

# Nepali Politics in the Grip of Catch-22

---

R.K REGMEE  
*Nepal News*

Will the advocates of neutrality continue to take the previous stand? Will they be indifferent towards the reality of Nepal? Will they disable the people-mandated Constituent Assembly? These are the questions which are emerging as more important for people today than how Prachanda and Poudel will finish their race.

As the third round August-2- Prime Ministerial poll draws closer, Nepali top leaders find themselves rather tightly-gripped in what could be termed the situation of Catch-22, the famous term coined by Joseph Heller in his novel to mean no way out. All politicians had first taken the poll to be a solution to the deadlock facing them, felt relieved and, therefore, passionately pursued it as the most convenient democratic fast track to provide the country with a viable alternative government through Legislature Parliament.

Candidates Prachanda and Poudel can neither withdraw nor secure majority to close the chapter. None of their parties - UCPN-Maoist and Nepali Congress- can tell them to drop out of race because the measure could be suicidal in the game of power politics. Their adventure for support at bilateral, multilateral dialogue has until Thursday not been more than simple socialization.

The due process of parliament demands that voting to pick up new Premier should continue until a successor of care taker PM Madhav Kumar Nepal emerges. Nothing short of decisive result would end it. The process is indifferent about the worries the endless voting might cause. Bypassing it would be highly undemocratic. Amending the rules could be highly opportunistic.

Those who did not vote in the past two rounds appear to be determined in making neutrality as an issue of political prestige. The CPN UML boss Jhala Nath Khanal describes his last minute withdrawal as a great sacrifice for consensus politics and urges his fellow contestants to follow suit. The joint front of Madheshi

parties is putting forward series of conditions as bargain for support which the competing parties might simply not be able to fulfill.

## **Cause of failure**

Why did the second round of voting fail to deliver results? The answer is simple: Maoists could not campaign convincingly that Prachanda, if elected, would be a different Prime Minister this time. They could not clarify the misunderstanding that other parties have about them particularly their way of high-handedness in ruling-times, acting forcibly as key- opposition party, imposing their communist party agenda upon others and ignoring the existence of other parties in politics.

Nepali Congress, in its efforts for majority votes for Poudel, could not capitalize on its silent, obedient policy that it pursued for 13 months while joining and somewhat blindly backing the CPN-UML-led government. It could not win trust of non-Maoist parties about its potentiality to ultimately provide a government with two-third majority, which is regarded as the need of the hour in Nepali politics. NC mediators also failed to communicate to non-Maoists about the futility of political neutrality at the PM-poll.

Advocates of neutrality in PM election knew what they were doing. But they could not sympathetically analyze how their strategy might victimize the people in the long run. The delay in electing a full fledged Premier triggers a chain of chaotic atmosphere marked by trends such as continuing care taker government, indifferent governance, administration without a sense of accountability, negligence in law and order, disarrayed development works, and more suffering for people.

Negotiation-experts, taking advantage from the fresh memory of 2010-experience of South African World Cup Football have begun to compare Prachanda-Poudel fiasco in parliamentary poll to the football match in which celebrity players play faithfully well. “They kick, dribble, punt, head, pass, shoot and show all acrobatic tricks of playing the ball with passionate zeal,” they say adding “but unfortunately all their blasts go wide of the mark; fail to score rendering the whole game as nothing but a lacklustre event.”

## **The neutrality – clutch**

The politicians with the neutrality –card have a great role to play at the moment. If they do not change their strategy, the Prime Ministerial run off in the third round would also be indecisive. It will have to go for the fourth round. This will project the Legislature Parliament as incompetent to offer the country the minimum

basics for a functional government. It will hurt the image of the Constituent Assembly which has already been damaged by the way politicians extended its tenure two months ago.

A weak parliament in times when the constitution is not ready and major issues of conflict have not been settled is not what the country needs today. Advocates of neutrality should understand this reality clearly before they act neutral in the parliament next week. As they know well, neutrality by itself is an abstract notion. It should always be viewed against the backdrop of time, space and reality behind issues.

Will the advocates of neutrality continue to take the previous stand? Will they be indifferent towards the reality of Nepal? Will they disable the people-mandated Constituent Assembly? These are the questions which are emerging as more important for people today than how Prachanda and Poudel will finish their race. Nepalese woes require Indian support.

**Source:** <http://www.nepalnews.com/main/index.php/-featurearchive/7927-nepali-politics-in-the-grip-of-catch-22.html>