

Factionalism in the Nepali Communist Movement: An Epistemological Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates factionalism and ideological rift within the Nepali Communist Movement from an epistemological outlook, situating the production, legitimation, and disputation of knowledge at the center of repeated divergency. Based on Marxist epistemology, the study shows that disputes were neither organizational nor interpersonal conflicts but disputes about legitimate meanings of revolutionary theory, strategy, and practice. The influence of external ideological models, particularly the Chinese Communist Party and the USSR, intermingled with native socio-cultural realities to generate epistemic pluralism and disputed truths. Authority based on leadership, cadres' practical knowledge, and international precedents combined to shape factional alignment, demonstrating the inseparable dyad of power and knowledge. Through the combination of archival sources, oral accounts, and academic critique, the study reveals that factionalism is a structural epistemological feature: competing claims to truth, validity and ideological correctness. Insight into these mechanisms offers a refined paradigm for the reading of intra-party divisions and presents a compelling account for the interrelation between the production of knowledge and political fragmentation in South Asian communist movements.

KEYWORDS: Epistemology, factionalism, ideological rift, Nepali Communist Movement, party-level knowledge

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INTRODUCTION

Epistemology, philosophical study of knowledge, examines the sources, nature, and justification of what is assumed to be true. As Dybjer, Lindström, Palmgren, and Sundholm (2012) argue, it investigates how knowledge is achieved, and how its novelty, and its inherent limitations revealed. Epistemology within the Nepali communist movement transcends abstract theorization, and is inextricably linked with practical processes. The awareness that the party operates in the interest of the working class is not 'immediately imbibed' but evolves over time through party initiation, organizational participation, and ideological commitment. Progressive assumption of responsibility for the organization, construction of movement consciousness, and realization of historical objectives cumulatively constitute the organizational and ideological epistemology of Nepal's communist movement.

Schwitzgebel (2021) points out that human consciousness is continuously interpreting and redefining its relation to reality, making the authenticity and objectivity of knowledge always debatable. This can be seen in the Nepali communist movement, where the reinterpretations of social conditions in early party manifestos enabled membership expansion. Yet, because of the limitations of individual and collective knowledge, members at various stages questioned the validity of organizational "truth," sometimes resulting in movement exit. Entry and exit processes can therefore be analyzed epistemologically.

Thagard and Findlay (2010) accentuate the necessity to critically establish the reliability and sufficiency of data in political and social research. The aphorism is particularly relevant to Nepali communist forces, since governing parties utilize epistemic reasons to formulate policies, economic plans, and governance strategies, whereas opposition parties weigh potential implications of parliamentary versus revolutionary approaches. Therefore, the search for truth cannot be divorced from practical consideration, data analysis, and model construction.

Faulkner (2011) further notes that epistemology investigates the connections among knowledge, belief, and justification. The sources of epistemic authority in Nepali communist parties are disparate. Scientific socialist factions draw upon knowledge

Factionalism in the Nepali Communist Movement: An Epistemological Perspective

from Marxist philosophy to guide systematic ideological inquiry, whereas power factions base knowledge on prevailing political practice and strategic opportunism. Such competing epistemic grounds yield competing concepts of truth, thus generating controversy and institutional factionalism.

This perspective brings to relief an axial question: How is truth ascertained and confirmed? This epistemological inquiry is the substance of long-standing controversies and cleavages in Nepal's communist movement. Although extant literature has predominantly accounted for factionalism in terms of organizational ineptitude, ideological bewilderment, or power struggles, the present study approaches the phenomenon from an epistemological perspective, offering a fresh conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of knowledge, authority, and cleavage in the movement.

Ever since its establishment in 1949, the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) has been beset by long-standing factionalism and internal conflicts. Ideological disagreements, organizational weaknesses, and personal rivalries among leaders have persistently divided the movement. While previous studies have analyzed these developments primarily from ideological, organizational, or political-behavioral perspectives (Hachhethu, 2002; Lawoti and Pahari, 2010), this study puts the focus on an epistemological reading: How is knowledge formed, contested, and legitimized within the party, and how does this shape frequent internal splits?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current research questions are:

1. How do ideological factors interact with organizational and epistemic dimensions to produce factionalism within the Nepali Communist movement?
2. In what ways do organizational structures and procedures influence the development and persistence of intra-party factions?
3. How does the construction and contestation of knowledge (epistemic dimension) affect factional alignments and disputes?
4. How can the interrelationship among ideological, organizational, and epistemic dimensions explain the dynamics and continuity of factionalism in the party?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The current research will:

1. To examine the epistemological sources of divisions and conflicts within the Nepal Communist movement.
2. To examine leadership understandings, ideological ambiguity, and institutional know-how for their role in factionalism.
3. To examine the influence of internal and external experiences on the construction of knowledge within the party.
4. To provide a comprehensive comprehension of factionalism as an N-dimensional process that includes ideological, organisational, and epistemic dimensions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has a qualitative, interpretive-critical approach to the study of factionalism in the Nepalese Communist Movement from an epistemological perspective. The study is interested in how knowledge is produced, interpreted, and challenged within the party, as well as offering structural or behavioral explanations.

Data Sources

Party Documents. Official reports, resolutions, and plans were analyzed to uncover authorized truths and the mechanisms by which oppositional voices were silenced.

Personal accounts and ideological treatises were analyzed for subjective meanings and claims to legitimacy within intra-fractional struggle.

Oral Histories. Interviews with grassroots activists and cadres provided information on lived experience and the quotidian knowledge of party ideology, with sensitivity to memory distortion and perceptual bias.

Media Reports. Contemporary newspaper, journal, and web-based reports gave instant commentary on party activities, taking note of public opinion and political spin, and being critically evaluated for internal bias.

Scholarly Research. Secondary sources in the shape of scholarly research and historical treatments were synthesized to put factionalism and ideological conflicts into perspective, with an understanding that theorists' and researchers' theoretical and epistemological commitments frame their analysis.

Analytical Techniques

Triangulation among these different sources ensured findings' validity and reliability. In addition, researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout, critically reflecting on how interpretive choices, positionality, and theoretical orientations shape knowledge production analysis, interpretation, as well as factional disputes. This allowed close insight into how epistemological processes underpin recurring splits in the movement.

LITERATURE REVIEW: A MARXIST EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMING

Marxist Epistemology: Foundations and Analytic Scope

Marxist epistemology places the source and justification of knowledge in material circumstances and social practice. Classical Marxist theory asserts that ideas, ideologies, and "truth claims" are derived from class relationships and the historical development of productive forces; knowledge is produced socially and grounded in social interests (Marx & Engels, 2008). Dialectical materialism, as an epistemological approach, emphasizes (a) empirical analysis of class relations, (b) historical-contextual explanation, and (c) critique of ideology as socially functional representation—ideas that legitimize existing power relations. Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Althusser's theory of ideological state apparatuses further clarify how dominant ideas circulate and acquire legitimacy (Gramsci, 1971; Althusser, 1971). Based on this interpretation, factionalism in Nepal's communist movement is not merely elite bickering but a struggle over competing claims to truth based on different material positions, organizational practice, and claims to representing class interests.

Applying Marxist Epistemology to the Nepalese Communist Movement

The Nepal communist movement literature can be interpreted by means of this approach in three senses: Ideological interpretation – what is "correct" Marxism. Organizational practice – how parties translate ideas into strategy. Social base – whose material interests are represented. Giri (2015) plainly maps strategies (electoral struggle vs. armed struggle) onto class and social bases, illustrating that strategic disagreements reflect differences in readings of objective class conditions. Khadka (1995) discusses historic factionalism, highlighting epistemological contest about what constitutes authentic political knowledge. Hachhethu (2006) demonstrates how institutional design and organizational learning decide what knowledge gets routinized, confirming the Marxist view that epistemic authority is institutionally mediated.

Ethnographic and cultural analyses extend this materialist framework to the lived level. Shneiderman (2003) shows how peasants reinterpret Maoist doctrine in terms of local cultural frameworks, pointing to knowledge production "from below." Hutt and Onta (2017) shows how literature and ideological education construct cadre consciousness, pointing out the cultural mediation of knowledge. Comparative and international studies suggest that received models (Soviet, Chinese, Indian) are localised in local contexts or raise epistemic dissonance when copied unselfconsciously (Bownas, 2003; Cailmail and Périer, 2007). This resonates with Althusser's warnings that transnational frameworks are ideological resources whose strategic selective adoption or rejection becomes central to factional struggles.

How Current Work Complies With (or Differs from) Marxist Epistemology

Explicit Marxist compliance: Scholarship marrying social-base analysis and strategic debates—tracing strategy back to class composition (Giri, 2015; Adhikari, 2023)—fully complies with Marxist epistemic reasoning. Institutional and organisational emphasis: Hachhethu (2006) and Baral (1994) emphasize party organisation and leadership. These are consonant with Marxist epistemology but place emphasis on organisational machinery over material bases. Cultural and ethnographic contributions: Shneiderman (2003) and Hutt and Onta (2017) emphasize contradiction between elite doctrinal claims and popular readings, and place emphasis on the agency of subaltern actors in knowledge production. International/ideological influence: Cailmail and Périer, (2007) also identifies how mediating local epistemic regimes with external models creates factional tensions.

Gaps and Opportunities

There are two main gaps from a Marxist epistemological perspective:

Linking epistemic claims to changing class composition over time: Most research examines ideology and strategy in tandem without systematically documenting how changing class structures reshape epistemic claims.

Micro–macro synthesis of knowledge production: While ethnographic accounts document local reinterpretation and institutional research codifies party-level knowledge, few studies have synthesized these levels to illustrate dialectical feedback between party dogma and local practice.

CONCLUSION: ORGANIZING FURTHER RESEARCH WITH A MARXIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Witnessing factionalism from a Marxist epistemic lens rearranges splits as not only organizational failures but also struggles over legitimized knowledge of social reality. Future study should:

Triangulate archival, quantitative social-base, and ethnographic evidence to link material conditions with epistemic claims.

Analyze party pedagogical materials, writings, and training to locate lines of ideological reproduction (Althusserian apparatuses).

Examine how global models are mediated through local contexts rather than blindly replicated.

This approach provides an empirically grounded, theoretically informed account of why knowledge—and not simply power or personalities—has been at the heart of recurrent factionalism in Nepal's communist movement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Epistemology is the philosophical examination of the sources, validity, and authenticity of knowledge (Dybjer et al., 2012). In Nepalese communist movement, sources of truth are complex: scientific socialism, subjective interpretations of leaders, historical experience, and practical politics. Varied sources produce varied truths, which ultimately lead to controversies and divisions.

As posited by Foucault (1980) in *Truth and Power*, truth is not an absolute fact but is entangled with power relations. Along this line of thought, comprehending splits in Nepal involves understanding that at each level, leaders have used power to validate their version of truth.

DISCUSSION

The epistemological dynamics of the Nepalese communist movement show that factionalism and organizational division stem from the tension between objective knowledge and subjective political interpretation. Whereas some factions uphold Marxist–Leninist principles and dialectical materialism as the science of truth, others value most highly leadership-centered interpretations in terms of personal authority, factional loyalty, and political expediency. This dichotomy between scientific investigation and subjective interpretation gives rise to conflicts that over time consolidate into institutional divisions.

Epistemological Challenges

Factionalism within the Nepali communist movement is a result of several epistemic concerns. Firstly, selectivity and partiality in knowledge sources privilege some at the expense of others; leadership declarations and public documents overwhelmingly become constricting of grass-roots realities. Secondly, retrospective interpretation reinterpret historical events through the lens of present political desires, creating justifications for factional loyalties. Thirdly, multiplicity of truth as diverse factions formulate different versions of Marxist–Leninist precepts, revolutionary strategy, and organizational priorities. Finally, unequal valuation of sources causes tension between formal and experiential knowledge, with cadre-level knowledge typically being at odds with official narratives.

Knowledge Dimensions of Factionalism

Factional disputes are also shaped by numerous dimensions of knowledge creation. Ideological difference—differences in meanings attributed to Marxism-Leninism, Maoism, and revolutionary strategy—brought about lasting factionalism (Giri, 2015; Khadka, 1995). Leader-focused truth emerged as charismatic pronouncements were accepted as final truths, shaping factional belonging and strategic choices (Baral, 1994; Ghimire, 2018). World ideological trends, for example, the Sino–Soviet divide, impacted regional epistemic systems, heightening intra-party conflicts (Cailmail and Périer, 2007; Shneiderman, 2003). Experience-based versus institutional knowledge explains how ground-level knowledge often contradicted party theory, creating epistemological conflict (Pokhrel, 2023; Shneiderman, 2003). Finally, organizational knowledge construction determined which claims were verified, affecting internal conflicts (Hachhethu, 2006).

CASE STUDIES: EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF FACTIONALISM

1950s–1960s: Initial Ideological Divisions and Party Congresses. The initial years of the Nepali communist movement were dominated by incessant epistemological disputes. During the prolonged conference at Darbhanga (1960), Mohan Bikram Singh set down guidelines for the Constituent Assembly polls, which received landslide approval. However, ideological divisions continued, mainly between the two factions of Rayamajhi and Pushpalal. The Central Committee led by Rayamajhi did not enforce the directive, even though it was not bound by law to do so in accordance with party bylaws. This is an example of the plurality of sources of knowledge, showing that legitimacy in the party did not solely reside in formal power but was in dispute between rival interpretations.

Rayamajhi's subsequent support for the 1960 royal proclamation led to accusations of royalism, culminating in his expulsion at the Third Party Congress (1962). Even after Tulsilal's National Democracy line was adopted, rival factions accused him of Sovietism or revisionism. The establishment of separate factional headquarters further underscored that emotional, personal, and ideological attachments influenced the acceptance of knowledge.

Epistemological Insights. Credibility and trust in sources: Official statements were insufficient; factional alignments determined what knowledge was authoritative. Multiplicity of truths: The same event spawned rival interpretations, reflecting epistemic contestation. Knowledge–power nexus: Factional power determined which perspectives were implemented and accepted.

Post-1990 Debates: Parliamentary Participation vs. Revolutionary Struggle. Following the restoration of democracy in 1990, intraparty disputes in Nepali communist parties increasingly revolved around the epistemology of strategy. Leadership debates emerged over whether to prioritize parliamentary participation or to persist with revolutionary struggle, in accordance with competing knowledge claims about political legitimacy and correct strategy. Leaders who advocated for parliamentary

participation argued that democratic processes represented a pragmatic and historically justified path, whereas radical forces maintained that revolution remained the only scientifically grounded strategy based on class struggle and dialectical materialism. These differences were not merely tactical; they reflected deep-seated epistemological contention over the generation and validation of knowledge concerning social change.

Epistemological Insights. Ideological range: Different interpretations of Marxism–Leninism and Maoism informed strategic choice. Leader-centered truth: The statements of charismatic leaders had a tendency to become epistemic reference points for factional allegiance. Experiential vs. official knowledge: Knowledge at the cadre level occasionally challenged leadership decrees, generating tension between grassroots understandings and official knowledge.

2020 NCP Division: Leadership Contest and Constitutional Politics. The 2020 divide in the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) illustrates the continued epistemological basis of factionalism in contemporary contexts. The disagreements were centered on leadership contest and constitutional politics, indicating that knowledge contentions were still at the center of factional alignment. Controversies were not limited to organizational or procedural matters; they reflected competing interpretations of party principle, national government, and the legitimate application of Marxist theory in modern Nepal. Leaders cited historical precedent, legal interpretation, and strategic analysis in order to assert epistemic authority. Factional allegiance was often contingent on whose interpretation was accepted as genuine, showing the persistent leader-centered epistemology in internal party unity.

Epistemological Insights. Plurality of truths: Competing claims about constitutional and political strategy reflected opposing epistemic structures. International impact: Global ideological and comparative contexts (world socialist experiences) influenced local interpretations. Knowledge–power nexus: Leadership hegemony expressly decided which interpretations became institutionalized, replicating factional strife.

USSR IMPACT ON FACTIONALISM AND IDEOLOGICAL BREAK

The influence of the USSR on the communist movement in Nepal can be analyzed epistemologically, where factionalism and ideological division are understood as struggles over knowledge, legitimacy, and interpretation of Marxist-Leninist ideals. The Soviet Union, being the global center of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, offered a dominant epistemic order to communist movements worldwide (McLellan, 2007; Service, 2009). To Nepali communists, this external model was a source of ideological legitimacy as well as a standard against which local interpretations of Marxism-Leninism were measured.

Epistemic Divisions and Competing Knowledge Claims. The Sino-Soviet split (1956–1960s) created global fault lines between global communist movements (Westad, 2005). Nepalese communists were epistemically divided along these lines: Soviet-aligning groups emphasized conformity with Moscow interpretations of Marxism-Leninism, emphasizing parliamentary involvement and centralized organizational types (McLellan, 2007). On the other hand, Beijing-or-Maoist sympathetic groups emphasized revolutionary conflict, rural mobilization, and decentralized cadre strategies (Dirlik, 1975). These distinctions were not merely strategic but involved rival epistemic regimes: both actors claimed epistemic authority on proper comprehension and deployment of Marxist-Leninist theory.

Imported Ideology and Local Knowledge Production. The deployment of Soviet models as epistemic reference points was prone to engender conflict with native social, cultural, and economic realities (Althusser, 1971; Gramsci, 1971). Soviet strategies of leadership of industrial proletariat and revolutionary posturing were only partially transferable to Nepal's semi-feudal and agrarian social structure. This epistemological incompatibility contributed to ideological disintegration, whereby leaders and cadres disagreed upon which tactics truly embodied Marxist-Leninist doctrine in Nepali circumstance. Factional disputes then degenerated into epistemological conflicts regarding whose conception of received theory or indigenous creativity was "correct" (Bhattacharya, 2013).

Knowledge–Power Nexus. Groups supportive of the USSR consistently used external validation as an epistemic resource to legitimate claims. Soviet orthodoxy-referencing leaders successfully expressed scientific reality, delegitimizing opponents who had put forward locally interpreted readings (Fukuyama, 2014; Mandel, 1980). This is the epistemological feature of factionalism: power and knowledge were inextricably linked, and legitimacy was not only generated through argument or proof but also by appeal to an authority universally acknowledged.

Strategic and Ideological Consequences. The epistemic hegemony of the USSR generated future factional battles and strategic debates. Parliamentary activism in opposition to revolutionary struggle, centralism in opposition to decentralized cadre self-management, and strict compliance with international versus national revolutionary models were all formulated as conflicts of knowledge (Hobsbawm, 1994; Westad, 2005). These debates bear witness that factionalism was not just a failure of organization but an epistemological struggle concerning what was valid revolutionary knowledge, strategy, and organizational practice.

Implications for Understanding Nepali Communist Factionalism. From an epistemological perspective, USSR influence demonstrates that factionalism and ideological disintegration are structural phenomena arising from contested knowledge creation and interpretation. Foreign epistemic models adopted uncritically may become contradictory to indigenous social realities, producing fragmentation. Local actors' reinterpretations of these models also contribute to multifaceted epistemic claims, resulting in recurring contests over authority, truth, and legitimacy. To grasp factionalism in Nepal, then, is to examine the interaction among imported ideological consciousness, local meaning, and party power relationships (Althusser, 1971; Gramsci, 1971; Mandel, 1980).

CCP influence on Nepali Communist factionalism and ideological rupture

Epistemology, or the knowledge science, deals with how truth is produced, legitimized, and contested. Factionalism and ideological disintegration of the Nepali communist movement are not organizational concerns but epistemological contests—contests over the source and validity of knowledge (Dybjer, Lindström, Palmgren, & Sundholm, 2012; Faulkner, 2011). The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the past shaped Nepali communists' epistemic frameworks, determining their vision of revolutionary strategy, organizational discipline, and ideological orthodoxy.

CCP as a Source of Ideological Knowledge. The CCP is often drawn upon by Nepali communists for models of revolutionary practice, particularly Maoist doctrine of protracted people's war, mass mobilization, and cadre schooling. The CCP provided an epistemological model of knowledge of the nature of change in society, theorizing the "scientific truth" of revolutionary tactics (Dirlik, 1975; Bhattacharya, 2013). For example, the Nepali Maoists adopted CCP-influenced rural mobilization tactics that were epistemically authoritative in the manner that they were viewed as grounded in successful revolutionary praxis.

Epistemic Contestation and Factionalism. However, CCP knowledge importation generated epistemic tension. Different factions read CCP ideology differently: some emphasized rural revolutionary struggle as the primary path, while others concentrated on urban political activism and parliamentary participation. These epistemic disputes about appropriate CCP principle application created splits, as every faction legitimized itself in terms of their "loyal" devotion to Maoist knowledges (Cailmail and Périer, 2007; Shneiderman, 2003). For instance, the call for armed struggle during the 1990s and early 2000s was premised on CCP epistemic legitimacy regarding issues of revolutionary necessity. Factions that were critical of this approach were accused of revisionism or ideological drift, highlighting the fact that factionalism was a struggle for knowledge itself rather than power (Giri, 2015).

CCP Influence on Organizational Epistemology. CCP emphasis on cadre education, discipline, and centralised decision-making shaped Nepali communist leaders' evaluation of knowledge claims. Leadership-based epistemology ensued, where ideologically educated or charismatic leaders were considered epistemic authorities, copying CCP practice (Gramsci, 1971; Althusser, 1971). Centralised epistemic authority solidified factional strife: factional struggles over whose reading matched CCP orthodoxy became the main source of splits (Hachhethu, 2006).

International Ideological Mediation. The Sino-Soviet division complicated the epistemic landscape further. Nepali communists were forced to choose between Soviet or Chinese versions of socialism and often framed these in terms of epistemic imperative (Westad, 2005; Service, 2009). Alignment with the CCP was a claim to epistemic correctness, and oppositional groups were depicted as ideologically rotten or revisionist. Factionalism was, in this way, an articulation of epistemological split facilitated by international ideological mediation.

Experiential Knowledge and Imported Ideology. Grassroots cadres' everyday life experiences sometimes contradicted imported CCP models. Nepalese local social environments did not conform to utopian rural revolutionary models in China. This epistemic mismatch between local knowledge and ideologically sanctioned external knowledge generated epistemic disputes within parties (Shneiderman, 2003; Bhattacharya, 2013). The epistemic dispute regarding which knowledge—local experience or CCP dogma—was authoritative also added to factionalism.

Epistemological Insights. Plurality of truth: CCP influence created alternating analyses of revolutionary policy, creating epistemic diversity. Knowledge-power nexus: Those who posited CCP-derived legitimacy had a tendency to dominate domestic decision-making, institutionalizing factional alliances (Chamlagai, 2024). Contextual epistemology: Legitimacy of knowledge varied with local and historical context, creating ongoing reassessment of ideological orthodoxy (Fukuyama, 2014).

Lastly, epistemologically, the CCP shaped factionalism and ideological division in Nepali communism as both a model of authoritative knowledge and a site of contestation. Factions competed over the interpretation of CCP doctrine, aligning itself with its doctrines to validate leadership and strategy. These epistemic contests, mediated by international ideological currents and local experiences, were at the forefront of regular splits and ideological debates within Nepali communism. Understanding

factionalism as an epistemological occurrence allows researchers to see divisions not only as organizational or individual conflicts but as struggles over the production, legitimation, and authority of knowledge.

FOREIGN SCHOLARSHIP AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL RELEVANCE

Existing scholarship provides analytical sophistication of knowledge production and factionalism in the Nepali communist movement. Hutt and Onta (2017) explains how literary education influenced ideological perception, resulting in divergence in leadership and grassroots perception. Shneiderman (2003) shows how peasants in Piskar village reconstructed Maoist ideology consistent with social and cultural context and highlight the primacy of experiential knowledge. Cailmail and Périer (2007) and Adhikari (2023) argue that epistemic conflicts enabled by leadership intensify factionalism at the cost of cohesion. Chamlagai (2024) identifies the intersection of ideological conflict and democratic process, illustrating the role of epistemological conflict in influencing policy-making.

Collectively, these studies illustrate how factionalism and divisions in the Nepali communist movement are deeply epistemological processes grounded in knowledge production, leadership interpretation, ideological conflict, and organizational process—processes all shaping party cohesion and direction of strategy.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Findings

The epistemological inquiry into factionalism within the Nepali communist movement reveals that conflicts and splits were not organizational blunders nor were they personality conflicts, but struggles for power concerning sources, legitimacy, and interpretation of knowledge. The study discovers five interconnected findings.

Factionalism as Epistemological Struggle. Factionalism reveals different representations of conceptions of truth and the mechanisms by which knowledge is legitimized. Diversity of factions based their legitimacy on differing epistemological sources—scientific socialism, leadership-focused authority, foreign models, or political adaptation pragmatism (Rawal, 1990; Mishra, 2023). In the 1960 Darbhanga convention, for instance, although the demand for a Constituent Assembly election was overwhelmingly adopted, it was not executed by the Central Committee led by Rayamajhi. The dispute was not just procedural but epistemological: which decision had epistemic weight—the majority judgment or the reading of the central leadership?

Multiplicity of Truths. The movement spawned multiple and often conflicting truths. Scientific interpretations based on Marxist theory-led understandings co-existed unhappily with leadership-centered readings, factional subjective opinions, and pragmatic politics (K.C., 1999; Giri, 2015). Leaders like Pushpalal, Tulsilal, and Rayamajhi interpreted the same events differently, each producing a distinct epistemic truth. The Third Party Congress of 1962, which expelled Rayamajhi's faction, illustrates this multiplicity: even after the official expulsion, competing factions claimed epistemic legitimacy by branding each other revisionist, royalist, or Sovietist.

Contextual Transformation of Truth. Communism's truth was not static but context-dependent. Valid knowledge was different depending on the conditions of history (Khadka, 1995). Voting in elections was hailed as a pragmatic truth at one point, only to be damned as revisionist treason at another. Similarly, revolutionary struggle was sanctified in one context but discredited in another. This shows that truth was continuously reconstituted by meeting changing political, social, and international conditions.

Knowledge–Power Nexus. Knowledge legitimacy was hopelessly entangled in intra-party power relations. Facts and decisions emerged into focus not simply on theoretical or empirical grounds but owing to the power of the faction or leader supporting them (Baral, 1994; Adhikari, 2023). The leadership of the likes of Pushpalal or Prachanda used to determine what epistemic structure was entrenched regardless of opposing evidence. This fusion was entrenched with external guidance—the Sino-Soviet split polarized Nepali communists into Moscow- and Beijing-oriented fractions (Hachhethu, 2006). Legitimacy derived from factional power rested in imposing epistemic authority. Those individuals that were seen to be aligned either with the USSR or CCP used this ideological legitimacy to exclude alternative fractions, demonstrating knowledge and power over organizations to be interdependent (Mandel, 1980; Fukuyama, 2014). Perception of epistemic correctness turned into a tool of factional control and strategic decision-making.

Interaction as a Site of Truth Production. Truth was not merely passively received but actively constructed through interaction, argumentation, and contestation. Party congresses, mass meetings, and factional headquarters were there as spaces where knowledge was argued out, contested, and redefined (Pokhrel, 2023). Even emotional allegiances, personal jealousies, and ego played a part in what knowledge was accepted or rejected. As Hutt and Onta (2017) demonstrates, literary and cultural contexts structured ideological states of mind, and Shneiderman (2003) demonstrates how local societies reinterpreted Maoist

ideology in experiential terms. That suggests that political practice epistemology is socially constructed in communicative contexts.

Factionalism as Epistemological Conflict. Nepali communist politics factionalism rested on contested knowledge production at its core. Fractions derived legitimacy from differing epistemic locations: fractions aligned with the Soviet Union drew legitimacy from the readings of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow, while fractions aligned with the CCP had recourse to Maoist strategy as scientifically established revolutionary truth (Dirlik, 1975; McLellan, 2007). Disagreements over what interpretation constituted "correct" knowledge resulted in splits directly, highlighting that factionalism was epistemic as well as organizational.

Multiplicity of Truths and Epistemic Pluralism. Imported ideological models disseminated multiple, at times conflicting truths. The USSR's emphasis on choreographed revolution and parliamentary activism was incompatible with Nepal's rural environment, and CCP-inspired protracted people's war strategies at times compromised with urban or parliamentary interests (Althusser, 1971; Bhattacharya, 2013). Grassroots reinterpretations also multiplied epistemic claims, creating pluralism that institutionalized factional divisions.

Contextual and Experiential Mediation of Knowledge. Local social, economic, and cultural backgrounds influenced the meaning given to adopted doctrine. Grassroots cadres localized CCP tactics, which created contradictions between official ideational knowledge and experiential knowledge (Shneiderman, 2003; Hutt and Onta, 2017). These epistemic negotiations underscored that factionalism emerged due to both international influence and local modification, rather than solely external imposition.

Global Ideological Divisions and the Sino-Soviet Split. Nepali communist understanding was shaped by global ideological cleavages. Alignment with the Soviet or Chinese variant was a pronouncement of epistemic power, whereas oppositions were revisionist or ideologically tainted (Westad, 2005; Service, 2009). Global epistemic power therefore constructed local factional politics, mediating leadership legitimacy and organizational mission.

CONCLUSION

The recurrence of factionalism and splits in the Nepali communist movement is best attributed to epistemological conflicts. Factions and leaders were divided not so much on organizational strategy issues or personal agendas but on diverse claims to knowledge and truth.

Some factions insisted on Marxist theory as scientific truth, while other factions invoked leaders' subjective readings or non-local models (/). Where the movement was following class-based epistemology, unity was closer; where subjectivism ruled through leadership, tensions increased (Chamlagai, 2024). Blind emulation of Soviet or Chinese models undermined local epistemic origins (Shneiderman, 2003). From its inception, the movement lacked a shared epistemological foundation for seizing state power. Leaders disagreed on whether armed struggle, parliamentary elections, or both should be used. Global ideological conflicts emboldened these ambiguities, and personal rivalries and affective allegiances further splintered epistemic consensus. Factionalism was therefore not organizationally weak but a structural component based on epistemological ambiguity. Recognizing this dynamic enables us to re-conceptualize factionalism not as political opportunism by itself, but a battle over the very definition of truth.

Follow-up research must incorporate systematic archival analysis, cadre oral histories, and cross-comparison with the South Asian communist movements to uncover the ways in which epistemological contestation shapes factionalism. Reflexivity and triangulation will be key to avoiding replication of the epistemic flaws that generated division in the first instance. In total, epistemology offers a rich lens for understanding why the Nepali communist movement repeatedly split. Struggle and conflict are only to be grasped as contested expressions of knowledge production, interpretation, and legitimation. Knowledge of this deeper epistemological foundation matters to political practice as well as academic understanding. Epistemologically, factionalism and ideological rupture in Nepali communist movement were not merely results of organisational ineffectiveness, personal animosity, or strategic difference. They were structurally embedded in contested knowledge production, verification, and interpretation. The USSR and CCP guided these processes in the form of authoritative epistemic models, which were adopted, disputed, and applied selectively, depending on local conditions by Nepali communists.

Repeated splits were caused by authority derived from leadership, ideological explanation, and conformity to the international. Multiplicity of truths, epistemic pluralism, and the knowledge–power nexus explain why internal cohesion was difficult to achieve, despite shared ideological precepts nominally. By understanding factionalism as an epistemological process, what is emphasized is that conflicts were battles over what was legitimate revolutionary knowledge and strategy. Research needs to combine archival analysis, cadre oral testimonies, and comparative South Asian case studies to better explain how epistemic traditions engage with regional social realities to create factionalism. Understanding the epistemological aspect of splits offers a strong analytical platform from which to comprehend intra-party conflict, leadership legitimacy, and ideological break within Nepalese communism.

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