

People's Multiparty Democracy: Path Towards the Socialist Mode of Production

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: 06 Feb.2026

Accepted: 26 April 2026

Keywords

Democratization

Political competition

Popular sovereignty

Socialist economy

Economic programs

ABSTRACT

Nepal's post-1990 political transition opened urgent debates about the ideological direction of its democratic project, particularly regarding the relationship between multiparty democracy and socialist economic transformation. This article examines how Madan Bhandari's *People's Multiparty Democracy (PMPD)* theorizes and operationalizes a constitutional pathway toward a socialist mode of production in Nepal. Employing a qualitative research design grounded in the Marxist theory of the mode of production, the study analyzes PMPD as a primary document alongside related party documents, constitutional texts, and relevant secondary literature to assess its internal logic and transformative potential. The findings reveal that PMPD transcends both single-party vanguardism and liberal pluralism by synthesizing socialist objectives with competitive multiparty frameworks. It posits that bureaucratic monopoly and disconnection from popular will obstruct economic transformation, and proposes instead a constitutional order in which competing parties consensually uphold socialist principles—including collective and state ownership, democratic management, equitable distribution, and people-centered development—while maintaining periodic free and fair elections, rule of law, and fundamental rights. The article further finds that PMPD, as the guiding principle of the CPN (UML) since its Sixth General Convention, institutionalizes accountability, innovation, and mass political participation as mechanisms for advancing socialist production relations. These findings are significant because they suggest that PMPD offers a theoretically distinct model for socialist transition in pluralist democracies of the Global South—one that reconciles ideological commitment with democratic legitimacy without resorting to authoritarian consolidation.

Introduction

The mode of production is the core conceptual tool of Marxism applied to the materialist historical analysis of society. It explains how society, with

its system for production and distribution, can be conceived as a social formation in which individual actors, independent of their representations and justifications, reproduce the system (Yalçın-

Heckmann, 2026). Marx identified five modes of production. Except for the primitive mode, all modes of production extracted surplus from the primary producers through one or another form of property arrangement. According to Graeber (2006), in the slave mode of production, the exploiters directly own the primary producers; in feudalism, landlords use direct juridical-political means to extract a surplus; and in capitalism, the exploiters own the means of production, thereby reducing the primary producers to selling their labor power.

Marx described the wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails as an immense accumulation of commodities, each being a single commodity. According to him, a commodity is an object outside us—a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another, whether directly as a means of subsistence or indirectly as a means of production (Marx, 1887:27). He further argued that each mode of production, together with the social relations corresponding to it, constitutes the economic structure of society. This structure is also the real basis on which the juridical and political superstructure is raised, and the mode of production determines the general character of social, political, and intellectual life (58). The mode of production is thus the infrastructure of society.

Because of extreme exploitation, the commodification of humanity, the creation of surplus value, and the dire conditions of peasants and workers, Karl Marx severely criticized the capitalist mode of production and developed the theory of socialism in the 1860s. In his book *Das Kapital*, Marx identifies the commodity as the foundation of capitalist wealth. He states that the wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as “an immense accumulation of commodities,” with the individual commodity appearing as its elementary form, and concludes that investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of the commodity (Marx,

1967:125). He analyzed the various dimensions of the commodity, commodity fetishism, and the global nature of capitalist exploitation. Marx further argued that a certain degree of capital accumulation under the capitalist mode of production generates further accelerated accumulation (438), ultimately developing into global capitalism that exploits developing countries. Marx, therefore, predicted that the establishment of socialism would not be possible in a single country but would necessarily be global. However, V. I. Lenin, the Russian revolutionary leader and head of the Communist Party, modified Marx's thesis, developed an alternative perspective, and established the first communist regime in the world. The Russian Revolution of 1917, also known as the October Revolution, brought workers and peasants together under Lenin's leadership and succeeded in establishing socialism in the world's largest country. This development profoundly affected the politics of Eastern Europe, China, and other countries, including Nepal. During World War II, revolutions occurred in countries such as Vietnam, China, and North Korea. Marxism reached Vietnam and Korea through a new interpretation known as People's Democracy. In China, however, Mao Zedong applied Marxism differently from the European model, arguing that conditions in Europe and China were fundamentally different and that the Russian and Eastern European model could not be transplanted directly. He developed a new model suited to Chinese conditions, interpreting it as Marxism in the Chinese context and calling it the “New Democratic Revolution.” According to Mao's New Democracy, the working class holds power, and the revolution is oriented toward socialism.

In 1990, the Russian model of socialism collapsed due to internal and external factors, raising widespread questions about the theoretical validity of Marxism. Various capitalist theorists proclaimed the failure of Marxism, among them the American writer Francis Fukuyama, who published *The End*

of History and the Last Man in 1992. Fukuyama argued that the collapse of Russian socialism symbolized the defeat of Marxism as a whole, and that liberal democracy and free-market capitalism had established themselves as the only viable model for a political-economic system (McManus, 2018). Marx used the concept of the mode of production in two main ways: first, to analyze the economic base, and second, to describe the overall structure of societies (Jessop, 1990). This article draws on both uses to analyze the nature of Nepali society.

Synthesizing lessons from historical experiences across different countries and closely examining the domestic and international situation, the Fifth General Convention, led by Bhandari, endorsed People's Multiparty Democracy (PMPD) as the guiding program of the Nepali communist movement. In this context, the article seeks to answer the following questions: What are the major economic aspects and significance of PMPD that may facilitate the establishment of a socialist mode of production in Nepal? What are the obstacles to implementing PMPD in Nepal? How did the CPN (UML) come to endorse PMPD as its guiding principle and strategic manifesto? The article thus discusses the significance of PMPD for the democratization of the communist movement and its theoretical roots in Nepal, and evaluates the economic program of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)—CPN (UML)—in light of the PMPD model.

Methodology

This article is grounded in the Marxist theory of the mode of production, which identifies five historically successive modes of production. The mode of production is the key concept of Marxism that describes the evolution of society from the primitive mode to the socialist mode. It encompasses the means of production (such as land, industries, and mines), the forces of production (such as the labor force, workers, and peasants), and the relations of production (which may be either

conflictual or harmonious). Within this framework, Marx traced the development of various economic systems throughout history through what he called historical materialism—a dialectical account of the stages of social development (Crossman, 2025). According to Marx (1967), each society is based on a particular mode of production, and each mode of production generates corresponding social structures and tendencies. He further argued that the mode of production reflects the direct relationship between owners and producers, which reveals the deepest secret and the hidden basis of the entire social structure, along with the compatible form of the state (791). The state's underlying interests are thus expressed through the mode of production, which is the determining factor of society, operating across all social levels and containing the core of political and ideological relations of power (Milios & Dimoulis, 2006). This article applies the theory of the mode of production to explain the theory and practice of PMPD.

The article analyzes PMPD as the strategy and guiding principle of the CPN (UML). An analytical and descriptive research design is employed. The data used in this article are policy-based documents published by the CPN (UML), collected from secondary sources including the party's political documents, reports, resolutions of national conventions, minutes of meetings, election manifestos, press documents, economic programs of the government, university dissertations, journal articles, newspaper articles, and other organizational and individual research documents.

Results and Discussion

PMPD holds that Nepali society can peacefully transform into a socialist mode of production by demonstrating its superiority through competition within the existing bourgeois capitalist system. This article examines how the CPN (UML) is implementing this model, as propounded by People's Leader Madan Bhandari, through its programs, and attempts to assess whether socialism can be built through its implementation.

History of PMPD

PMPD is a form of democratic practice developed by Bhandari (1993) in which the governing system includes multiparty competition among democratic and patriotic political forces. It holds that the state established after the revolution will be democratic, accepting competition among multiple class forces, and will not be a monopoly of the capitalist class as it was under the old democratic system. Since political parties represent political classes in a class-based society, such competition necessarily takes a party-based form. PMPD is therefore conceived as a new and distinct type of democratic system, one that differs both from the model proposed by Mao Zedong in China and from capitalism as it exists in the contemporary world. The CPN (UML) regards PMPD as a scientific contribution within the variants of Marxism-Leninism and has maintained it as the party's guiding principle since its Sixth General Convention. The resolution passed by that Convention states that PMPD conveys the original characteristics of Nepali society and culture and will serve as the guiding principle and strategy of the party for the coming years. The Seventh National Convention (2059 BS) further elaborated on PMPD, grounding it in an analysis of the nationalism and social justice movements in Nepali society. It described PMPD as encompassing both the democratic and communist traditions of the movement in the Nepali context. PMPD is thus not only a process of democratizing Nepal's communist parties but also an ideological struggle within the party, drawing on the experiences of national and international communist and socialist movements. The Sixth General Convention concluded that PMPD is a foundational principle, creatively developed for the implementation of Marxism in Nepali society (CPN [UML], 2054 BS; Pokhrel, 2024). Subsequent conventions—the Seventh (2059 BS), Eighth (2065 BS), Ninth (2071 BS), Tenth (2078 BS), and Eleventh (2082 BS) General Conventions—all reaffirmed PMPD as the guiding principle of the CPN (UML).

The multiparty system, which originated in Europe in the nineteenth century, is a widely practiced form of political organization and is not the exclusive property of capitalists; it can be embraced by socialists as readily as by capitalists. Bhandari (1993) argued that PMPD represents the path to establishing socialism in the Nepali context and put forward fourteen major features of PMPD, several of which are discussed in this article.

PMPD affirms constitutional supremacy, the protection of human rights, a system of multiparty competition among patriotic and socialist parties, periodic elections as provided for in the constitution, majority government and minority opposition, and the rule of law. The model also proposes a pluralistic and open society, the principle of the separation of powers, and the strengthening of the people's democratic system. It further commits to a balanced foreign policy and to attracting foreign capital, investment, and technology for national development (Gyanwali & Khanal, 2024).

On the economic front, PMPD holds that the means of production—such as land, industry, and factories—will be nationalized, with compensation provided to those who make a positive contribution to building society, while no compensation will be given to feudal lords and landlords who oppose or undermine it. The model advocates strong leadership and people's authority in place of the proletarian dictatorship, and proposes People's Multiparty Democracy as the program of communist revolution.

Existing mode of production in Nepal

There has been a long ideological debate about the existing mode of production in Nepal. The major communist parties and intellectuals have been debating since the establishment of the Communist Party in Nepal whether Nepali society is semi-feudal or capitalist. All communist parties in Nepal, except the CPN (UML), have stated that the character of Nepali society is semi-feudal and semi-colonial (Dhakal, 2069 BS). Pokharel (2025),

however, argues that “due to internal developments such as infrastructure expansion, urbanization, and labor migration into non-agricultural sectors—along with the establishment of economic ties with trading partners—Nepal has evolved into a market capitalist economic and political system” (20). Other communist parties, by contrast, hold that Nepal’s current economic structure, production system, production relations, and class dynamics do not support characterizing Nepali society as capitalist, while still others contend that Nepali society is no longer semi-feudal but has in fact become capitalist (Poudel, 2071).

Nepal has become capitalist in its basic form and that it should now emphasize the expansion of production and distribution. Political analyst Shyam Shrestha argues that the capitalism established in Nepali society is not the European type that emerged from the industrial revolution, but rather a post-industrial form characteristic of the twenty-first century. According to him, agriculture contributes 35 percent to Nepal’s overall economy, services contribute 50 percent, and industry contributes only 15 percent. He further argues that Nepal should be considered capitalist because services and industry combined—excluding agriculture—contribute 65 percent of total GDP. Similarly, land tax revenue accounts for only 19 percent of state income, while income tax, customs, VAT, and excise duty together account for 80 percent of revenue. It appears that even agriculture has been capitalized, which suggests that capitalism dominates the politics of Nepal (Shrestha, 2014) as well as its society, culture, and the behavior of its people. Some foreign scholars have characterized Nepal as a country with a history of relative isolation from direct integration into capitalist markets, with the majority of pre-capitalist and semi-feudal social relations persisting in rural areas (Blaikie et al., 2001). However, Sugden’s (2013) research indicates that the Tarai region of Nepal is progressively integrating into capitalist markets, though the spread of capitalist production

relations remains highly uneven in its extent, with semi-feudal relations remaining predominant in shaping the trajectory of this distinct social formation. Capitalism in Nepal, driven by neoliberal economic policies and globalization, appears to have embedded itself within traditional cultural and ritual systems, fostering consumerist practices and aligning them with capitalist values rather than displacing them (Pokahrel, 2025). It has commodified traditional cultural practices, transforming them from use-value to exchange-value. A close examination of the structural patterns of Nepali society and culture reveals that Nepal contains multiple modes of production, ranging from primitive hunting-gathering to modern capitalist production. Due to the dominant role of capitalism, however, Nepali society is broadly characterized by a capitalist mode of production.

Political roadmap to socialism

In the twenty-first century, there are several empirical perspectives on the socialist model. Socialists consistently analyze economics and politics from the standpoint of working people, seeking the causes of social problems and their solutions. Without such a critical perspective, a clear understanding is lost, replaced by the ideological fog of state mystification, which obscures the real interests and motivations of dominant power groups (Lawrence, 2006). Similarly, Lebowitz (2016) argues that twenty-first-century socialism should not be governed by a small segment of capitalists for their narrow interests, but should instead serve all people working and thinking together toward common objectives—holding no monopoly on social concern but sharing the hopes and aspirations of the working class (Lawrence, 2006). With the collapse of the socialist model in Russia and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, capitalist writers and philosophers began to challenge the theoretical validity of Marxism, a claim that Bhandari refuted at an international conference held in Calcutta, India, in 1993. At that conference, Bhandari

presented a working paper entitled “Contemporary World Situation and the Relevance of Marxism,” in which he clearly argued that Marxism had not failed globally—only the Soviet model had failed. The American magazine *Newsweek* published an interview with him on May 27, 1991, under the title “Nepal, Where Karl Marx Is Alive” (Nepal Page, 2020).

PMPD also accepts the need for essential revisions to the classical model of socialism and proposes a new model grounded in the realities of the Nepali people and society. It is a program of transition from a semi-feudal mode of production to socialism in the twenty-first century. According to Oli (2025), it provides a systematic roadmap for building socialism following the success of a people’s democratic revolution, proposing three stages: first, eliminating the remnants of feudalism; second, consolidating and strengthening a people’s multiparty democratic system; and third, transitioning toward socialism (Bhandari, 1993). It is a comprehensive political model that emphasizes social ownership, economic equality, and the role of the state in achieving socialism (Roka, 2024). A people’s government would then implement the PMPD program with a view to transforming capitalist relations of production. A revolution, according to Bhandari, may accomplish great things, but its achievements must be periodically renewed by the mandate of the people (Bhandari, 1993; section 3.5, cited in Dhakal, 2023).

The establishment of a socialist state in Nepal is the ultimate goal of PMPD and has become the primary objective of all communist and socialist parties in Nepal (Roka, 2024). According to Bhandari (1993), the decisive and fundamental element of the country is its system of production. The country’s livelihoods, means of earning, and productive resources are in the hands of a few feudal lords, bureaucratic capitalists, and foreign monopoly capitalists, who have seized control of the nation’s natural resources and wealth (Dhakal, 2023). The common people across all other classes and strata

are subjected to exploitation and oppression. Social liberation—to end the exploitation of the feudal and bureaucratic capitalist classes—and national independence—to end the exploitation of foreign monopoly capitalism and imperialism—must therefore be the fundamental tasks of the current revolution. The principal contradictions of Nepali society at the present stage are those between the people and the feudal class and bureaucratic capitalist class, and between the nation and foreign monopoly capitalism and imperialism. The basic goal of the revolution is to resolve these contradictions and establish a democratic system of, and for, the people (Document presented at the Fifth General Convention of the Communist Party of Nepal, 1993).

The government established through the people’s revolution is to be governed in the interest of the people and the nation, operating with the consent of the people. This system—which aims to fulfill the aspirations of the people by developing capital and cumulative productivity (Pahari, 2024)—would constitute the new people’s democracy and serve as the path toward socialism. According to Bhandari (1993), the central, minimum, and decisive task of the revolution is to establish people’s democratic power by abolishing the power of feudalism and imperialism; this is a general task that will remain unchanged regardless of circumstances until it is fulfilled. It is the responsibility of the party to define these basic objectives and tasks in concrete terms according to the specific conditions of each period, and to advance them through specific and concrete programs. What must change over time is only the party’s specific program—adapted to shifts in national and international conditions and to the changing alignment of enemies and allies of the revolution—while its basic objectives remain constant.

Economic programs of PMPD

PMPD has a clear vision and a specific economic program oriented toward the socialist mode of

production. It presents a holistic framework encompassing political, economic, and socio-cultural programs, with a focus on a socialist economy built on social security and the equitable distribution of benefits to the people (Chapagain, 2023). It notes that industries, trade, and other capitalist enterprises in Nepal are under the control of foreign capitalists and comprador bureaucratic capitalists. Medium-and-small-scale national capitalists have been unable to develop due to the pressure of global capitalism, and the national economy has become increasingly dependent on neighboring countries and the world capitalist system. Industries and institutions established by socialist countries under development assistance agreements—which remained under state ownership—had been contributing significantly to employment and revenue generation, yet were sold off to foreign capitalists in the name of privatization. National enterprises that had only just begun to find their footing under a liberal economy have been forced to compete with foreign capital. As a result, some national industries have collapsed and thousands of industrial workers have lost their employment (Bhandari, 1993). PMPD has therefore formulated a set of tasks to be carried out after the establishment of a people’s government, including a plan to build and strengthen the national economy and lay the material foundation for the transition to socialism through a concrete strategy. The major economic programs of PMPD are as follows:

- To eliminate all bases and remnants of exploitation, oppression, and domination by feudalism, comprador-bureaucratic

capitalism, foreign monopoly capitalism, and imperialism.

- To build an independent economy and raise the living standards of the people, new production relations will be established to drive growth and development.
- Based on the economic programs of PMPD, the people’s democratic system will be consolidated and developed across all areas—political, social, cultural, and others.
- To advance the strategy of preparing the material conditions for the transition to socialism, a strong foundation will be built upon the progressive new social system.
- It is accepted that the basic character of the democratic system is a mixed economy, in which the state plays a leading role in uplifting working people, low-income populations, and backward castes, communities, and regions, based on equality and social justice.
- Emphasis is placed on encouraging the private sector to play an important role in the development of the national economy, and on carrying out the country’s macro-economic and social transformation based on this approach • PMPD has also proposed various other programs and strategies across different sectors of the economy, some of which are presented in the figure below.

Table 1: Sectoral programs of PMPD

S.N.	Sectors	Strategies/Programs
1	Agriculture	• To increase agricultural production and productivity by developing scientific and advanced farming, to provide necessary facilities to farmers at their doorsteps, and to ensure that farmers can directly benefit from the facilities.

S.N.	Sectors	Strategies/Programs
		- To implement progressive land tax based on the size, fertility, and soil quality and structure of the land, to modernize agriculture, and to contribute to the establishment, promotion, and development of cottage and modern industries in the agricultural sector, and to develop a self-reliant economy. - To abolish feudal land ownership on land and end all forms of semi-feudal exploitation, to implement a revolutionary land reform program, to distribute land to real tillers and landless farmers, to end dual ownership of land, and to establish new boundaries.
2	Building an equitable society	To build an equitable society for the prosperity and development of the country and to end poverty, socio-economic backwardness, and inequality of the common people.
3	Industrial development and ending unemployment	- To formulate and implement a plan for the industrial revolution. - To develop national capital by developing the national capitalist class and using it for industrial development, bringing about structural changes in the economy and dynamism, ending underemployment in agriculture and the increasing unemployment in the country, and establishing and developing cottage, medium, and large industries under the industrial revolution. - To operate industries that produce seeds, fertilizers used in agricultural production, cement used in construction work, and consumer goods for the general public under the leadership of the state. - To arrange for training for unskilled domestic workers to involve them in industrial business and replace foreign workers, guarantee adequate wages for livelihood, housing, education, health, and all internationally recognized rights and facilities for workers.
4	Development of a Self-reliant economy	- To make the country self-reliant, develop industries that provide more benefits and are import-substituting, and the government sector will be the main involvement in such industries. - To protect and encourage the private sector, and to involve the private sector in the establishment, development, and expansion of export-oriented industries that compete in the international market.
5	Foreign investment and technology transfer	To emphasize the development of import-substituting and export-promoting industries by mobilizing maximum government and private capital, foreign investment, and technology transfer, and to modify the industries established through foreign investment and technology transfer in accordance with national interests.

S.N.	Sectors	Strategies/Programs
6	Policy, rule, and law formulation	- To make legal arrangements to allow foreign capital and technology to enter the country and to protect foreign capital, subject to the country's constitution and laws. - While formulating industrial policy, emphasis will be placed on ensuring balanced regional development. A policy will be adopted to encourage the establishment of cottage and small industries in rural areas and to provide market arrangements. - To adopt appropriate policies to develop and promote government institutions and to operate them in accordance with their objectives.

Source: Bhandari, 1993

Implementation of PMPD

The Fifth General Convention of the CPN (UML) (1993) endorsed PMPD as its basic strategy and principle. In the period that followed, the CPN (UML) participated in elections guided by PMPD principles—in 2048, 2051, 2056, 2074, and 2079 BS. When the communist government was formed for the first time in 2051 BS under the leadership of Manmohan Adhikari, several policy reform programs were introduced based on PMPD principles. The government launched various socialism-oriented policies and programs, including “Aafno Gaaun, Aphai Banaun” (Let’s Build Our Village Ourselves), the Senior Citizen Allowance Program, Unemployment Allowance, disability allowance, maternity allowance, and free basic health care. Similarly, after the formation of the Left coalition government in 2074 BS, the implementation of socialism-oriented programs was continued.

In 2018, the Oli-led government proposed various socialism-oriented programs. “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali” and the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Model, 2019, were among the major socialism-oriented programs with distinctly Nepali characteristics. According to Sharma Oli (2025), the pluralism and diversity that characterize Nepali society will be advanced in harmony within a socialist state system. Some of the major programs of the CPN (UML) to implement PMPD are listed below:

Prosperous Nepal, happy Nepali

This program has a long-term vision extending to 2100 BS, structured in four stages: (i) structural management and the foundation of prosperity; (ii) a problem-solving process; (iii) review of the work; and (iv) preparation of new proposals (National Planning Commission, 2020). The program has been supported by the party as a vehicle for building a prosperous society.

Agricultural transformation programs

The government has focused on scientific land reform and agricultural transformation, the use of high technology to improve seeds and livestock, and the promotion of agro-based industries and marketing systems (*My Republica*, October 23, 2013). The Tenth General Convention of the CPN (UML) (2078 BS) passed several resolutions related to agriculture, including: providing housing to landless, squatter, homeless, and Dalit communities through the Land Commission; preventing land fragmentation; classifying land according to use; encouraging agricultural work by making agricultural land tax-free; promoting the cultivation of single crops in designated areas as a new form of agricultural organization; setting appropriate prices for agricultural produce; increasing investment and ensuring the welfare of farmers; and rapidly developing agro-based industries to draw the labor force from the agricultural sector into non-agricultural employment (129).

Industry-related programs

The program also ensures sound industrial relations and labor security through the social security fund, promotes domestic and foreign investment, and develops export-oriented industries that use domestic raw materials (Sapkota, 2014).

Employment generation programs

The program encourages the creation of employment opportunities for youth within the country through job creation and the expansion of self-employment. It also creates an environment that engages Nepalis living abroad in enterprises and employment at home (Tenth General Convention of the CPN [UML], 2078 BS).

Programs of industrialization

To create jobs, strengthen the national economy, and end dependency through industrialization (Tenth General Convention of the CPN [UML], 2078 BS).

Initiatives taken by the CPN (UML)-led government for the implementation of PMPD

A range of legal, institutional, policy, administrative, and socio-economic changes and reforms have been undertaken to lay the foundation of a socialism-oriented economy, including the following: (i) Minimum wages have been guaranteed, and living allowances have been provided to those without employment. (ii) Some form of social security has been extended to all citizens in accordance with the concept of life-cycle-based social security. (iii) Laws and structural arrangements have been put in place, and budgets have been allocated, to guarantee free basic education and health services. (iv) Health insurance has been introduced to bring all citizens within the scope of health services. (v) Food and energy security have been pursued. (vi) Housing construction for poor families has been accelerated, and laws have been enacted to end social discrimination. (vii) The country has gradually moved toward

building an independent and self-reliant economy through measures such as export promotion and import substitution, reducing the number of workers going abroad for foreign employment, broadening the domestic revenue tax base, and mobilizing resources based on national priorities (Tenth General Convention of the CPN [UML], 2078 BS).

These initiatives by the government represent steps toward building a socialism-oriented state. The legal, institutional, policy, administrative, and socio-economic changes undertaken by the CPN (UML)-led government—including the fair distribution of public resources, the implementation of a progressive tax system, and budgetary support for weaker sections and regions—have begun to lay the foundation for a socialism-oriented economy (First Legislative General Convention of the CPN [UML], 2078 BS:95). Among these, the CPN (UML)-led government has launched grassroots programs that strengthen people's empowerment and development at the local level through local government.

PMPD: Path to the socialist mode of production

Bhandari (1993), the propounder of PMPD, emphasized that even after the political completion of the democratic revolution and before entering socialism, society must pass through various sub-stages. According to Bhandari, eliminating the remnants of feudalism, strengthening the people's democratic system, and preparing the ground for socialism constitute the natural process of social development. Bhandari (1993) further argued that the current era is the era of socialist revolution, and that the democratic revolution is itself a part of the socialist revolution in the twenty-first century. Bhandari was clear, however, that the program he was putting forward was not socialist but rather a program to lay the groundwork for socialism (Political Report of the CPN [UML], 2078:104).

At the Fifth General Convention of the CPN (UML), Bhandari (1993) argued that the progressive development of Nepali society is not possible without ending the exploitation and oppression of feudalism and imperialism. Bhandari (1993) further stated that the advancement of the country is not possible without industrialization, the development of a self-reliant industrial economy, and the growth of national capital. By ending the semi-feudal and semi-colonial condition, national capital reaches a level at which the doors of industry and trade must be opened. A socialist society cannot be built without the physical development of society.

The path of development of Nepali society is obstructed by feudalism, traditional bureaucracy, capitalism, and imperialism. Without the industrialization of the country and adequate physical development of society, a socialist society cannot provide work according to ability and pay according to work. Therefore, ensuring the development of national capital and industry is the first and essential task of PMPD. To achieve this, it is necessary to end feudalism and imperialism and to complete the capitalist democratic revolution. The socio-economic character of the current revolution, in Bhandari's view, is capitalist democracy, and its goal is to establish a democratic system for the people. Only by completing this first task can society move forward toward socialism (Bhandari, 1993).

PMPD focuses on transformation at two levels. At the superstructure level, it calls for change in legal, political, social, cultural, behavioral, educational, and religious aspects, while at the infrastructure level, it advocates change in the mode of production. Pahari (2024) notes that transforming society means not only bringing about changes at the base level but also ensuring corresponding changes in the superstructure and at the foundational level of society. Singh (2013) similarly observes that the interaction between infrastructure and superstructure is mutually influential, though in general the infrastructure plays the determining role while the superstructure exercises a secondary influence on the base.

Challenges of implementing PMPD

Since the inception of the multiparty system, the CPN (UML) has been at the center of national politics in one form or another for almost thirty-five years. As the country's largest party—one that has been entrusted by public mandate to lead the federal government, six provincial governments, and a majority of local bodies—the CPN (UML) has nonetheless not been able to achieve success on all fronts. It is therefore necessary to seriously examine the shortcomings in its philosophy, principles, practices, or strategies (Bhusal, 2078). The following factors appear to be responsible for the party's difficulties in implementing PMPD effectively:

Political context

The absence of a sustained single-party majority has resulted in coalition governments, where governing programs are developed through consensus among coalition partners. In such circumstances, a single party's guiding framework, including PMPD, may not always be reflected comprehensively in government policies and programs.

Conceptual development

The CPN (UML) and its national conventions have interpreted PMPD in different ways over time. While some party documents describe it as a guiding principle, others present it as a strategy. Bhandari originally articulated PMPD as a strategy, whereas the party later adopted it as a broader guiding principle.

Coalition dynamics

Bhandari emphasized the importance of cooperation among parties with shared ideological orientations. In practice, coalition governments have often been formed on broader political considerations, which has influenced the extent to which PMPD has informed governance.

Programmatic evolution

As political, economic, and social conditions continue to evolve, there is an ongoing need to

further develop policy agendas and democratic initiatives that reflect the principles of PMPD while addressing emerging national priorities.

Leadership capacity and expert engagement

The effective implementation of PMPD depends on a shared understanding of its principles among political leaders and cadres, supported by sustained collaboration with subject specialists, researchers, and policy experts in the formulation of national strategies, policies, and implementation plans.

Academic and intellectual engagement

Continued scholarly research and dialogue on PMPD within universities, research institutions, policy centers, and the party's educational forums could contribute to its conceptual development and broader academic recognition, both nationally and internationally.

Conclusion

This article applies the Marxist theory of the mode of production to the context of Nepal. The mode of production is the central concept of Marxism that describes the evolution of society from the primitive mode of production to the socialist mode of production, encompassing the means of production (such as land, industries, and mines), the forces of production (such as the labor force, workers, and peasants), and the relations of production (whether conflictual or harmonious). The article primarily examines PMPD, which is regarded as the guiding principle of the CPN (UML). The argument developed here is that a socialist mode of production is not merely an economic or administrative arrangement but is fundamentally a political process of society. The political superstructure fosters mass initiative by addressing errors through various institutional mechanisms, channeling the aspirations of the working classes through dynamic developmental strategies and programs. As endorsed by the CPN (UML), PMPD institutionalizes political competition within a constitutional framework that serves as a superstructure. It holds that the

limitations of a monolithic political model cause detachment from social reality, and that popular mandates must therefore be continuously renewed, debated, and legitimized through periodic democratic processes. The system dismantles the conventional structure of political life and directs it toward the social and economic transformation of society.

The CPN (UML)'s endorsement of PMPD in 1993 reflects a maturation of socialist theory for the contemporary era—one that recognizes economic emancipation as ultimately inseparable from political emancipation. It is also the case that the working class can only become the ruling class through a political choice for change. Making such choices within a system that upholds collective ownership and social justice is what builds a resilient and authentic socialist society. Ultimately, the PMPD framework offers a viable alternative that sets the goals of social production around dignity, equality, and human-centered development.

The reimagined political system also serves as a critical safeguard against the degeneration of the revolutionary project. Historical experience has shown that unchecked political and economic power generates alienation and class stratification even within socialist systems. The multiparty system, combined with a constitutional commitment to socialism, introduces checks, balances, and avenues for the peaceful correction of political course. In this way, the system addresses the tendency of the socialist mode of production to become a static imposition by instead making it responsive to popular will—engaging with the risk of bureaucratic capture and resisting alignment with elite interests.

As discussed in this article—covering the history of PMPD, the existing mode of production in Nepal, the path to the socialist mode of production, the political roadmap to socialism, the economic program of PMPD, and its major challenges—the analysis ultimately reflects the socio-political realities of Nepali society and the limited progress

made in implementing PMPD. The researchers conclude that the path to PMPD in Nepali society is obstructed by feudalism, traditional bureaucracy, capitalism, and imperialism. Without the industrialization of the country and adequate physical development of society, a socialist society cannot provide work according to ability and wages according to work. Ensuring the development of national capital and industry is therefore the first and essential task of PMPD. The article also identifies the key challenges of implementing PMPD as: political instability, the inability to form a single-majority government, the constraints of coalition governance, insufficient engagement with intellectual and expert communities, a lack of clear and well-grounded leadership, the absence of a clearly formulated vision, and moral failures in leadership.

PMPD, postulated by Bhandari (1993) and endorsed by the CPN (UML), thus stands at a crossroads, with its principles and strategies intact but its implementation still incomplete. It represents a necessary framework for the realization of sustainable socialism in Nepali society. As the guiding principle of the party, PMPD provides a dialectical synthesis between revolutionary direction and democratic practice, between conventional planning and new innovation, and between leadership and popular sovereignty. Its full implementation in Nepali society remains both a necessary and a viable goal.

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