/07/18/cpn-unified-socialist-and-bamdev-gautam-s-campaign-merge>
- Transparency International. (2022). *Corruption Perceptions Index 2022*. <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022>
- Upadhyay, C. (2023). *Dalit Women's Political Participation at the Local Level: Perspectives of Elected Women Representatives in Nepal*. *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 9(1), 292–312. <https://doi.org/10.3126/bodhi.v9i1.61849>
- Upreti, B. R. (2010). *Nepal, from War to Peace: Legacies of the Past and Hopes for the Future*. Adroit Publishers.