

## Calling Off Nepal Shutdown Political Strategy Siddhi B Ranjitkar

I could say Prachanda was a great political strategist. Calling off the Nepal shutdown programmed for Wednesday, April 8, 2015, and Thursday, April 9, 2015, Prachanda earned good will from the common folks in general and the business community in particular. Punishing the common folks for the faults of the two-thirds majority political parties was not rational. Prachanda had shown a great statesmanship convincing so many parties of the need for calling off the shutdown. Promulgating a new constitution acceptable to all political parties and all Nepalese would certainly depend on the skill of Prachanda in the political maneuver in the coming days. So far, Prachanda had avoided the direct confrontation with the ruling political parties even though they could not build a consensus on a new constitution.

The thirty-party political front had enforced the Nepal shutdown on Tuesday, April 7, 2015 following the announcement of the three-day Nepal shutdown starting on April 7, 2015 and ending on April 9, 2015 to put pressure on the two-thirds majority political parties to promulgate a new constitution building a consensus on it. Cadres of the front went to the streets to enforce the shutdown. Enforcement of the Nepal shutdown went peacefully except for a burning of a taxi, and minor scuffles with the police in Kathmandu. That was another achievement of the skillful political maneuver.

Shutting down Nepal was not a peaceful movement. It was violence against the people's rights to work even if it were to go peacefully. Nobody has rights to stop others' business but in Nepal it had been everybody's rights. Prime Minister Sushil Koirala shut down Kathmandu for two days to hold the SAARC summit peacefully in November 2014. How he could claim it a peaceful summit, as he had violated the rights of the common people to travel and work. Political parties shut down the business of the entire Nepalese for achieving their goals. Some people also closed traffic to force the public to meet their demands. They called it peaceful movement but how could it be peaceful when you denied others to earn their living.

After the successful closure of Nepal for a day on Tuesday, April 7, 2015, Prachanda took the leaders of the thirty political parties to his party's parliamentary office in Kathmandu to review the success of the shutdown, and to review plan on the future course of actions for the success without causing pains to the common folks. He successfully persuaded them, and brought them to an agreement on calling off the shutdowns planned for the next two days despite the opposition of some leaders. Prachanda demonstrated his statesmanship.

What the front would have owned if it were to go ahead with the two more days of the Nepal shutdown. Millions of Nepalese would be dissatisfied with the front for losing another two working days to earn livelihood. A few people might have gone hungry if they had to live on the daily earning. The country must have lost the business of billions of rupees. Millions of Nepalese would have cursed the front for forcing them to close their businesses. Businesspersons lost the productions, and transporters lost their businesses, too. In fact everybody lost his or her business. Nobody would be happy with the Nepal shutdown except for the state employees that could stay home for days without losing their earnings. Even the state employees working at the tax offices, custom offices, land registration offices and other money-making offices would not be happy with the closure of Nepal, as they would lose the business of making money, too.

Calling off the shutdown, the front has won the goodwill of the business community, the international community, and of course of the common folks. Nepalese in general and the business community in particular have been happy with the decision of the front on not

shutting down Nepal as previously planned. The business community was ready to build a pressure on the two-thirds majority for the cause of the front, the Nepalese media stated. The business community might be even give additional donations to the front. People in general also would have the positive thinking of the front. The international community would be glad to help the front more concretely than used to be. That was a great gain for the front.

The ruling parties and the government had seen what the front could do. They must be more serious and sensible than used to be for building a consensus on crafting a new constitution as the front had been insisting on. The two-thirds majority parties must realize that they could not bully the front any more. They could not promulgate a new constitution following the process of the two-thirds majority. Even President Dr Ram Baran Yadav had repeatedly told the political leaders to build a consensus on a new constitution. Chairman KP Oli received the same message from the president when he went to have an audience with the president on April 9, 2015. President Yadav had told Oli to build a consensus on a new constitution, and promulgate it without delay, the ratopati.com stated.  
<http://www.ratopati.com/2015/04/09/224759.html>

Prime Minister Sushil Koirala had been telling that he wanted to build a consensus on a new constitution. Several times, he publicly called on the front leaders for a meeting but he had been a tricky person. The prime minister did not work with the open heart. He had something different in his mind when he said to the front publicly. Any political tricks would not work any more, Prime Minister Koirala needed to understand it. Political leaders had already understood the tricks played by the former prime ministers. So, Prime Minister Koirala would not be able to trick any leaders any more.

Now, Prachanda needed to effectively use his political skill and strategy for building a consensus on a new constitution, and promulgate it as soon as possible to end the political transition. A new constitution should be acceptable to the Nepalese in the mountains, in the hills and in the terai, too. So, a new constitution should not be of the two-thirds majority politicians. It would be a scrap of paper if any of the people living in those geographical areas would not own it up. Prachanda knew it. He needed to persuade the two-thirds majority political leaders that Nepal needed a constitution to be owned up by all Nepalese.

The two-thirds majority political parties erroneously believed that voters had given them the two-thirds majority to do whatever they liked. The two-thirds majority was not of a single party they knew it. A number of political parties coming together made the two-thirds majority. So, voters had not given them a mandate to craft a constitution of their own but to craft a constitution acceptable to the Nepalese in general. A few unscrupulous political leaders built up not the voters the two-thirds majority. They claimed it as if the voters had overwhelmingly voted for them to craft a new constitution they like. They forgot about the voters that had voted for the front, were against the two-thirds majority political parties. They also forgot that the constituent assembly was not the parliament where they could work on majority. The constituent assembly was elected for crafting a new constitution for all Nepalese not for the two-thirds majority only.

If the two-thirds majority political parties would not craft a new constitution acceptable to the common folks of all the geographical regions then they would certainly go head-on confrontation with the people. Such a confrontation would start off on the very day, the two-thirds majority parties in the constituent assembly would declare a new constitution, and the president would put his seal of assent on it. It would be just like igniting the house of the two-thirds majority assembly. So far, Prachanda had avoided such a political situation. If the two-thirds majority were to bully the front including Prachanda then neither Prachanda nor anybody could avoid the direct confrontation with the common folks. At that time, not

the front but the common folks would rise up against the constitution crafted by the process of the two-thirds majority.

One of the Madheshi leaders Upendra Yadav came out directly against the decision on calling off the remaining-day shutdown of Nepal. He even went on charging Prachanda with having a secret negotiation with the ruling parties for getting into power. Thereafter, some of the Madheshi leaders refused to attend the meeting of the thirty-party front that was for formulating a new improved plan on fighting for crafting a new consensus on a consensus.

It was hard to believe that Prachanda had reached a clandestine agreement with the NC and CPN-UML to get into the power. Anybody could believe that Prachanda had an undisclosed negotiation with the NC and CPM-UML ruling parties but it was hard to believe that Prachanda had done so for getting into the power. Prachanda could neither be the prime minister nor he could dictate the ruling parties to make the ministers of his choice. So, Prachanda would have neither of them if this were to be considered as the political power gain in the present context.

In the past also precisely in 2008, Upendra Yadav played a role of the villain in getting elected his candidate for the vice-president. That was one of the many reasons for the current political situation. This political wrong role he had played became the major cause of dropping Yadav down from the national level of the Madheshi leader to the leader of the tiny Madhehi People's Rights Forum-Nepal. Yadav had difficulty in keeping his political status as a leader of a significant party.

If some of the Madheshi political parties were to withdraw from the thirty-party front it would be for the great satisfaction of the ruling political parties. That was exactly what the NC and CPM-UML had been looking for. Then, the ruling parties would work hard on the two-thirds majority in the constituent assembly and craft a new constitution of their own bringing an unforeseen political chaos if not calamity. That would be another role of Upendra Yadav even though it might not be solely of his in bringing such a terrible political situation.

In the interview given to the reporter of the ratopati.com, Chairman Prachanda said that the current protest was not for changing the government but for putting pressure on the government to craft a new constitution acceptable to all Nepalese. So, if the ruling parties were willing to talk and be flexible on their stand on a new constitution then why not be on course of the political dialogue rather than going head-on confrontation, he said. Shutting down Nepal means causing the tremendous pain to the common folks. The thinking was the right one in the current political situation. It was a wise and visionary, too. Why not follow his strategy for the good result.

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Why call off the Nepal Shutdown program?

<http://www.ratopati.com/2015/04/09/224814.html>

<http://www.ratopati.com/2015/04/09/224817.html>

<http://www.ratopati.com/2015/04/09/224766.html>

Interview with Prachanda

<http://www.ratopati.com/2015/04/11/225275.html>