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US POLICY TOWARDS MAOISTS OF NEPAL

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Abstract:-The US always maintained cordial and supportive relation with Nepal. When Himalayan Kingdom faced biggest threat in the form of Maoist insurgency in 1996, Washington did not have any coherent policy. But soon US began to provide political and military assistance to Nepal so it could face Maoist groups backed by China. This paper discusses Clinton and George W. Bush Administration's policy towards Maoist groups of Nepal.

KEYWORDS :

Maoists of Nepal, provide political and military assistance .

INTRODUCTION:

Before dealing Washington's Maoist policy, it seems to discuss the emergence of Maoist problem in Nepal. The Maoist suddenly emerged in Himalyan Kingdom in 1996. Their goal was to establish people's government in Nepal. To achieve their goal, they staged many deadly attacks on police and army. In 2004, Maoists cut off land routes to Kathmandu. In June 2005, Maoists exploded bomb in a crowded bus killing 38 and injuring more than 70. By 2005, Maoists ran parallel government in nearly 45 districts of Nepal. By 2006, Maoist violence had claimed more than 12000 lives and paralyzed Nepal's political system. As King Gyanendra's repression increased both democrats and Maoists came closer. In 2005, Maoists and seven main political parties secretly negotiated a deal in India to establish multiparty democracy in Nepal. After this deal Maoist declared ceasefire there. But they broke off ceasefire again in January 2006.

Maoists were very critical of India as well as United States. They described US as the world's biggest terrorist. American action in Afghanistan was interpreted as a 'terrorist attack' by Maoist. They did not see anything wrong in 9/11 terrorist attack on US in 2001. They justified Al Qaeda attack on America on the ground that terrorists too had the right to retaliate. Maoist's chief negotiator and Chairman Baburam Bhattarai threatened US with another Vietnam if it expanded its military aid to Nepal. He sent a letter to US Ambassador in Kathmandu which called on the US to stop interfering in the internal affairs of Nepal. Maoists killed two Nepalese Security guards deployed at the American Embassy in Kathmandu in 2002. They made it known that American tourists were not welcome in Maoists controlled Nepal. As if all these gestures against US were not enough, Maoist warned that they would target US backed organization in Nepal.¹ Their leader Prachand clearly stated that groups funded by Washington would not be allowed to operate in Nepal.²

In the beginning, the America was soft vis-à-vis Maoists. In this early phase of its policy, US stated that in the prevailing scenario, Maoist could not be described as real terrorists.³ In post 9/11 era, there occurred a clear shift in Washington's Maoist policy. In January 2002, US Secretary of State General (Rtd.) Colin Powell rejected Maoist violence in Nepal on the ground that there was no room for violence to create political change in a democracy.⁴ He acknowledged Nepal's right to protect its citizens

and institutions from terrorist attacks. The Bush administration supported imposition of emergency as well as Nepal's army action against Maoist. Mr. Powell assured full US support to Nepal against terrorists and agreed to provide military equipment and training. He committed US dollar 20 million for military purpose.

In February, 2002 Nepalese PM Sher Bahadur Deuba urged international community, particularly US, to help Nepal in its fight against terrorism. He said "I believe that the international coalition must address all forms of terrorism. We appeal for aid in our fight against terrorism in Nepal."⁵ To muster further US support, Prime Minister Deuba visited Washington in May 2002. There he held discussion with President George Bush, National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice and members of US Congress. Mr. Deuba's sole objective behind the visit was to seek US military aid to crush Maoist insurgency in Nepal.⁶

In 2002 Maoist attacked several towns and police posts in western Nepal. Micheal Milinoski, the American Ambassador to Nepal visited the site of the attack and condemned violence. He compared Maoist with terrorist organizations such as Khme Rouge and Al-Qaida.⁷ On September 5, 2002 State department official while delivering a lecture at US Institute of Peace said, "Nepal continued to confront a violent Maoist insurgency which had left over 4000 dead. The Maoist had employed ruthless tactics in the field and conducted terrorist attacks against both government and innocent civilians". At this stage Washington Nepal government's tough actions against Maoists saying Nepal Government was duty bound to protect its citizens within the framework of its constitution. Regarding US economic assistance to end violence in Nepal, American Ambassdor said: "The United States is finalizing plans for assistance as part of an international response to end the brutal conflict and help bring peace to Nepal. Our programmes are intended to facilitate the government efforts both to restore the security and to focus on development and poverty reduction.....All must work to find the common ground on which to began rebuilding what the Maoists have destroyed. We can assist in that reconstruction by continuing to aid Nepal's economic development".⁸

In October 2002, the Bush administration stated that it did not want to see the Maoists prevail in Nepal.⁹ It accused them of destroying schools, torturing, killing civilians and bombings. In 2002 a US Special Forces team visited area of Western Nepal where the Maoist had been active. Their purpose was not just to boost the morale of Nepalese army but help them prepare a proper strategy to defeat Maoists. Testifying before House International Relations Committee on March 20th 2003, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Christina put the US Maoist policy as: "Nepal's democracy, stability and its economic and social development are now threatened by a ruthless Maoist insurgency. The Maoist leadership has made it clear that its ultimate aim is to establish communist regime. Such development could contribute significantly to instability in region.....our support for settlement has led us to increase our development assistance to \$38 million requested in the President's FY 04 budget an all time high and to restructure our programmes better to address the economic causes of the insurgency."¹⁰

In a bilateral purchase deal, the US provided a consignment of 5000 US made M.-16 rifles to Nepal in early months of 2003.¹¹ These weapons were expected to enhance significantly Nepal's anti-insurgency capabilities. The US supply of arms and military training was deeply resented by Maoist leaders. In April 25, 2003 Nepal and US signed a Memorandum of Intent (MoI) under its Anti Terrorism Assistance Programme. The cooperation was basically designed to enhance the anti-terrorism skill of the country concern by providing training equipment necessary to counter terrorist threats.¹² In year 2000 and 2003 over 200 Nepali officials from police and army received training in several specialized areas both in Nepal and US under the programme. In September 2003, 50 US Special Forces began providing training to quarter of Nepalese army through a three month long programme in counter insurgency.¹³ In Financial Year 2006, US executive request proposes an increase from \$ 1488,000 to \$4, 000,000 for Forein Military Financing (FMF) for Nepal and stable \$ 650,000 for IMET and training for Nepal. High priority items for FMF assistance to the Royal Nepal Army included small arms, grenade launchers, night vision goggles, body armour, communications equipment and mobility plateforms.¹⁴

Overall it can be said that US wanted to strengthen Himalyan Kingdom to prevent Maoist takeover and for achieving that goal it provided diplomatic, financial and military assistance to Nepal. Washington's efforts to stop Maoist influence was in consonance with its policy of democracy promotion in South Asia.

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