

Political Situation Update

Internal Democracy in Nepali Parties

Leadership and Decision-Making Practices

No. 18 | September 2025

DEMOCRACY

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Phone: 01-5902286

Email: info@democracyresource.org

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SUMMARY

Political parties are essential for democracy. In Nepal, they have been crucial in creating the democratic system. They are also primarily responsible for institutionalizing democracy in the country. For parties to succeed and strengthen democracy, they must be built on clear principles, strong organization, and good leadership. Most importantly, they must practice democracy internally.

The internal workings of Nepali political parties are supposed to be guided by the Constitution, the Political Parties Act 2017, and each party's own statute. According to these rules, parties should form their central committees through general conventions, which are meant to make key decisions. In practice, however, this process is complicated. The type of representatives at the convention and the leaders they choose depends on the party's internal power dynamics. Those who already gained leadership positions get significant advantages, like appointing for public positions, influencing internal elections within the party, and choosing candidates for local municipalities, provincial assemblies and federal parliament elections. This makes it easy for them to stay in power. Consequently, the central committees often fail to represent Nepal's diverse society.

Furthermore, these central committees are often made very large. They meet less frequently due to the large size and lack of motivation of the party's senior leaders for that. Instead, real decision-making power is concentrated in a small group around the top leaders, or even in the hands of a single leader. The large central committee is then just asked to approve these decisions later. This practice has become common, weakening the central committee's role. Overall, internal democracy within parties is now in serious danger.

1. INTRODUCTION

In most countries, political parties serve as a bridge between the state and the people and are central to governing the state. Principles, organization, and leadership make a party strong and successful. Parties are also a key means of institutionalizing democracy, but this requires robust internal democracy. Several factors influence a party's internal democracy. A party that ensures broad participation of its members, gives them a decisive role in policymaking, decision-making, and leadership selection, and conducts periodic leadership elections is generally considered to have strong internal democracy. In addition, transparency and inclusiveness in candidate selection for public office and in the management of party funds are crucial for strengthening internal democracy.

In Nepal, legal provisions guide the political parties to select the leadership through democratic methods and procedures. Parties are supposed to choose leaders and approve party policies and plans through a general convention. They have also ensured rules in their statutes to follow democratic practices. However, these rules are not fully implemented. There are significant internal issues and challenges in the process of leadership selection. Despite holding a general convention due to the mandatory provisions in the constitution, the parties are often criticized for being illiberal and resisting the transfer of leadership. This Political Situation Analysis seeks to assess internal democracy within parties by examining their leadership selection processes and practices.¹ It basically

¹ Though issues such as inclusion, financial transparency also help to gauge the internal democracy in the political parties, these have not been dealt with here. Democracy Resource

describes the process of forming a central committee and evaluates its level of activity.

Based on the number of seats secured in the House of Representatives election 2022, the three parties namely Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) [CPN (UML)], and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) [CPN (Maoist Centre)] are considered major. These three parties have been included in this study. However, other parties have also been mentioned where relevant. For this political analysis, the parties' statutes and other previously published materials were studied, and conversations were held with some party leaders.

Center Nepal (DRCN) has already published two separate Political Situation Updates on Financial Transparency of Political Parties and Weak Representation of Youth in Nepali Politics. See 1) DRCN. 2024. Financial Transparency in Political Parties. *Political Situation Analysis*, 14. Available at https://www.democracyresource.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/DRCN-PSU-14-Financial-Transparency-in-Political-Parties_in-Nepal-English-Version-November-2024.pdf and 2) DRCN. 2025. Participation of Youths in Nepali Politics: Practices and Challenges. *Political Situation Analysis*, 16. Available at <https://www.democracyresource.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/DRCN-PSU-16-Participation-of-Youths-in-Nepali-Politics-Practices-and-Challenges-English-Version-June-2025-1.pdf>.

2. GENERAL CONVENTION

Article 269 of the Constitution of Nepal contains a clause related to political parties. It states that the statute of a party must have a provision for the election of each office bearer at the federal and provincial levels at least once every five years. However, it also mentions that the statute of the political party may allow such elections to be conducted within six months even after five years if special circumstances arise and the election of the central committee cannot be held within the given time. The Political Parties Act, 2017 stipulates that when conducting elections, nominations, or appointments to party committees, participation must be ensured on the basis of the principle of proportional inclusion, so as to reflect Nepal's social diversity. Regarding women's participation, it mandates a minimum of one-third representation. The Act further requires parties to submit details of their elected central and provincial committees to the Election Commission of Nepal, which is also empowered to monitor whether the central and provincial committees of parties have fulfilled the necessary procedures.

In accordance with these legal provisions, parties have specified in their statutes the time frame for holding general conventions. The statute of the Nepali Congress provides for a general convention every four years (see Table 1), with a provision allowing an extension of up to one year in special circumstances. The statute of the CPN (UML) states that a general convention shall be held every five years. Similarly, the statute of the CPN (Maoist Centre) also requires a general convention every five years, with an additional provision allowing the central committee to postpone the date by up to six months, with justification, in special circumstances.

Although the statutes of these parties require general conventions on a set schedule, this rule is often broken. Party leaders tend to wait for a convenient time and manipulate representatives selection by delaying the general convention. By not holding the convention on time, the party leadership extends its term without hesitation even in normal circumstances by exercising the special rights provided in the statute. For example, the Nepali Congress statute required its 14th general convention after four years of the 13th, i.e. by March 2020. However, it held this convention only after five years and nine months, thereby exceeding both the statutory provision and the constitutional deadline.² The party postponed its national convention four times. Furthermore, Chairperson Sher Bahadur Deuba used a special constitutional provision to extend his term, even though no specific situation existed.³ Even though the general convention provides a unique opportunity for democratic practice, the top leadership has turned it into a tool to approve their own continuation. As a result, the parties have become puppets of their leaders instead of legitimate institutions.

Table 1: Provisions in Party Statutes Regarding Central Committees

Party	Number of Members	Term Duration	Extension Period in Special Circumstances	Frequency of Meetings
Nepali Congress	167	4 years	1 year	Once every 2 months
CPN (UML)	301	5 years	Not specified	Once every 6 months
CPN (Maoist Centre)	199	5 years	6 months	Not specified

Source: Statutes of the respective parties.

² BBC Nepali. 2021. Nepali Congress's General Convention Started after 5 Years 9 Months (in Nepali). December 10. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/nepali/news-59604065>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

³ Dahal, Mani. 2021. Major Parties in the Rush of General Convention (in Nepali). *Kantipur*, September 27. Available at <https://ekantipur.com/news/2021/09/27/163273333625659554.html>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

According to its statute, CPN (UML) must hold its 11th convention in November, 2026. However, because the party is completely focused on its "Mission 2027" (election strategy), there is confusion within the party about whether the convention will be held before that or not. When Madhav Kumar Nepal had a strong influence in the party, the current chairperson, KP Sharma Oli, strongly advocated for making the party democratic and implementing a collective leadership system. He played a major role in establishing a rule in the CPN (UML) statute that sets an age limit of 70 and a rule that a chairperson cannot serve for more than two terms. At that time, he was not in the top leadership; he was only 60 years old and an aspiring candidate for chairperson, not the actual one. But now, he is trying to dismantle the very rules he introduced to give the party democratic energy and is becoming undemocratic himself.⁴

The statute is being amended to remove these rules specifically for Oli's benefit. After former President Bidya Bhandari showed interest in taking a leadership role in the party, she was blocked at a statute convention in September 2025. Because Karna Thapa, a member of the standing committee, supported Bhandari, Chairperson Oli did not allow him to express a dissenting vote at that convention.⁵ This move by Oli has completely violated Article 77 of the CPN (UML) statute, which guarantees the right to a dissenting opinion without discrimination.

Although the general convention should have an intensive discussion on policies and principles, maximum attention of the delegates of the general convention focuses on the selection of leadership. Keeping this fact in mind, parties such as the CPN (UML), the CPN (Maoist Center), the Janata Samajwadi Party Nepal, etc. have made arrangements in their

⁴ Dhakal, Ameet. 2025. Untold matter by Deuba to Oli (in Nepali). *Setopati*, July 20. Available at <https://www.setopati.com/opinion/364558>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

⁵ BC, Ganga. 2025. Why Oli is Demolishing the Democratic System He Himself Established? (in Nepali). *Kantipur*, September 6. Available at <https://ekantipur.com/news/2025/09/06/oli-destroying-the-democratization-system-of-the-party-he-established-himself-48-30.html>; accessed on September 6, 2025.

constitution to separate the statutory convention and the general convention to select leadership. However, due to personal politics, even the statutory convention has become a place for practicing leadership selection.

3. CENTRAL COMMITTEE: INCREASING SIZE, 'DECREASING' RESPONSIBILITY

In countries with advanced democratic practices, party central committees are typically small. In contrast, Nepal has moved in the opposite direction. The central committees, which were previously formed in small sizes, have expanded significantly. Political analyst Jhalak Subedi observes that their size fluctuates mainly to accommodate various interest groups within the parties, which has ultimately weakened their effectiveness.⁶ One major reason for the expansion is the push for inclusiveness.

Until the 2006 movement, central committees were mainly occupied by a dominant caste group, but growing pressure for broader representation led to the creation of additional positions. Instead of restructuring to ensure both inclusiveness and efficiency, parties retained the traditional elites while adding new seats for underrepresented groups. As a result, central committees became increasingly large, since the dominant class was unwilling to reduce its share.

There are many examples of the central committee being expanded when a party splits or unites. Particularly, it is found that the central committee is stretched or shrunk to suit the convenience of the leadership. When the then Chairperson of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) and Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli dissolved the parliament in 2020, the

⁶ Subedi, Jhalak. 2025. Incidents Says- Central Committees are Being Weaker (in Nepali). *Onlinekhabar*, July 11. Available at <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2025/07/1720536/events-say-the-central-committee-is-becoming-weak>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

Madhav Kumar Nepal faction was prepared to split the party. At that time, to bring many members to his side and to appease many, Oli increased the number of members in the Central Committee to 1,501.⁷

Around 2015, some top leaders of CPN (Maoist) abandoned the party and formed separate parties. To save the party from splitting, the number of Central Committee members was increased. Later, on May 19, 2016, after the unity between the Maoist factions, CPN (Maoist Centre) was formed. At that time, by incorporating all the central committee members from the various parties, the number of Central Committee members of CPN (Maoist Centre) reached four thousand.⁸ Although the new statute stipulates a 199-member Central Committee, currently, according to the party's website, a 408-member Central Committee is active.

The Nepali Congress, the CPN (UML) and the CPN (Maoist Centre) grew out of underground political backgrounds and have went through a harsh history of organization building. In the past, their central committees were small and compact. Decisions were made through collective discussions and all members had equal ownership. In recent times, due to various reasons, the central committees have become large. It is difficult to hold meetings, and many members do not get a chance to express their opinions in the meetings.⁹ Meetings last for a couple of days and they are held only after long intervals. For example, the statute of the Nepali Congress requires central committee meetings at least once every two

⁷ Onlinekhabar. 2021. The Number of Central Committee Members of Oli Group has Become 1501 (in Nepali). January 11. Available at <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2021/01/922786>; accessed on July 22, 2025.

⁸ Rai, Saindra. 2025. There might be Innumerable Central Committee Members in CPN (Maoist Center) (in Nepali). *Onlinekhabar*, June 13. Available at <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2025/06/1701593/numerous-central-members-can-become-members-of-the-maoists>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

⁹ Subedi, Binu. 2025. Central Committees Used to Be Decisive, But Became Weaker Now a Days (in Nepali). *Onlinekhabar*, July 11. Available at <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2025/07/1720523/the-central-committee-used-to-be-the-deciding-factor-but-now-it-is-innocent>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

months, but in practice, meetings are held only once or twice a year.¹⁰ Such committees are becoming symbolic, like the tusks of elephants. They act as a ‘rubber stamp’ to validate the decisions made by the leadership, putting the party’s internal democracy at risk.

In addition to the central committee, leftist parties have a standing committee and a politburo, while the Nepali Congress has a performance committee. However, even these smaller committees are often bypassed. Most decisions are made by the chairperson and a few close members. Thus, although parties have laws and regulations, in reality they are being shaped to suit the leader’s convenience.¹¹

¹⁰ Nagarik. 2023. Nepali Congress Holds Meeting after a Year (in Nepali). July 5. Available at <https://nagariknews.nagariknetwork.com/politics/1226391-1688607089.html>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

¹¹ Poudel, Kiran. 2023. Parties Became Company of Leaders: Question Raised against the Significance of General Convention (in Nepali). *Himal Press*, May 16. Available at <https://himalpress.com/2025/05/221446/>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

4. LEADERSHIP SELECTION PROCESS

Political parties have made provision for elections in their statutes to make the leadership selection process democratic. The general convention plays a role in selecting the central leadership. Although the statutes mention that all processes should be democratic, there are many examples of negligence in implementation. While going through internal discord, groupism and other adverse situations, there is a tendency for top leaders to violate democratic norms in the name of unity and consensus and read the names of people who will be included in the central committee from their pockets and approve them through the general convention. In some parties, it is also seen that the old top leaders are taking responsibility, saying that the new generation is not ready for leadership.¹²

KP Sharma Oli, who elected most of the office bearers and central committee members unopposed at the 10th General Convention in November 2021, had also encouraged to elect the leadership unanimously in most of the districts at the district convention held immediately thereafter. However, his efforts to select the leadership unanimously in the provinces did not bear fruit. At first, the Lumbini Province went through voting for selecting the leadership and later other provinces also followed this. Contrary to the call made by Chairperson KP Sharma Oli for the

¹² Pokharel, Ishwari Prasad. 2022. Political Parties and Practice of Leadership Selection (in Nepali). *Safal Awaj*, January 2. Available at <https://safalawaj.com/2022/01/02/55750/>; accessed on April 2, 2025.

selection of the leadership unanimously, the four provincial committees selected the leadership through elections.¹³

CPN (Maoist Center) had started some attempts to elect leaders by vote for the first time in its 8th convention.¹⁴ Before this, the leadership selection process was mainly done through closed-door meetings and internal discussions. Chairperson Pushpa Kamal Dahal has managed to stay in leadership uninterrupted for over three decades simply because he was always chosen by unanimous applause, without any real election.¹⁵

In its first statute convention in March 2024, the party discussed making the leadership selection process more transparent and democratic. They discussed about using a system of open and proportional representation to directly elect leaders.¹⁶ The new party statute has a clause that committees at the local, province, and central levels should be elected. Then, those elected committees will choose the office-bearers. It states that after the central committee is elected, that committee itself will elect the main leaders (office-bearers). Even before that convention, some leaders within CPN (Maoist Centre) had expressed that the common practice of electing leadership through votes might not be the best method.¹⁷

The process of holding local to national level conventions and general assemblies at fixed times has established a democratic system within the

¹³ Makalukhabar. 2021. UML in History: How it Born? Who were in the Leadership? (in Nepali). November 22. Available at <https://www.makalukhabar.com/2021/11/99977136556/>; accessed on April 2, 2025

¹⁴ Nepallive. 2022. Voting Process Started in Maoists, Voter Roll Published (in Nepali). January 1, Available at <https://nepallive.com/story/269238>; accessed on March 31, 2025.

¹⁵ Tamang, Jung. 2024. A Shocking Opinion for Prachanda: Is Prachanda Ready to Contest the Election and Become the President? (in Nepali). *Shilapatra*, February 12. Available at <https://shilapatra.com/detail/130514>; accessed on March 31, 2025.

¹⁶ Shahi, Dipesh. 2024. Direct Election for Leadership Selection in Moists (in Nepali). *Onlinekhabar*, February 13. Available at <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2024/02/1434478/>; accessed on April 3, 2025.

¹⁷ Janaaastha. 2021. Leadership Selection: Maoists, UML, Congress, RPP - Who is Right? (in Nepali). December 26. Available at <https://www.janaaastha.com/story/68873/>; accessed on April 2, 2025.

parties. This has started the practice of encouraging debate and discussion among supporters and workers about leadership selection. Suresh Nepal, a central committee member of CPN (UML), explained that the party's internal rules allow for decision-making through unanimous agreement or, if that fails, through an election and hence the members play a main role in choosing leaders. He stated that the party always tries to find a consensus as much as possible.¹⁸

The statutes of these parties also give priority to the principle of proportional inclusion, making provisions for the representation of women, Dalits, indigenous peoples, Madhesis, Tharus, Muslims, and people from backward regions, which is another positive aspect. However, the level of inclusivity within the parties still cannot be considered satisfactory.¹⁹ The top positions in the parties are still dominated by the same old faces from dominant groups, and because they seem to treat inclusivity as a burden, it has become merely a technical topic.²⁰ The lack of diversity among the central committee office-bearers is proof that the top leaders have not truly embraced the provisions of the constitution and relevant laws. For example, in CPN (Maoist Centre)'s 22 office-bearers, Pampha Bhusal is the only woman; in the Nepali Congress's 14 office-bearers, Mahalakshmi Upadhyay Dina is the only woman; and in CPN (UML)'s 18 office-bearer positions, there are only two women: Ashtalaxmi Shakya and Padma Aryal.

¹⁸ Conversation with Nepal on April 7, 2025.

¹⁹ Pariyar, Santosh. 2022. Democracy Building through Inclusion. In *Rooting Nepal's Democratic Spirit*, Chandra Dev Bhatta, ed. pp 125-134. Kathmandu: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Nepal Office.

²⁰ Rijal, Mukti Ram. Ashok Pandey, Arjun Kumar Thapa and Gopal Acharya. 2080 BS. *Role of Political Parties for Institutional Development of Democracy* (in Nepali). Kathmandu: Policy Research Institute.

5. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

A large central committee is supposed to represent many people, and this could be considered the beauty of democracy. But in practice, this is not the case. Because the committees are so large, important decisions are often made by the top leadership without regular meetings. The central committee has become only a place to approve decisions already made by the top leaders and office bearers. In many cases, major decisions are taken directly by the party chairperson. For example, the alliance agreement between the Nepali Congress and the CPN (UML) to run the government was made by the two chairmen without informing other members.²¹

Similarly, the decision that Min Bahadur Gurung, the owner of Bhatbhateni Supermarket, would build an office for the CPN (UML) was known only to the chairperson. He merely told the secretariat that a donor was constructing a central office.²² Recently, decisions such as no need of the resignation of Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak over the visit visa issue and the extension of terms for sister organizations were also made without the knowledge of central committee members, during a meeting

²¹ Kantipur. 2024. Congress-UML Agree to Form Ruling Coalition, Oli and Deuba Take Turns as Prime Minister (in Nepali). July 1. Available at <https://ekantipur.com/news/2024/07/01/an-agreement-to-form-a-power-alliance-between-congress-and-uml-35-38.html>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

²² Subedi, Binu. 2024. Oli did not Reveal the Name of Min Bahadur Gurung, Saying that the Land was Acquired from a Donor (in Nepali). *Setopati*, October 15. Available at <https://www.setopati.com/politics/341555>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

at the residence of Nepali Congress Chairperson Sher Bahadur Deuba in Budhanilkantha.²³

According to Janardan Sharma, Deputy General Secretary of the CPN (Maoist Centre), centralism dominates all parties. Since one leader is supreme, democracy inside parties has shrunk and autocratic practices have flourished.²⁴ Democracy can be real only when all members feel equal. But the feeling of hierarchy is widespread in the parties. Political analyst Hari Sharma argues that the problem lies in the mindset of party members, who see themselves as cadres rather than members.²⁵ In his view, members belong to the organization, while cadres belong to a leader, serving him personally and unquestioningly. As a result, central committee members and cadres are forced to silently tolerate the wrong actions of the top leadership. The leadership has become the center of power in the political system. Their approval is needed not only for government appointments, election tickets, and internal party elections, but even for the allocation of the government budget. No one dares to oppose them. Overall, the decision-making process of parties has become extremely undemocratic, as individuals dominate over the central committee.

²³ Acharya, Roman. 2025. Chairperson's rule in Congress, Ignoring the Statute (in Nepali). *Nepalnews*, August 23. Available at <https://nepalnews.com/2025/08/23/presidents-rule-in-congress-flouting-the-constitution/>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

²⁴ Setopati. 2025. Janardan Opens Fire: There is no Democracy in the Parties, There is Autocracy (in Nepali). July 22. Available at <https://www.setopati.com/politics/364813>; accessed on July 22, 2025.

²⁵ Sharma, Hari. 2025. Committees Became Weaker as Party Members Became Cadre (in Nepali). *Onlinekhabar*, July 11. Available at <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2025/07/1720546/committees-are-weak-when-party-members-become-activists>; accessed on July 21, 2025.

6. CHALLENGES TO INTERNAL DEMOCRACY

Top leaders of Nepal's political parties frequently assert that their organizations are democratic. Yet, weak internal democracy has led to recurring allegations of opaque and biased leadership selection. While party conventions are formally tasked with choosing leadership through established rules and procedures, the process in practice is far from transparent or straightforward. Critical decisions—such as the allocation of election tickets and public appointments—are often concentrated in the hands of top leaders, reinforcing a network of vested interests. Individuals who challenge this authority risk marginalization and eventual exclusion. Consequently, party leadership has long remained dominated by a small circle of individuals, with selection processes shaped by nepotism and factional interests. Discontent over leadership selection has not only been widespread within parties but has also led, in many cases, to party divisions.

A common tendency across all parties is for senior leaders to hold on to positions while resisting opportunities for new leaders to emerge. As a result, leadership selection has become increasingly contentious, shaped by internal rivalries, factionalism, and power struggles. Nepali Congress leader Mahesh Acharya has noted that factional competition is evident from the local level to the center, adding that the electoral system itself should be reviewed to curb this trend.²⁶ This problem is not limited to the Nepali Congress. Political scientist Chandra Dev Bhatta argues that since

²⁶ Dhaulakoti, Parkash. 2021. 'Faction' Became the Main Basis for Selecting Leadership, While Policies and Ideas Became Secondary (in Nepali). *Kantipur*, November 19. Available at <https://ekantipur.com/Interview/2021/11/19/163725189495588819.html>; accessed on April 6, 2025.

parties have been selecting leadership in a ritualistic manner, it will not be easy to steer future politics in this way.²⁷ Ideology, policies, contributions, and capabilities are the qualities that should define leadership. In practice, however, proximity to the top leader has become the main criterion for selection. To address this, reforms are needed in party organization, membership distribution, and the leadership selection process. Professor Krishna Khanal emphasizes that while some legislative amendments can help, the most important task is to institutionalize internal democracy and foster democratic political traditions within parties.²⁸

Party leadership has often been accused of making decisions and plans driven by personal interests while excluding youth from the decision-making process. Leadership transitions have also been problematic, as parties have struggled to adapt to changing circumstances. Although general conventions are held in line with constitutional and legal requirements, the same figures have continued to dominate leadership positions for years. For instance, Sher Bahadur Deuba in the Nepali Congress, KP Sharma Oli in the CPN (UML), and Pushpa Kamal Dahal in the CPN (Maoist Center) have remained at the helm for a prolonged period.

There are also numerous examples of party leadership resorting to undemocratic practices to silence dissenting voices. The CPN (UML), for instance, expelled Bhim Rawal from its membership and suspended Binda Pandey and Usha Kiran Timilsina for six months, while the Rastriya Swatantra Party expelled Mukul Dhakal.²⁹ The Nepali Congress recently

²⁷ Kantipur. 2021. Parties have Become Corporate, and Leadership Selection has Turned Ritualistic. Available at <https://ekantipur.com/Interview/2021/11/21/163749856453989340.html>; accessed on April 2, 2025.

²⁸ Khanal, Krishna. 2024. Politics Needs to be Improved First (in Nepali). *Kantipur*, September 5. Available at <https://ekantipur.com/opinion/2024/09/05/the-first-thing-that-needs-to-be-reformed-is-politics-52-21.html>; accessed on April 5, 2025.

²⁹ Setopati. 2024. Rashtriya Swatantra Party Takes Action against Mukul Dhakal: Decision to Remove Him from the Posts of General Secretary, Spokesperson and Central Member (in Nepali). July 21. Available at <https://www.setopati.com/politics/333847>; accessed on July 22, 2025.

took action against 23 leaders for not supporting the party's or its alliance candidates in the 2022 elections.³⁰ Similar disputes have also emerged within the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), the Nagarik Unmukti Party, and the Rastriya Swatantra Party.

In the RPP, figures such as Dhawal Shamsher, Mukund Shyam Giri, and Sagun Lawati have been relieved of their responsibilities.³¹ In June 2025, General Secretary Dhawal Shamsher Rana was removed from his role as Head of the Organization Department, Sagun Lawati from Party Spokesperson, and Central Committee Member, Dhansur Shahi from Member Secretary of the Organization Coordination Department, in violation of the party statute. In protest, Senior Vice Chair Bikram Pandey, Vice Chair Mukund Shyam Giri, and General Secretaries Dhawal Shamsher Rana and Kunti Shahi issued a joint statement.³² Some of these actions may have been carried out through central committee meetings, and others through the Disciplinary Committee. However, most were aimed at suppressing dissenting voices.

Cadres are being instructed to conceal mistakes, while promising young members are expelled on one pretext or another.³³ Even in communist parties, a Politburo is established. These parties claim to follow democratic centralism. In principle, the party chairperson should not have the freedom to make arbitrary decisions. Decisions should be made by consensus through democratic processes, or otherwise based on

³⁰ Nepal Press. 2025. Former Minister Kumar Khadka Expelled from Nepali Congress as an Ordinary Member (in Nepali). July 9. Available at <https://nepaldut.com/2025/07/09/75741/>; accessed on July 23, 2025.

³¹ Newspolar. 2025. Series of Actions in RPP: Why Was Mukund Shyam Removed? (in Nepali). July 17. Available at <https://newspolar.com/archives/354649>; accessed on July 23, 2025.

³² Setopati. 2025. RPP Leaders' Statement Targeting Lingden: Arbitrary Decisions Have Harmed the Party (in Nepali). July 17. Available at: <https://www.setopati.com/politics/364411>; accessed on July 22, 2025.

³³ Vastavik, Dhanraj. 2024. The Need for Political Leadership Change (in Nepali). *Drishhti News*, June 7. Available at <https://www.drishtinews.com/archives/324358>; accessed on March 25, 2025.

majority vote. However, in practice, Professor Krishna Khanal notes that the Politburo intervenes over the Central Committee, the Secretariat over the Politburo, the Standing Committee over the Secretariat, and ultimately, the Chairperson exerts influence throughout the hierarchy.³⁴

There is no alternative to embracing democratic practices to make leadership selection processes in parties transparent and inclusive. Nepal's political history, which has repeatedly raised and dashed public expectations in the name of change, now makes it imperative to deliver result-oriented politics and accountable leadership. Only such leadership can address the real problems of society and pave the way for long-term prosperity.³⁵

³⁴ Khanal, Krishna. 2019. Internal Democracy within Parties. *Shilapatra*, June 18. Available at <https://shilapatra.com/detail/7270>; accessed on July 18, 2025.

³⁵ Chapagai, Ravi. 2024. The Need for Change in Nepali Politics. *Sajhapana*, December 26. Available at <https://www.sajhapana.com/view-thought/81936/>; accessed on April 2, 2025.

7. CONCLUSION

Political parties are the principal carriers of democracy. They are serving as a vital bridge between the state and the people. Their loyalty, sacrifice, and dedication throughout Nepal's democratic movement remain exemplary. Today, the pressing challenge is to institutionalize democracy. The political parties bear the central responsibility in this endeavor. However, for parties to lead this important campaign, they themselves must embody democratic values. In Nepal, internal party democracy remains weak. Leadership selection in general conventions often reflects entrenched power structures. Those in positions of power tend to dominate, ensuring their continued control. Consequently, parties have fostered a culture where individual leaders hold supremacy over the central committee. This concentration of power has overshadowed the very essence of party democracy.

The leadership of a political party is more than just a position, it carries the responsibility of guiding the country's democratic practices and society toward positive change. It is therefore the duty of parties and their members to ensure that responsible and thoughtful individuals are elevated to leadership through fair methods and procedures. For parties to chart a new direction, the leadership process must be not only theoretical but also practically democratic, transparent, and effective. In times of leadership transition, statutes and policies should be updated in line with contemporary needs, free from personal interests. Attempting to run the party in outdated ways while disregarding progressive reforms risks creating another form of authoritarianism.

When internal democracy is weak, the gap between leaders and supporters widens, ultimately undermining the strength and credibility of the party. It reduces the motivation of party members, ultimately increasing the risk of losing trust and faith in the party. The lack of accountability and transparency also weakens members' sense of ownership. This, in turn, alienates voters. If internal democracy is weak in only one party, voters may still find an alternative. But if most parties face the same problem, there is a risk of disillusionment with political parties and even with the entire multiparty system. Therefore, it is essential for parties to engage in timely reflection and deliberation and to steer themselves firmly in a democratic direction.

Founded in 2014, Democracy Resource Center Nepal (DRCN) is a national non-governmental organization dedicated to the study and research of social and political issues. Since its establishment, DRCN has consistently undertaken in-depth and evidence-based research into various aspects of Nepal's transitional political landscape, including the implementation of federalism, local-level restructuring, and election observation. The outcomes of these studies are shared with stakeholders, fostering discussions and debates. DRCN's overarching objective revolves around advancing efficient governance within Nepal's federal framework through these rigorous research endeavors and thoughtful discourse.



Democracy Resource Center Nepal

Lalitpur, Nepal

Tel: +977-1-5902286

info@democracyresource.org

<https://www.democracyresource.org/>