

Political Perspectives Towards the Unemployed in Nepal: A Class-Based Study

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ABSTRACT

This study reorients the analysis of unemployment in Nepal from conventional market-driven perspectives to a class-based framework, examining how guiding political ideologies, party constitutions, and manifestos conceptualize the unemployed. Employing a qualitative research design, it uses thematic and textual analysis of foundational documents from five major political parties, alongside political ideologies such as people's multiparty democracy, democratic socialism, and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. Traditional paradigms of social stratification prioritize economic status, material wealth, and roles in production, often marginalizing the unemployed. In Nepal, this marginalization is further intensified by entrenched class and caste hierarchies, structural political-economic conditions, and psychosocial vulnerabilities. The findings reveal a persistent lack of recognition of the unemployed as a distinct social class within both political discourse and ideological frameworks. While foundational ideologies historically emphasized state-led economic models, employment generation, land redistribution, and labor empowerment, current policy practices indicate a shift toward neoliberalism—marked by market-oriented reforms, privatization, foreign investment, and increasing reliance on remittance economies. Despite rhetorical commitments to job creation and skill development, implementation remains inconsistent and inadequate. Consequences include persistent youth unemployment, rural neglect, rising foreign labor migration, and the growth of informal labor markets. Political documents frequently reference the working class and other social groups, yet the unemployed are rarely acknowledged. This invisibility exacerbates inequality and fosters latent class antagonism, as the unemployed remain excluded from welfare, training, and political representation. The study argues that unemployment in Nepal should be understood as a structural and political phenomenon, requiring a class-sensitive framework and inclusive, accountable governance.

Introduction

Nepal's class structure is profoundly shaped by a confluence of economic and sociocultural factors, similar to early Indian societal formations, resulting in enduring inequalities. Historically,

Nepal's feudal and caste systems have significantly influenced social stratification, with land ownership and caste affiliation serving as pivotal determinants of social status. The Rana regime (1846–1951) exacerbated these disparities by consolidating

power and resources within a small elite class (Hoftun et al., 1999). Despite political reforms after 1951, deeply entrenched inequalities persist.

Caste and ethnicity are essential components of class analysis in Nepal. Historically, high-caste Brahmin and Chhetri groups have occupied privileged positions, whereas marginalized groups such as the Dalit have experienced systemic discrimination and socioeconomic disadvantages (Dahal, 2003; Gellner, 2007; Gellner et al., 2016). Nepal's economic stratification generally comprises three primary categories: the upper class, middle class, and lower class (rural poor/peasantry). The upper class includes political elites, business leaders, and influential bureaucrats. The middle class—comprising professionals, small business owners, and civil servants—has expanded due to improved access to education and employment opportunities. The lower class, which includes urban laborers, factory workers, and the peasantry, faces challenges such as low wages, job insecurity, and persistent poverty. The rural poor and peasantry, in particular, continue to grapple with poverty and limited access to essential services despite various land reform initiatives (Khadka, 1993; Thieme, 2005; Gurung, 2001).

Nepal has historically been shaped by a predominantly patriarchal society, where women have often been subordinated to men. This cultural legacy has reinforced deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices, particularly in employment opportunities and participation in formal labor markets. The gendered division of labor has significant implications for women's access to life chances (Acharya & Bennett, 1983). Women's experiences of deprivation are further shaped by the intersection of gender with other social factors such as religion, class, caste, ethnicity, and kinship (Subedi, 1993). Although the *Constitution of Nepal (2072 B.S.)* enshrines the 'right to employment' as a fundamental right, unemployed individuals from marginalized groups—including Dalit and indigenous women—often face multiple forms of discrimination

and deprivation, further exacerbating their vulnerability (Gurung, 2001). The consequences of such deprivation in employment and income generation contribute to the formation of social clusters marked by shared social, psychological, and economic disadvantages (Bourdieu, 1986; Pokharel, 2015).

According to Nepal's 2021 census, the population stands at 29,164,578 (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2021). The 2018 Labour Force Survey reported that 71.5% of the population was of working age (20.7 million), with an unemployment rate of 11.4%. Female unemployment was higher at 13.1%, and youth (ages 15–34) constituted 69.1% of job seekers. Approximately 20% of Nepal's employed population works in agriculture, the largest employment sector, followed by trade (17.5%) and construction (13.8%). The informal sector accounts for 62.2% of all employment. Service and sales occupations employ nearly a quarter of the workforce (23.8%), while elementary occupations account for just over 20% (CBS, 2019). In response, the government launched the Prime Minister Employment Program in 2019, offering 100 days of work per year to eligible unemployed individuals through a formal selection process.

Conventional approaches to social stratification have primarily focused on material wealth, roles within the production process, and kinship ties, from classical philosophers like Plato (1937) and Aristotle (1985) to economic theorists such as Smith (1776; 1998). Marxist theory (Marx & Engels, 1848) emphasized the means of production as central to class divisions, while Max Weber (1947) expanded this view to include cultural standing, kinship, and individual capabilities. Scholars like Schumpeter (1942) and Mills (1959) introduced the roles of innovation, technology, and elite power in shaping class dynamics. Bourdieu (1986) highlighted cultural, social, and symbolic capital as mechanisms for maintaining class divisions, while Piketty (2014) focused on wealth inequality, capital accumulation, and inheritance.

Unemployed individuals in Nepal, as in many other countries, face a range of challenges that significantly undermine their well-being and quality of life. Unemployment is frequently associated with financial hardship, social exclusion, psychological distress, and reduced self-worth. Prolonged periods of joblessness can intensify mental health issues and diminish future employability (Paul & Moser, 2009; Clark et al., 2001). In Nepal, these issues are compounded by structural economic constraints, policy shortcomings, and entrenched social hierarchies, which have sustained high levels of youth unemployment despite repeated policy commitments to job creation (Khatri et al., 2025). Contributing factors include weak industrial growth, a limited formal employment sector, and a persistent mismatch between educational outcomes and labor market needs. Additionally, the rising trend of foreign labor migration has shifted national focus away from strengthening domestic employment systems. The country's heavy dependence on remittances also reduces incentives for sustainable job creation. Other systemic barriers—such as inadequate vocational training, lack of entrepreneurial support, and ongoing political instability—further hinder the economic integration of the unemployed (Rai et al., 2024). Rural populations are particularly vulnerable due to infrastructural deficits and geographic isolation. While international frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) acknowledge the importance of decent work, they often fall short of addressing the complex and localized challenges faced by the unemployed in Nepal. Against this backdrop, the present research seeks to critically examine how Nepali political ideologies conceptualize and respond to unemployment, employing a comprehensive class-based perspective grounded in the broader socio-economic landscape of contemporary Nepal.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing thematic analysis (TA) integrated with textual analysis to develop a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of Nepali

political parties and ideologies as reflected in their publications and official texts (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Fay, 1987). Thematic analysis is used to identify and interpret recurring patterns (themes) within the data, offering a flexible and systematic approach well-suited to the research questions and theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes identified are analyzed through a matrix of seven core concepts, each corresponding to various theoretical perspectives on social stratification (Davis & Moore, 1945; Ossowski, 2018; Wright, 1980, 2005; Marx & Engels, 1848; Bourdieu, 1986). This analysis focuses on both explicit and implicit statements related to the following themes: Distributional Location, Subjective Saliency, Inequalities in Life Chances, Class Antagonism and Class Conflict, Historical Variation, Emancipation, and Class Consciousness. These seven themes serve as key indicators of class identity and characteristics (Marx & Engels, 1848; Wright, 1980, 2005), providing a framework to assess whether a group possesses class characteristics (Wright, 2005), and are particularly relevant in the context of contemporary Nepali socio-economic conditions. The results and discussion are organized according to these seven themes.

The study includes a thematic analysis of the constitutions and manifestos of five major political parties, along with the most widely debated political ideologies in Nepal: People's Multiparty Democracy (PMPD), Democratic Socialism (DS), and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM). Both explicit and implicit terms were coded to construct the thematic categories. The study's universe comprises five dominant political ideologies in Nepal, with a specific focus on their perspectives regarding the unemployed as a social class. A purposive sampling method was employed to select the constitutions and manifestos of five major political parties in Nepal, published between 2021 and 2025: the Nepali Congress (NC), the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist [CPN-UML]), the Communist

Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre [CPN-MC]), the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), and the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP). These parties were selected based on their representation in the House of Representatives, ranked from the largest (by number of parliamentary seats) to the fifth largest. As of 2 April 2025, these five parties collectively hold approximately 85% of the parliamentary seats, ensuring the inclusion of Nepal's most politically influential entities.

The inclusion of the NC, the CPN (UML), the CPN (MC), the RSP, and the RPP was guided by both the principle of ideological saturation and the need to represent the full spectrum of Nepal's contemporary political landscape. These parties reflect a broad ideological continuum: the CPN (MC) represents the far-left, advocating Marxist-Leninist-Maoist principles; the CPN (UML) and the NC occupy center-left to centrist positions, shaped by Democratic Socialism and PMPD; while the RSP and the RPP represent center-right to far-right orientations, emphasizing liberal nationalism and conservative monarchism, respectively. This ideological diversity facilitates a more holistic analysis of how unemployment is conceptualized across different political traditions in Nepal.

Moreover, the inclusion of the RSP and the RPP avoids analytical oversaturation by introducing perspectives distinct from the dominant left-leaning narratives. While the primary analysis focuses on the three mainstream parties due to their broader historical and policy influence, the RSP and the RPP function as important ideological counterpoints. Their inclusion enriches the comparative framework and ensures that emerging political discourses and historically conservative perspectives are not overlooked. Although future iterations of this study may examine their positions in greater empirical detail, their presence in the current research is essential for maintaining both ideological inclusiveness and conceptual balance. Textual analysis is integrated through a thematic coding process conducted using MAXQDA software.

Operational definition

Unemployed. Commonly, this refers to a person who is not engaged in employment. Historically, theorists such as Marx, Engels, and Weber used the term worker to denote an employed individual (Marx & Engels, 1848, p. 116). The World Bank (2018) and the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018) define the unemployed as a working-age person who is not in employment, has actively sought work during a specified recent period, and is currently available to take up employment if an opportunity arises. Similar definitions are provided by Winkelmann (2014) and Clark & Summers (1982).

In this study, the term nonworker is also used to denote the unemployed, defined as “a person of working age who is involuntarily excluded from the production process.” More specifically, it refers to an individual who is willing to sell both physical and mental labor to sustain their livelihood, is actively seeking employment, and is available to work but has not received an opportunity. Voluntarily unemployed individuals are not considered unemployed in this context, as both the World Bank and the ILO categorize them as economically inactive. Similarly, persons with physical or mental disabilities who are unable to work are not included in the definition of unemployed.

Results and Discussion

Political ideologies in Nepal

People's multiparty democracy (PMPD)

PMPD is a significant political ideology in Nepal, formulated by Madan Bhandari in the early 1990s in response to the country's unique socio-political and economic challenges. Rooted in Marxist-Leninist principles, PMPD integrates democratic pluralism and a competitive multiparty system, diverging from traditional Marxist reliance on revolutionary struggle (Bhandari, 1993; 2014). It emerged as a framework for establishing socialism through peaceful and constitutional means, emphasizing democratic processes, public participation, and

representative governance (Baral, 2012). Unlike orthodox Marxist doctrines, which often prioritize revolution and class struggle, PMPD aligns socialism with democratic norms such as political freedoms, regular elections, and the coexistence of multiple parties (Hachhethu, 2002).

A core principle of PMPD is its adaptation of Marxist ideology to Nepal's socio-political context. Acknowledging Nepal's feudal past and underdeveloped economy, Bhandari proposed a model that blends socialist ideals with democratic governance (Lawoti, 2005). PMPD supports electoral democracy and ensures the coexistence of multiple political parties within a structured system (Thapa & Sijapati, 2004). It also emphasizes the sovereignty of the people, advocating for inclusive governance that empowers marginalized communities (Baral, 2012). This commitment to decentralization and participatory decision-making reflects PMPD's broader goal of achieving social justice and equity through peaceful political processes (Bhandari, 1993).

Economically, PMPD promotes a mixed system that balances state control with private sector contributions to foster development and employment (Lawoti, 2005). Bhandari argued for the coexistence of public and private sectors, with state intervention focused on resource management and industrialization, while the private sector drives innovation and growth (Whelpton, 2005). Land reform remains a central policy within PMPD, aimed at redistributing land to the landless, enhancing agricultural productivity, and reducing rural unemployment (Thapa & Sijapati, 2004). The ideology also encourages infrastructure development and industrialization as means of economic diversification and job creation, although progress has been limited by resource constraints.

A key feature of PMPD's economic vision is its emphasis on employment generation through planned state intervention and private sector engagement. Bhandari identified unemployment as a major challenge and proposed a multifaceted solution involving state-led industrialization, rural

land redistribution, and infrastructure development (Sharma, 2004). By addressing structural economic barriers and fostering inclusive growth, PMPD aspires to promote economic equity and social stability.

Despite its innovative character, PMPD has faced substantial criticism. Scholars point to its ideological ambiguity, noting that its effort to merge Marxism-Leninism with multiparty democracy presents contradictions, particularly given socialism's traditional opposition to class-based political competition (Hachhethu, 2002; Sharma, 2004). Its practical implementation has also been hindered by bureaucratic inefficiencies and limited socioeconomic progress (Baral, 2012). While the ideology advocates poverty eradication and reduced inequality, Nepal continues to struggle with pronounced wealth gaps and uneven development (Lawoti, 2005).

Hardline Marxist factions have criticized PMPD as a revisionist ideology that undermines the revolutionary essence of Marxism-Leninism (Sharma, 2004). By emphasizing peaceful, constitutional pathways over revolutionary struggle, PMPD is seen by some as straying from foundational Marxist principles (Thapa & Sijapati, 2004). Its reliance on democratic processes has also made it vulnerable to electoral challenges, including from radical and populist forces (Whelpton, 2005). Bhandari's death in mysterious road accident in 1993 further revealed the ideology's dependence on charismatic his leadership, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of his political vision (Thapa, 2012). Moreover, Nepal's continued economic struggles, including persistent poverty and high unemployment, suggest that PMPD has not fully delivered on its promises of equity and justice (Baral, 2012).

The CPN (UML), which officially adopted PMPD as its guiding ideology, has undergone significant ideological shifts. Despite continued rhetorical commitment to PMPD's socialist foundations, the party's governance has become increasingly elite-

driven, focused on strategic power consolidation. Rather than pursuing PMPD’s vision of state-led socialism, the CPN (UML) has evolved into a pragmatic electoral actor, often forming coalitions and embracing market-driven economic policies. Its growing alignment with private-sector interests reflects a clear departure from its original socialist commitments.

Table 1 highlights the discrepancies between the core tenets of PMPD and the current practices of the CPN (UML). The party’s recent political actions have featured limited land reform, heavy reliance on remittances and foreign labor markets, and slow industrial development—factors

contributing to widening wealth inequality and elite dominance. Allegations of corruption and internal factionalism have further eroded its credibility. While PMPD advocates grassroots democracy and decentralization, the CPN (UML) has often centralized decision-making within a narrow leadership circle. Its employment policies remain weak, characterized by high youth unemployment and an expanding informal labor sector. Nepal continues to depend on labor migration, and the UML government has prioritized political power over the socialist transformation envisioned in PMPD, leading to shortcomings in employment and broader economic policy.

Table 1: Contrasting ideologies: PMPD’s core tenets and the contemporary political trajectory of the CPN (UML)

Aspect	Emphasis of PMPD	Contemporary political practices and policies of the CPN (UML)
Economic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept of <i>janavadi arthatantra</i> (democratic economy) was conceptualized as a framework for economic development. • It advocates for a mixed economy that harmonizes state intervention with private sector participation. • The system emphasizes the promotion of national capital and the advancement of nationalist capitalism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifted toward market-driven policies, promoting privatization and foreign investment. • High rate of foreign migration, coupled with a low rate of self-employment and entrepreneurship.
Employment Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoted state-led industrialization and infrastructure projects to foster economic development. • Expanded public-sector employment and vocational training programs to enhance workforce skills. • Reduced dependency on foreign employment through integrated rural and urban employment policies. • Prioritized infrastructure development and planned economic growth to stimulate job creation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks large-scale industrialization and heavily relies on remittances. • Experiences persistent mass labor migration due to limited domestic employment opportunities. • Exhibits a growing informal sector with weak labor protections and no comprehensive employment strategy. • Faces ongoing job scarcity in rural areas.
Land Redistribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented state-led land redistribution to landless peasants to alleviate rural poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land reform was largely unfulfilled; no major redistribution policies were effectively implemented.

Aspect	Emphasis of PMPD	Contemporary political practices and policies of the CPN (UML)
Urban-Rural Employment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented integrated rural and urban employment policies to ensure balanced development. Promoted decentralization of development and power to enhance regional equity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacks a structured urban employment strategy, resulting in growing urban joblessness and neglected rural employment. Concentrates development primarily in urban areas.
Skill Development and Worker Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted skill enhancement and vocational training to reduce unemployment. Strengthened labor rights and worker unity to improve workforce conditions. Enhanced workforce development to address unemployment challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibits weak labor protections and ineffective policy implementation, contributing to high youth unemployment. Experiences significant foreign labor migration and weakened labor unions in the private sector. Faces increasing informality in the labor market.
Political Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes democratic socialism within a competitive multiparty framework, emphasizing decentralization and public participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibits increasing centralization of power, with accusations of factionalism and political opportunism. Operates as a power-driven electoral party.
Industrial Growth and Globalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes state-led industrialization with minimal foreign influence to foster a self-reliant national economy. Implements managed and controlled liberalism to balance economic policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages with international financial institutions and promotes foreign direct investment but fails to achieve significant industrialization, resulting in an increasing trade deficit.

Democratic socialism (DS)

Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala was a prominent figure in Nepali politics and served as the country's first elected Prime Minister. His political ideology, grounded in Democratic Socialism (DS), aimed to merge democratic governance with social fairness and economic equity. Emphasizing political freedom, economic equality, nationalism, and social justice, Koirala's vision sought to uplift marginalized communities and address socio-economic disparities (Sharma, 2002).

Unemployment, a persistent issue during his time and beyond, was a central concern in his socialist vision. Rooted in Nepal's socio-economic context,

his ideology focused on combating poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment (Sharma, 2002). Koirala advocated for a mixed economy in which both the public and private sectors play crucial roles. He believed the state should address social inequalities and promote public welfare while also recognizing the importance of individual initiative and economic freedom (Whelpton, 2005). His priorities included social justice, economic development, and national unity. He emphasized reducing disparities, uplifting marginalized communities, and ensuring access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and employment (Whelpton, 2005). Koirala envisioned planned economic growth driven

by state intervention in key sectors to generate employment and finance social programs. Land reform was a central component of his agenda, intended to redistribute land to landless peasants, enhance agricultural productivity, and reduce rural unemployment (Pradhan, 2009). He believed Democratic Socialism could bridge Nepal's social and economic divides, fostering national unity and long-term stability (Pradhan, 2009).

However, implementing his policies faced considerable challenges, including resistance from entrenched interests, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and a lack of financial and infrastructural resources (Lawoti, 2010). Balancing state intervention and private enterprise proved difficult—excessive state control could hinder innovation and growth, while insufficient regulation could exacerbate inequality and unemployment (Lawoti, 2010). Nepal's limited infrastructure and resources further constrained the reach and impact of employment programs (Sharma, 2002). Moreover, Koirala's vision was developed during the Cold War, under vastly different global political and economic conditions. The subsequent rise of globalization and neoliberal economics would have posed new challenges to his model (Pradhan, 2009).

Koirala's time in office was brief and politically turbulent. As his vision of Democratic Socialism could not be fully implemented, its long-term impact is difficult to assess (Whelpton, 2005). Nonetheless, his ideas remain relevant in ongoing discussions about development, social justice, and employment generation in Nepal (Lawoti, 2010). From a class perspective, his policies favored lower and middle-income groups, but they faced resistance from the elite and feudal landlords, resulting in political conflict and instability (Lawoti, 2010). Despite his emphasis on development, unemployment persisted due to

the lack of technical skills and limited economic opportunities (Sharma, 2002).

While advocating for DS, Koirala's model relied heavily on state-led industrialization, which often suffered from inefficiencies and mismanagement. The limited encouragement of private sector participation hindered dynamic job creation and restricted opportunities for sustainable employment (Pradhan, 2009). Nepal's infrastructural constraints during Koirala's era—such as inadequate roads, unreliable electricity, and poor market access—were major barriers to rural economic growth and employment generation (Sharma, 2002). His tenure was cut short by the 1960 royal coup, which abruptly halted the implementation of his policies and limited their long-term effect on reducing unemployment (Whelpton, 2005). Although rural unemployment was a key concern, Koirala's focus on agrarian reform and rural industries left urban unemployment and the growing demand for industrial jobs relatively underaddressed. His policies lacked a comprehensive framework to integrate both rural and urban employment strategies (Lawoti, 2010).

As shown in Table 2, the NC, which was founded on Koirala's ideals, has since evolved its economic policies in response to changing global and domestic conditions, shifting from state-interventionist models to a more mixed-economy approach. NC-led governments have emphasized economic liberalization, privatization, and foreign direct investment, with a focus on entrepreneurship and job creation. However, a growing reliance on foreign labor migration and remittances represents a departure from Koirala's original vision. Persistent issues such as inadequate infrastructure, poor education quality, and the mismatch between labor market demands and workforce skills continue to fuel unemployment, especially in rural and underdeveloped regions.

Table 2: Differences between the core ideology of DS and contemporary NC policies

Aspect	Emphasis of Democratic Socialism	Contemporary Political Practice and Policies of the NC
Economic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes an open, mixed economy with state-led development in key sectors. Addresses the needs of peasants and the rural poor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes a market-oriented economy, emphasizing globalization, liberalization, and privatization. Exhibits low domestic production and exports, contributing to an increasing trade deficit.
Unemployment Reduction Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes state-led industrialization and land reforms to ensure equitable resource distribution. Implements planned economic development and agricultural development at the rural level, advocating for independent farming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes private sector-driven job creation but weakly supports entrepreneurship. Relies heavily on agriculture within a remittance-driven economy.
Land Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implements redistributive policies to empower farmers, the landless, and squatters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deprioritized land reform, with an increased focus on privatization and the promotion of entrepreneurship.
Urban-Rural Employment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on rural unemployment and poverty alleviation policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban employment programs have limited focus on rural unemployment, underemployment, and poverty.
Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognized as crucial but lacked execution capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded, but not addressed to skills mismatch.
Political Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocated open, competitive politics in opposition to dictatorship and centralized authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operates within a multiparty parliamentary system but faces accusations of corruption and political opportunism.
Industrial Growth & Globalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasized state-led industrialization, positioning the state as a guardian of national development. Pursued a balanced foreign policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages foreign direct investment (FDI) and private sector growth. Maintains an unclear foreign policy amid a growing trade deficit.

Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM)

Marxism-Leninism-Maoism (MLM) is a political ideology that has profoundly influenced Nepal’s political landscape. Centered on Maoist principles, this ideology was adopted by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) [CPN (MC)], which led the Maoist insurgency that began in 1996. The movement aimed to overthrow the monarchy

and establish a people’s republic through armed revolution (Maske, 2002).

MLM in Nepal emphasizes class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the need for a revolutionary transformation of society. It advocates for the abolition of feudalism and imperialism, and the creation of a socialist state under the leadership of a vanguard party. Guided

by MLM principles, the CPN (MC) mobilized the rural population—particularly marginalized and oppressed groups—to achieve these revolutionary goals (Hachhethu, 2009).

A core element of MLM in Nepal is its focus on agrarian revolution. The CPN (MC) sought to redistribute land to landless peasants and increase agricultural productivity, aiming to reduce socio-economic inequalities in rural areas. The party also stressed the importance of armed struggle and established base areas in rural regions as strategic launching points for attacks on urban centers and state institutions (Sharma, 2022). The decade-long insurgency led to significant political transformation. It culminated in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006, which ended the conflict. A broader democratic movement—joined by other political parties, including the UML and NC—then facilitated the abolition of the monarchy and the creation of a federal democratic republic (Ayadi, 2018).

Despite its influence, MLM in Nepal has faced considerable criticism. A central point of contention is the use of violence and armed conflict to achieve political objectives. The insurgency resulted in the deaths of thousands and widespread destruction, raising serious questions about the legitimacy of the Maoist movement (Ajith, 2006). Another major criticism concerns the Maoist leadership's failure to deliver on promises of socio-economic transformation. Although the party espoused social justice and equality, critics argue it has fallen short in addressing entrenched socio-economic inequalities. Since joining mainstream politics, the party has also been accused of corruption and political opportunism (Baidya, 2018).

Furthermore, MLM's ideological rigidity has been criticized for limiting political pluralism and suppressing democratic discourse. The emphasis on a vanguard party and the dictatorship of the proletariat is often seen as incompatible with democratic governance and political freedoms.

As shown in Table 3, the CPN (MC) has significantly deviated from its revolutionary foundations since entering mainstream politics. The party has adopted more pragmatic, electoral, and market-oriented policies. It has largely abandoned MLM's revolutionary principles, prioritizing coalition-building and electoral success over radical transformation. Economic policies have shifted toward liberalization, contradicting MLM's original vision of state-led socialism. Employment generation and land reforms remain largely unfulfilled, with no major socialist economic programs implemented. The party now operates within a democratic framework, making frequent ideological compromises to retain political power.

The transition from insurgency to governance has prompted the CPN (MC) to adopt increasingly pragmatic—and at times contradictory—positions. While the party continues to use socialist rhetoric, its current approach to governance is reformist rather than revolutionary. The focus has shifted from MLM's radical socio-economic transformation to political survival and electoral competitiveness. This evolution reflects the party's pragmatic turn, which prioritizes maintaining influence within Nepal's democratic system over adhering strictly to MLM ideology.

Table 3: Differences between the core Ideology of MLM and the contemporary policies of the CPN (MC)

Aspect	Emphasis of MLM	Contemporary political practice and policies of the CPN (MC)
Economic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasized collectivization, nationalization, and state-led production. Promoted industrial development and state control over the economy, envisioning a planned socialist system led by the proletariat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market-driven approach shifted toward neoliberal economic policies, embracing privatization and foreign investment.
Employment Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State-led industrialization and agrarian reform to create jobs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No large-scale socialist industrialization; heavy reliance on remittances
Land Redistribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seizure of land from landlords and redistribution to peasants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land reforms largely unfulfilled; no major redistribution policies implemented
Urban-Rural Employment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the rural proletariat and agrarian revolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No structured urban employment plan; rising urban joblessness and no clear practice of agrarian revolution
Skill Development and Worker Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening of worker unity, labor rights, and economic equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labor protections remain weak; high youth unemployment, reliance on foreign labor migration, and weak labor unions in the private sector
Political Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a one-party state under proletarian leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operates within a multiparty parliamentary system; accused of corruption, factionalism, and political opportunism
Industrial Growth, and Globalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rejection of foreign influence, imperialism, and global capitalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages with international financial institutions and accepts FDI, contributing to increased consumerism and trade deficits

Despite their rhetorical commitments to social justice and labor rights, Nepali political ideologies often overlook individuals who fall outside conventional structures of production—particularly the unemployed, who neither possess nor engage in the means of production. These ideological frameworks tend to prioritize the working class, failing to offer practical or sustained responses to the structural and psychosocial challenges faced by nonworkers. Recent global studies on human development (ILO, 2019, 2020; OECD, 2021; World Bank, 2020) similarly focus on the “decent work agenda,” emphasizing employment

promotion, labor rights, social protection, and social dialogue. However, these frameworks rarely extend their scope to meaningfully address the conditions of the unemployed. The psycho-socio-economic vulnerabilities of this group remain largely unexamined, and discussions on sustainable strategies for their inclusion and support are notably limited.

Perspective on unemployed

Distributional location of the unemployed

Statements, policies, provisions, and offerings that explicitly or implicitly indicate and identify

the contemporary position of the unemployed within the existing socioeconomic structure are categorized under this theme.

The constitutions of most political parties—including the NC, the CPN (UML), the CPN (MC), the RSP, and the RPP—largely fail to acknowledge or address the contemporary socio-economic status of the unemployed. However, some acceptance of the economic marginalization of unemployed individuals is noted, for instance, in the [Constitution of the NC \(2078 B.S., p. 96, Article 10\)](#).

The NC's manifesto implicitly identifies the location and status of the 'working class' and other cultural strata but omits any explicit mention of unemployed individuals and their socio-economic position. Similarly, the CPN (UML)'s manifesto implicitly refers to the 'working class' but fails to recognize the unemployed. In contrast, the CPN (MC) explicitly addresses the unemployed within the existing socio-economic structure, highlighting their subjective salience in society ([Pratibaddataapatra, 2079 B.S., pp. 5–12](#)). Meanwhile, parties such as the RSP and the RPP focus more on existing inequalities among other social groups without specifically mentioning the unemployed.

Across party manifestos, a consistent gap is evident in defining or identifying the distributional location of the unemployed within Nepal's socio-economic structure. While the working class and other cultural groups receive attention, the unemployed are largely overlooked. Programs like skill enhancement and employment schemes typically target the already employed or part-time workers, failing to recognize the unemployed as a distinct demographic in need of targeted policy interventions. This neglect reinforces their marginalization and limits access to resources and opportunities essential for economic participation.

Subjective saliency of the unemployed

Statements that define, compare, or identify unemployed people within existing social

structures, or illustrate how the unemployed are perceived or differentiated, fall under this theme.

None of the political parties' constitutions explicitly or implicitly acknowledge the subjective salience of the unemployed within the current socio-economic structure. However, entrepreneurship is occasionally referenced as a measure to overcome poverty. The CPN (UML) and the CPN (MC) emphasize working-class unity and well-being, indicating a lack of recognition for the unique experiences, hardships, and characteristics of the unemployed as distinct from other groups.

Unemployed individuals rarely appear as a distinct or salient category within party manifestos, which tend to focus on other social groups such as farmers, laborers, cultural communities, and backward communities. The absence of explicit recognition of the unemployed as a significant demographic reflects a broader issue of invisibility in political discourse. This lack of acknowledgment impedes the development of tailored strategies to address their specific challenges and integrate them meaningfully into the socio-economic framework.

Inequalities in life chances

Statements, provisions, plans, and policies that favor or are intended to favor either existing social classes or the unemployed are categorized under this theme.

The NC's constitution acknowledges existing inequalities in employment opportunities and implicitly promotes foreign employment as a solution—an approach that could worsen domestic labor market issues ([Constitution of NC, 2078 B.S., Article 10](#)). Other parties, including the CPN (UML) and the CPN (MC), focus more heavily on working-class welfare, with insufficient emphasis on the unemployed. The RSP and the RPP do not appear to address this theme at all.

The NC's manifesto includes provisions such as health facilities, insurance, and subsidies for kidney transplants and dialysis, especially for destitute and disabled individuals. However, it does not explicitly extend these benefits to the

unemployed, who are often unable to afford insurance premiums. The manifesto also mentions youth skill enhancement and a Contributory Social Security Fund for workers—also promised by the CPN (UML). The UML’s manifesto includes a minimum work guarantee of 100 days.

Both manifestos emphasize agriculture and farming but fail to consider those without access to land. The NC’s “Integrated Social Security: From Womb to Bereavement” proposal promises respectful employment, skills training, or full-time education for all youth within five years (NC, 2079 B.S). The CPN (UML) manifesto lists 20 guarantees, including the expansion of social security, but does not include specific provisions for the unemployed, such as allowances or insurance. The CPN (MC) manifesto highlights agriculture and farmers as central to Nepal’s economic revolution but, again, makes no explicit mention of the unemployed.

While party manifestos commonly emphasize reducing inequalities for existing social groups, they rarely extend these promises to the unemployed. Although commitments are made to improving healthcare, education, and economic opportunities, these rarely benefit the unemployed, who face significant barriers in accessing such services. This oversight further entrenches inequalities and limits the life chances of the unemployed, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.

Class antagonism and class conflict

Texts, statements, and offerings that explicitly or implicitly reflect the potential for developing antagonism or conflict between the unemployed and other existing social groups fall under this theme.

The constitutions of political parties such as the NC, the CPN (UML), and the CPN (MC) show a tendency to favor the working class, which may contribute to antagonistic or conflicting relationships—both psychological and material—with nonworkers. The opening statement in the constitutions of the CPN (UML) and the CPN (MC)—“Workers of the World, Unite!”—demonstrates their strong

emphasis on the working class. The RSP and the RPP similarly emphasize support for the working class and marginalized groups, without specific reference to the unemployed. This partiality has the potential to foster long-term class antagonism.

Although no party manifesto includes overtly antagonistic statements, the persistent emphasis on established social classes and neglect of the unemployed can still foster class resentment. The unemployed may perceive themselves as excluded from the benefits and recognition afforded to others, deepening social divides.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the themes of ‘Historical Variation,’ ‘Inequalities in Life Chances,’ and ‘Class Antagonism’ are interconnected. Historical disparities and unequal access to basic livelihood resources contribute to the development of class antagonism. The provisions offered through the manifestos of major political parties suggest the potential for such divisions to grow over time.

Historical variation

This theme captures the chronological inconsistencies, systemic exclusions, and historical patterns of discrimination embedded in the texts of Nepali political parties with regard to the unemployed population. It highlights the continuation of past biases in party constitutions and manifestos, which prioritize existing socio-economic groups while marginalizing nonworkers.

Across party constitutions, major political entities such as the NC, the CPN (UML), the CPN (MC), the RPP, and the RSP clearly demonstrate a continuation of historical disparities in the allocation of opportunities. These documents often emphasize the advancement of the working class and various ethnic or cultural groups, yet fail to acknowledge the psycho-social and structural dimensions of unemployment. This omission reflects a persistent lack of understanding about the long-term socio-political consequences of joblessness.

Party manifestos further reinforce this historical neglect. For instance, the NC places considerable

emphasis on addressing the concerns of landless and squatter communities, managing foreign labor migration, and strengthening the Social Security Fund. However, the absence of any implicit or explicit mention of unemployment reveals a continuation of traditional class-based exclusions.

Similarly, the CPN (UML) and the CPN (MC) rely on slogans like “Workers of the world unite”—a rhetoric that valorizes the working class while sidelining those outside it. The CPN (UML)’s manifesto, though it offers initiatives such as “Respectful Labour: Secure Employment,” employment information centers, and a 100-day employment program (Manifesto, 2079 B.S., p. 52), fails to address the structural needs of the unemployed. These initiatives primarily benefit those already engaged in the labor market, leaving the unemployed largely unrecognized. Critics have noted the limitations of such programs, especially the 100-day scheme, questioning its ability to provide sustained livelihoods.

The CPN (MC) exhibits a similar pattern. While it claims credit for empowering various social groups (Pratibaddata Patra, 2079 B.S., p. 8), its manifesto notably omits the unemployed. The “Strategy” section (p. 16) outlines plans for laborers and farmers—individuals who at least have some access to life chances—but excludes those with no economic engagement whatsoever. While it proposes social safety nets and insurance for farmers (p. 27), it offers no comparable provisions for unemployed individuals, thus reinforcing their structural invisibility.

The RPP also adopts a class-differentiated approach in its policy propositions. Although the party proposes benefits for various social classes, it does so in a way that implicitly diminishes the socio-political standing of the unemployed. Similarly, the RSP’s economic manifesto reflects a selective distribution of state support. By prioritizing employed groups—such as government workers (Manifesto, 2079 B.S., p. 11), healthcare professionals (p. 17), and farmers (p. 19)—without incorporating unemployed

populations into its strategic vision, the RSP continues the pattern of excluding the jobless from socio-economic upliftment. Its ambitious plans to revitalize agriculture, for instance, offer no pathway for integrating the unemployed, and its proposed social security measures are reserved for those with an existing economic role.

This long-standing exclusion is not limited to Nepal’s political texts but is also embedded in the theoretical frameworks that inform political ideologies. Traditional class analyses—such as Marxist interpretations focusing on the proletariat’s opposition to the bourgeoisie (Marx & Engels, 1848) and Weberian theories linking class with status and power (Weber, 1978)—have historically overlooked the unemployed as a separate class. They are typically treated as residual elements within the working class rather than as distinct groups with unique structural and agency-based characteristics (Aryal, 2023; 2025).

Even more nuanced sociological theories—such as Pierre Bourdieu’s emphasis on cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1984)—generally fail to recognize the unemployed as an independent class with its own dynamics and collective interests. Deeming (2013) critiques this omission, arguing for recognition of the “precariat” as a class-in-the-making. These global oversights are reflected in Nepal’s domestic political and ideological discourses, where dominant frameworks such as DS, PMPD, and MLM similarly ignore unemployment as a defining class feature—even within parties guided by socialist or Marxist traditions.

Yet empirical evidence from Nepal indicates that the unemployed exhibit significant class-like characteristics at the individual level (Aryal, 2025). By failing to acknowledge these characteristics, political parties inadvertently perpetuate historical inequalities. Their constitutions and manifestos reflect systemic biases that hinder the development of inclusive policies and obstruct equitable socio-political progress.

Emancipation

Statements addressing emancipation, sustainable solutions, or empowerment for the unemployed are grouped and categorized under this theme. No party constitution appears to provide a sustainable solution to unemployment or outline a pathway to emancipation. Most political parties—the NC, the CPN (UML), the CPN (MC), the RPP, and the RSP—fail to adequately address these issues, limiting themselves to short-term measures.

Efforts to emancipate the unemployed from the grip of joblessness and poverty are sometimes implied in party manifestos, but there is a pervasive lack of clarity—an essential component for effective implementation. Most parties affirm their commitment to social welfare and inclusion. Their manifestos emphasize education, health, and employment, indicating a general focus on social welfare for unemployed citizens. However, a clear and actionable vision for implementation is consistently lacking.

The Maoist Center, while neglecting to explicitly mention unemployed individuals in discussions of resource distribution, does acknowledge the need to increase their engagement in agriculture. The party also proposes programs to promote self-employment, skills training, and a reformed education system geared toward employability. These could potentially benefit unemployed citizens, but they suffer from a lack of concrete implementation plans.

Other parties present even fewer coherent strategies. The RPP proposes mobilizing volunteers through fixed-term employment, but provides little detail. While its manifesto mentions job creation and income generation, it is unclear which demographic groups these efforts target. The proposed technical and vocational education fund ([Manifesto of the RPP, 2079 B.S.](#)) may be insufficient to ensure the long-term well-being of the unemployed.

The NC emphasizes skill development and job creation, but the sustainability of its proposals remains uncertain. Although skill enhancement

could empower some unemployed individuals, a broader, more integrated strategy is required to address issues that arise during the application and implementation phases. The CPN (UML) recognizes the role of the private sector in employment creation, raising questions about government efficiency and accountability. Its focus on human capital development and management appears to primarily benefit the working class, lacking a clear and sustainable pathway for addressing unemployment in a comprehensive manner.

Class consciousness

Statements that imply the recognition of the unemployed as a distinct social stratum with class-like properties, or that address organizational efforts to mobilize them, are categorized within this theme.

There is a clear absence of recognition of unemployed individuals as a separate social group in party constitutions. None of the political parties provide a framework or platform for forming committees or organizations under the party structure to represent and organize the unemployed for their emancipation. The NC, the CPN (UML), the CPN (MC), the RPP, and the RSP all demonstrate a limited understanding of the potential emergence of new social classes—indicating a disconnect from contemporary societal dynamics that could give rise to a new class configuration.

Party manifestos similarly fail to conceptualize the unemployed as a distinct class. Instead, they remain focused on established social groups, primarily the working class. The idea that existing socio-economic disparities could lead to the development of a new social stratum appears to be absent from the ideological frameworks of even the communist-aligned parties.

By overlooking the unemployed as a potentially distinct social group, political parties miss an opportunity to deepen their understanding of evolving class relations and to develop a more comprehensive framework of socio-economic stratification.

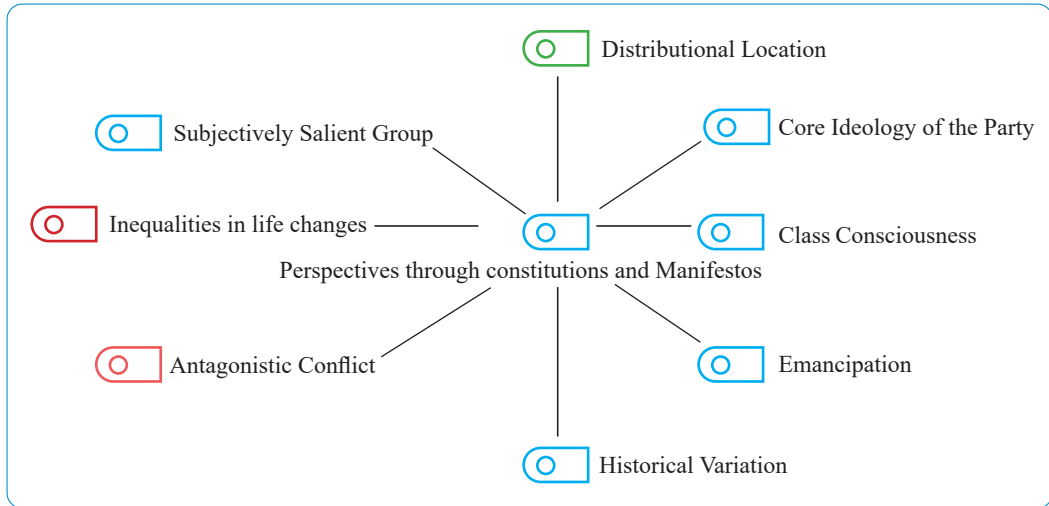


Figure 1: Relationship among themes

The results indicate that despite differences in political ideology, political parties fail to formally recognize unemployed individuals as a distinct social group with specific needs. Parties tend to offer short-term, election-focused populist promises without thorough research or planning. This is not unique to Nepal; many developing—and even developed—countries exhibit similar patterns. In countries with strong welfare states, such as Sweden or Germany, policies exist to support unemployed individuals, but these are typically framed as transitional measures rather than acknowledging the unemployed as a separate socio-economic category (Hicks, 1991). Conversely, in countries with weaker labor protections, particularly in the Global South, unemployment is often treated as an individual issue rather than a structural problem requiring systemic solutions (Harvey, 2005).

The exclusion of unemployed individuals from Nepal’s party constitutions and manifestos reflects a broader global trend in which the unemployed lack formal political representation. This failure to position unemployed individuals within the socio-economic structure aligns with a neoliberal focus on individual responsibility, where unemployment is frequently framed as a personal failure rather than a systemic issue (Peck, 2001).

Globally, political parties tend to focus their policies on the employed population, promoting initiatives related to well-being, decent work, or labor protections, while neglecting those who are entirely excluded from labor market access and employment opportunities. For instance, in the United States, both major political parties prioritize job creation but rarely address deep-rooted economic inequalities or long-term structural unemployment (Piketty, 2014). In contrast, countries like France—where labor movements have historically wielded more political influence—have occasionally advocated for protections and support for unemployed populations, though still within a framework that does not recognize them as a separate class (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005).

In Nepal, the focus on the working class in political ideologies, party constitutions, and manifestos—while ignoring the unemployed—reinforces the exclusion of those without stable employment. All three major political ideologies have envisioned land reform as a way to reduce rural unemployment and poverty; however, this vision remains unimplemented. This suggests that political discourse continues to follow historically labor-centric models, failing to adapt to contemporary realities in which automation, globalization, and

economic crises have led to a growing class of unemployed individuals (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

At the ideological level, principles such as DS, PMPD, and MLM advocate reducing inequality and poverty while promoting social equality (see Table 1; Table 2; Table 3). However, political parties adhering to these ideologies have often struggled with implementation. For example, PMPD emphasizes land reform, industrialization, and equitable resource distribution to address socio-economic disparities. Despite these commitments, the CPN (UML) failed to fully adopt or implement these policies, highlighting the gap between ideological aspirations and practical execution.

The results show that Nepali political parties offer various social welfare programs, but these overwhelmingly target those already within the labor force rather than those excluded from it (see Table 4). This mirrors a global trend in which economic policies prioritize improving conditions for existing workers while failing to address the structural barriers preventing unemployed individuals from accessing opportunities (Fraser, 2013).

In many countries, unemployment benefits are conditional, requiring recipients to actively seek employment. This approach assumes that jobs are readily available, ignoring deeper structural causes of joblessness such as automation, economic downturns, or geographic disadvantages (Wacquant et al., 2009). For instance, in the UK, austerity policies during the 2010s significantly reduced welfare support for unemployed individuals, reinforcing the notion that they are responsible for their economic condition rather than victims of structural inequalities (Taylor-Gooby, 2013).

As shown in Table 4, Nepal's political parties focus primarily on job creation without addressing systemic unemployment, underemployment, and the plight of the working poor—thus reinforcing this global pattern. The emphasis on agriculture and informal employment as solutions overlooks

the fact that many unemployed individuals lack access to land or capital to engage in such work (Kabeer, 2003). Similarly, foreign employment is often presented as an alternative, despite its exploitative conditions and long-term negative consequences for domestic labor markets (Sassen, 2014).

The continuation of historical patterns of exclusion in the Nepali political context aligns with global trends in which class divisions are continually reinforced. From feudal Europe to industrial capitalism, unemployed populations have often been treated as surplus labor rather than as groups with inherent political and economic rights. Moreover, the commodification of labor contributes to social instability and mass unemployment (Polanyi, 1944).

In South Asia, caste-based hierarchies have historically influenced class dynamics, with certain groups systematically excluded from economic opportunities (Deshpande, 2011). The persistence of these exclusions in contemporary Nepali political discourse suggests that while economic systems may evolve, deeply rooted social structures continue to shape class inequalities. The failure of Nepali political parties to break from these historical patterns demonstrates how entrenched biases against the unemployed remain strong.

The findings from this study reveal a clear disjunction between guiding ideologies, political commitments, and actual implementation. Additionally, they reflect a broader global pattern in which unemployment is inadequately addressed within class analysis. By failing to recognize the unemployed as a distinct social stratum, political parties reinforce historical exclusions and deepen economic inequalities. A more comprehensive understanding of class is therefore necessary—one that acknowledges the realities of structural unemployment, informs more equitable policy-making, and redefines class struggle in the 21st century and beyond.

Table 4: Comparative analysis between parties addressing specific themes

Themes	CPN (UML)	CPN (MC)	NC	RPP	RSP
Distributional Location	No clear implication	Not included in the party constitution but discussed in the manifesto (Pratibaddataapatra, 2079 B.S., pp. 5, 11, 12)	No clear implication	No clear implication	No clear implication
Subjective Saliency	No explicit statement; mentions poverty reduction, partial employment (e.g., 100-day programs), etc.	Emphasis on private-sector reliance and self-employment; no explicit or focused statement on unemployment	Focused on economic growth; no explicit statements on the significance of the unemployed	Not mentioned	Minimal attention; offerings are suggested rather than explicitly addressed
Inequalities in Life Chances	Weak emphasis on inequalities faced by the unemployed; primarily focused on the working class	Weak emphasis on the unemployed; focus remains on workers and peasants	Acknowledges existing inequalities but provides weak policies and offerings to address them	None provided	Very weak and indirect focus (e.g., food security for the poor)
Historical Variation	Offerings continue past class-based approaches, with a focus on the working class	Maintains a class-based framework with continued focus on the working class, reflecting historical patterns	Indirect emphasis on the working class and other social strata	None provided	Partial consideration through poverty alleviation programs
Class Consciousness	No specific mention of the unemployed as a distinct stratum with class characteristics; focus remains on existing classes, particularly the working class	Unemployed individuals are not specifically mentioned or recognized as a distinct class; class struggle is prioritized	Does not identify the unemployed as a distinct social class; instead, emphasizes general inequality reduction	No class framework for the unemployed; they are not perceived as a distinct social class	Weak recognition; emphasis is placed on poverty, but the unemployed are not identified as a distinct class

Themes	CPN (UML)	CPN (MC)	NC	RPP	RSP
Class Antagonism and Class Conflict	Emphasizes the working class, women, and other marginalized social groups; worker-centric offerings take priority, while the unemployed are overlooked—potentially fueling class antagonism	Class characteristics of the unemployed are overlooked; prioritizing the working class may foster class divisions	No direct recognition of the unemployed; risk of exclusion potentially contributes to class antagonism	No consideration given; high risk of antagonistic conflict due to unaddressed hardships faced by the unemployed	Policies tend to favor employed individuals; emphasis on privatization may contribute to class antagonism
Emancipation Policies	Short-term employment programs like PMEP; challenging proposals such as the “20 Guarantees” (e.g., guarantees 3, 6, and 15 on p.25 of the manifesto) are difficult to implement	Policies promoting national capital, social justice, and criticism of liberalism (p.11 of the manifesto) face implementation challenges; programs remain private-sector-based and focused on self-employment	Indirect support through economic development; foreign labor migration is presented as an alternative (Constitution of NC, 2078 B.S.)	The policy of mobilizing volunteers with fixed-term employment lacks a clear implementation strategy; job creation and income generation are discussed, but the target population remains undefined	Policies are challenging and unclear—for example, the promotion and creation of domestic employment (p.10); tourism is identified as the foundation for employment generation (p.12) in Chinaripustika and directive principles (Constitution of the RSP, 2079 B.S., pp. 4, 10)

Conclusion

This study reveals the historical and systemic exclusion of unemployed individuals from Nepal’s political discourse, highlighting a persistent failure across diverse political ideologies and party foundational texts to recognize unemployment as an evolving socio-economic class. Despite their ideological differences—DS, MLM, and PMPD—Nepali political parties converge in their neglect of the structural and class-based

dimensions of unemployment. Party constitutions often remain silent on sustainable unemployment policies, while election manifestos typically offer populist, short-term promises that rarely translate into effective reforms. This disconnect not only undermines public trust but also reinforces the political marginalization of the unemployed, thereby perpetuating deep-rooted socio-economic inequalities.

Historically, Nepal's political movements emphasized transformative goals such as state-led development, land reform, employment generation, a self-reliant economy, agricultural upliftment, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. However, in practice, parties like the NC, the CPN (UML), and the CPN (MC) have increasingly adopted neoliberal strategies prioritizing privatization, foreign direct investment, and economic liberalization—although the UML has emphasized the promotion of national capital development. This ideological shift has resulted in policy inconsistency, over-reliance on remittances, and the systematic sidelining of rural employment and labor protections in favor of urban-centered, market-driven programs. The consequences include the expansion of informal economies, rising youth unemployment, and a widening gap between political rhetoric and socio-economic realities.

A key observation is the ideological divergence of political parties from their stated commitments. Once grounded in transformative economic visions, parties now converge in practice, marked by centralized governance, political opportunism, and declining public accountability. As a result, the ideological distinctions that once defined party positions have become increasingly blurred, leading to erosion in policy coherence and representational equity.

Most parties—including the NC, the CPN (UML), the CPN (MC), the RPP, and the RSP—fail to explicitly identify the unemployed as a distinct socio-economic group in their foundational documents. While the working class and cultural communities are frequently acknowledged, unemployed individuals remain structurally and symbolically invisible, with only limited recognition by the CPN (MC). Subjective salience is also absent, as none of the parties acknowledge the lived experiences, psychosocial hardships, or specific vulnerabilities of the unemployed. Instead, the political focus remains on groups such as laborers, farmers, and marginalized

communities, thereby reinforcing the invisibility of the unemployed in social welfare and development agendas.

In terms of life chances, policies are largely tailored to those who are employed or economically active, leaving the unemployed with limited access to essential services such as welfare programs, skills training, and social protection. This exclusion exacerbates existing inequalities. Political rhetoric—such as slogans like “Workers of the World, Unite”—and resource allocations continue to uphold class hierarchies, fostering resentment among the unemployed, who increasingly perceive themselves as systematically excluded from public benefits and opportunities.

Analysis of historical variation shows that while early ideological commitments emphasized inclusion and class struggle, current practices reveal a neoliberal drift that prioritizes privatization and remittance-based growth over structural employment strategies. Under the theme of emancipation, most parties offer only short-term or fragmented policies—such as temporary job creation or basic vocational training—without clear long-term strategies or accountability mechanisms. Promises of inclusion remain largely rhetorical.

Crucially, there is a complete absence of class consciousness regarding unemployed individuals. No party recognizes the unemployed as an emergent class, nor do they propose organizational structures or platforms to ensure their political representation. This oversight undermines the possibility of inclusive, class-based policy development and reinforces existing socio-political hierarchies.

The study also identifies a pressing and underexplored issue: the emergence of class antagonism between the employed and unemployed. As global trends such as automation, labor restructuring, and globalization continue to reshape the nature of work, the socio-political identity of the unemployed is increasingly taking on class-like characteristics. Yet even labor-centric and left-leaning parties in Nepal have failed to adapt

to this evolving reality. Unemployment continues to be viewed as an individual problem rather than a systemic outcome of political-economic processes.

A more robust and inclusive approach to policymaking is therefore essential. Recognizing unemployment as a distinct and dynamic social class requires a shift away from employment-centric and election-driven responses toward structural solutions. These include the implementation of comprehensive social security systems, targeted skill development programs, and expanded equitable access to employment opportunities. Furthermore, fostering class consciousness among unemployed individuals is critical for achieving political recognition and representation. Lessons from international movements—such as Argentina’s piqueteros—and ongoing debates on Universal Basic Income in Europe underscore the deeply political nature of unemployment and the potential of collective action to reshape public policy.

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