

# Empty Core in a Coalition: Why No Constitution in Nepal?

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## Abstract

Trust from one group to another is vital for a success of a coalition. Coalition breaks down when such trusts disappear. It is possible that no group or coalition could be formed again to get the required majority. Situation may result in a Nash limbo indecisive state undesirable to everyone. No solution seems apparent because of conflicts of interest and irreconcilable differences. Nepalese people elected 601 member Constituent Assembly (CA) in May 2008 to make a constitution but the Assembly has not been able to elect a PM because of the failure of coalition.

## 1 Introduction

In many circumstances, a functioning coalition could be formed, when no single party is able to get majority in the house. It fulfills both group and individual rationality as coalition partners may enjoy benefits of the public office despite their own party not having required majority in the Assembly. The coalition of parties like this is essentially an agreement to stick together and to support each other to get majority vote in the house. Such agreements are based on explicit or implicit understanding to divide the gains/power of assuming public offices. Public outside evaluates success or failure of a coalition looking at progress they made towards achieving the objectives stated in the social welfare function. Trust from one group to another is vital for a success of a coalition. Coalition breaks down when such trusts disappear. It is possible that no group or coalition could be formed again to get the required majority. Situation may result in a limbo indecisive state undesirable to everyone. No solution seems apparent because of conflicts of interest and irreconcilable differences. This worst outcome is known as empty core of coalition. An intervention of some

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sort is required to get things moving again, but such interventions becomes harder for sovereign nations.

Let there be  $N$  number of members in an assembly  $a_i \in A_i$   $i = 1, \dots, N$ . Assembly has  $P_1..P_n$  parties; each of  $a_i$  belongs to a particular party  $P$  and thus  $a_i \in A_i \setminus P_j$  where  $i \neq j$  belong to a particular party  $i$ . This member is first responsible to his/her own party and votes according to the party line. Let  $n(a_i \in A_i \setminus P_j)$  be the total number of members belonging to party  $P_i$ . The influence in the decision making power of party  $i$  depends on the number of members of candidates  $N(a_i \in A_i \setminus P_j)$  who voted in the assembly out of  $N$  total  $n(a_i \in A_i \setminus P_j)/N$ . Vote from coalition by joining parties is given by  $V(n(a_i \in A_i \setminus P_j)/N \cup n(a_j \in A_i \setminus P_i)/N \cup \dots)$ . In fact there are  $2^P$  possible coalitions among  $P$  parties. A coalition cares about its coalition partner and ignores members out of the coalition. A dominant coalition has majority required, most often more than 50 percent of votes from  $V(n(a_i \in A_i \setminus P_j)/N \cup n(a_j \in A_i \setminus P_i)/N \cup \dots) \geq \frac{1}{2}N$ .

While  $V(n(a_i \in A_i \setminus P_j)/N \cup n(a_j \in A_i \setminus P_i)/N \cup \dots) < \frac{1}{2}N$  is a situation of indecision. Let  $C_i(p)$  denote the number of members from party  $i$  who are in the coalition. Then  $\sum_{i=1}^j C_i(p) \geq \frac{1}{2}N$  is the condition for a successful decision.

If  $\sum_{i=1}^j C_i(p) < \frac{1}{2}N$  there is not required majority and the house is adjourned for the election next time. Parties then try to form new coalition but this does not guarantee that the condition  $\sum_{i=1}^j C_i(p) \geq \frac{1}{2}N$  will be fulfilled. The condition

$\sum_{i=1}^j C_i(p) < \frac{1}{2}N$  is an empty coalition. If parties do not change voting behavior this can go forever. This obviously is not in the interest of the people who elected these members to the Assembly.

How could such a deadlock be solved? There can be two approaches to the solution to turn empty core into non-blocking coalition, endogenously by forming new beliefs and attitudes or exogenously from an external intervention. Rational players should calculate their benefits from forming these new beliefs and compare them to the indecisive situation. When parties get tired of the process of indecision in successive rounds of failure to achieve their objective they have no alternative that to rethink and change their behavior. Learning from the past experience they must respect each others interest before exogenous interventions such as the natural calamities, epidemics or external wars force them to bring them together. Endogenous efforts are always superior to the exogenous intervention as the consequences of later can be much worse than of the former. When it is obvious that totalitarian or dictatorial solution is impossible parties should come in agreement to divide and share. Intensity of conflict should end and give way for a functioning new coalition. Gains from

the commitment and cooperation should be much larger than of noncooperation to form coalition again. Rethinking about the true and realistic social welfare

function such as  $W(Y, S)$  where  $Y$  denotes the level of aggregate economic activities and its growth rates and  $S$  the stability of the system, can be one way to redirect resources wasted in the process of unsuccessful coalition formation to bring more efficient and Pareto optimal solution.

## 2 Results of the Election for Prime Minister in Nepal

Nepalese people elected for 601 member Constituent Assembly (CA) in May 2008 giving it a mandate to promulgate a fully democratic constitution for the Federal Republic of Nepal (FRN). This was a hung assembly with no clear majority of any single party (see Table 2). Interim constitution adopted by the CA requires at least 301 votes for one of its member to be successfully elected to the post of the Prime Minister (PM) of Nepal. The CA elected PM twice successfully in which coalitions were able to get the majority required for the PM. CPN(Maoist) candidate Pushpa K Dahal remained PM supported by UML for ten months but had to resign after the UML withdrew its support in issue of mishandling the Chief of the Army. Then a coalition of 22 non-Maoist parties was formed to get the majority to elect MP Nepal of the UML to the PM. Despite very bad performance this coalition government continued till May 28, 2010 - the last day of the two year tenure of the Constituent Assembly. CPN(Maoist) insisted on his resignation while agreeing to extending the tenure of the CA by one more year. Consequently a "three points agreement" was signed among parties -resignation of the existing PM, adoption or implementation of all agreements and the promulgation of constitution. Nepal resigned but continues as a PM as no other candidate has been able to prove the majority. Neither Pushpa Kamal Dahal of CPN( Maoists) nor Ram Chandra Paudel of the NC, two candidates contesting for the PM, were able to get of 301 votes in the hung assembly despite sixteen rounds of voting for it in the CA as shown in Table 1. The seventeenth round scheduled on Nov 15 has been postponed in anticipation a similar inconclusive decision.

Major issue of disagreement and inconclusive state is that Maoist is not prepared to dismantle its own private army. The NC, UML and Other parties have made the dismantling of the Moaist Army as the first precondition for a successful conclusion of the peace process. As the long run vision and mission is missing from the politics of Nepal, parties are far away from reaching an agreement to promulgate a constitution. A dream of a unitary dictatorial rubber stamp democracy on the part of Maoists is the major reason for such a deadlock. Maoism might have worked in China, democracy has worked in India but both of them seem to have failed in Nepal thus far as the leaders have not been able

think originally about the Nepalese problem - the urgent need to eradicating poverty by kick starting the process of economic growth.

Economic costs to Nepal, one of the poorest countries of the world, of such political deadlock are enormous. Nepal's peace process has further deteriorated. None of the terms of the comprehensive peace accords have been implemented. Maoists have turned deaf ears to demand of civilian parties to dissolve their army and to return properties that had been unlawfully captured during the ten year long people's war. If they are not dreaming for a totalitarian government, there is very little logic to support adamant and arrogant behavior regarding policies towards their own armies, which the UNMIN estimates to be around nineteen thousands, separate from the national army. Presence of their army intimidates civilian parties to enter into cooperation. Thus it seems very unlikely that the peace process will conclude until Maoists dissolve their army. Maoists are not only to blame. Situation has become worst as the Nepali Congress (NC), UML and MRFP-TMLP three major civilian parties have not been able to trust themselves and failed to renew the coalition that they had formed before the extension of the CA on May 28, 2010. The UML and MRFP-TMLP have failed to reciprocate their supports to Ram Chandra Paudel - NC's candidate for the PM. Drafting of the new constitution for the FRN has been completely forgotten. The CA is in mess and not even able to choose a PM because of an empty coalition problem.

Solution of this problem may be possible by

1. **Endogenous intervention: change in beliefs. This can come from protests of common people or through reinvigoration of spirits of April 2006 Revolution. Gains from dynamic optimisation are far greater than zero sum game being played at the moment. Leaders can become dynamic and pragmatic regarding the opportunities and constraints of Nepal.**
2. **External intervention: counter acting forces such as in Afganistan but this would be a great disaster; whether Nepal will be able to survive in its current form then becomes questionable.**

Both of above solutions are costlier than the smooth functioning of the CA but the lack of trust does not let it work. Empty core continues.

### 3 Conclusion

Trust from one party to another is vital for a success of a coalition. Coalition breaks down when such trusts disappear. It is possible that no group or coalition could be formed again to get the required majority. Situation may result in a Nash limbo indecisive state undesirable to everyone. No solution seems apparent because of conflicts of interest and irreconcilable differences.

Nepalese people elected 601 member Constituent Assembly (CA) in May 2008 to make a constitution for the Federal Republic of Nepal but the Assembly has not been able to elect even a PM because of the failure of the coalition. Solution of this problem lies either in creation of new believes and thinking abandoning the mistrust or in an external intervention that may even annul Nepal in the form that exists today.

## References

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Table 1: Votes for Prime Ministerial Candidates in the 601 member Constituent Assembly of Nepal

	First Round		2nd Round		3rd Round		4th Round	
	July 21, 2010		July 23, 2010		Aug 2, 2010		Aug 6, 2010	
	Dahal	Paudel	Dahal	Paudel	Dahal	Paudel	Dahal	Paudel
For	242	124	241	123	259	124	213	122
Againt	114	235	113	241	114	246	99	245
Neutral	236	228	228	214	208	186	156	194
Total	592	597	572	578	581	556	468	561
	5th Round		6th Round		7th Round		8th Round	
	Aug 23, 2010		Sept 5, 2010		Sept 7, 2010		Sept 26 , 2010	
	Dahal	Paudel	Dahal	Paudel	Dahal	Paudel	Dahal	Paudel
For	246	124	240	122	252	119	-	116
Againt	111	243	101	242	110	245	-	2
Neutral	206	200	163	172	159	151	-	71
Total	563	567	504	536	521	515	-	189
	Sept 27	Oct 6	Oct 7	Oct 10	Oct 26	Oct 29	Nov 1	Nov 4
	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th
	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel
For	105	109	104	89	98	96	96	82
Againt	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Neutral	61	46	40	29	44	40	31	17
Total	168	156	145	119	144	138	129	101
	Nov 15	Nov	Nov	Dec	Dec	Dec	Dec	Jan
	17th	18th	19th	20th	21st	22nd	32rd	24th
	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel	Paudel
For								
Againt								
Neutral								
Total								
Source: Compiled from newspapers ekantipur/gorkhapatra/nepalnews.								

Table 2: Members of Constituent Assembly by Political Parties in Nepal

	Total	Maoist	NC	UML	MPRF	TMLP	Others
Total	601	229	116	108	53	21	74
FPTP	240	120	38	33	29	9	11
Proportional	335	100	73	70	22	11	59
Nomination	26	9	5	5	2	1	5
Percentage	100%	38.1%	19.3%	18.0%	8.8%	3.5%	12.3%