Universiteit
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The Netherlands

Transforming Nepal's political system: party positions and public opinion (2004-2012)

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Citation
Sen, P. K. (2025, April 24). *Transforming Nepal's political system: party positions and public opinion (2004-2012)*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4212957

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Transforming Nepal's Political System: Party Positions and Public Opinion (2004-2012)

Pawan Kumar Sen

Transforming Nepal's Political System: Party Positions and Public Opinion (2004-2012)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus prof. dr. ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
te verdedigen op 24 April 2025
klokke 13:00 uur

door

Pawan Kumar Sen
geboren te Darsing Dahathum
Syangja District, Nepal
ìn 1970

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te verdedigen op 27 November 2024
klokke 11.30 uur

door

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My greatest gratitude goes to my supervisors, Prof. Dr. Rudy Andeweg † and Prof. Dr. Joop van Holsteyn for accepting me as a student to pursue a PhD study in the Department of Political Science of Leiden University, the Netherlands. This dissertation could not have taken this shape without their critical comments and continued efforts in the entire period of the study. Their regular guidance helped to develop insights for interpreting the survey data. My heartfelt thanks go to Dr. Michael Meffert (Department of Political Science) for teaching me the advanced course on Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis. It is my pleasure to thank Dr. Patrick Overeem (Department of Public Administration) for providing me an introductory tutorial on Philosophy of Science. I was very fortunate to have the friendship of Mr. Caspar ten Dam who accompanied me every moment as a family member during my stay in Leiden, and never let me feel I was away from home. I owe a special debt of gratitude to my organisation, Himalaya Comprehensive Research Pvt. Limited (Nepal), for providing some funds for buying books. I also express my gratitude to the Asia Foundation Nepal, the Saferworld UK and Interdisciplinary Analysts (Nepal) for allowing me to utilize raw data of public opinion surveys for my study. My final words of heartfelt thanks go to my family members for regularly encouraging me to work hard and for their patience during my study period.

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ACRONYMS

B	Beta coefficient
BS	Bikram Samvat (an era officially used in Nepal)
CA	Constituent Assembly
CATPCA	Categorical Principal Component Analysis
CDR	Central Development Region
COAS	Chief of the Army Staff
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Accord
CPN	Communist Party of Nepal
CPN (Maoist)	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CPN (Marxist)	Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist)
CPN (ML)	Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist)
CPN (UML)	Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist)
CSDC	Centre for the Study of Developing Societies
DK/CS	Do not know/ cannot say
EDR	Eastern Development Region
Exp	Expectation
FWDR	Far-Western Development Region
HDI	Human Development Index
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IIDS	Institute of Integrated Development Studies
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure
MARG	Marketing and Research Group
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPs	Members of the Parliament
MWDR	Mid-Western Development Region
N	Sample size
NCCS	Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies
NCD	Nepali Congress (Democratic)
NCP	Nepali Congress Party
NCPS	Nepal Contemporary Political Situation
NEFIN	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities
NH	Not heard
NMKP	Nepal Majdur Kisan Party
NOSC	Nepal Opinion Survey Centre
NSP	Nepal Sadbhawana Party
NU	Not understood
P	Probability
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
POLSAN	Political Science Association of Nepal
PPSS	People's Perception on Safety and Security
R^2	Coefficient of determination

RPP	Rastriya Prajatantra Party
RPP Nepal	Rastriya Prajatantra Party (Nepal)
SE	Standard Error
SPA	Seven-Party Alliance
TAF Nepal	The Asia Foundation Nepal
UCPN (Maoist)	United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VDC	Village Development Committee
WDR	Western Development Region

1

About This Study

1.1 Political Developments in Nepal

This study aims to analyse the structure and dynamics of public opinion in Nepal with regard to the radical transformation of the principal features of the country's political system in recent decades, with a particular focus on the similarities and/or differences between the positions taken by Nepal's major political parties and the concerns and priorities of the general public. Nepal has been witnessing a historic political transition in the first decade of the twenty-first century, changing characteristics of the political system that were not only fundamental, but that still seemed impervious to reform only years before the transformation. The monarchy has been abolished, and so have the unitary state structure and the state's association with the Hindu religion. In place of a Hindu unitary kingdom, the country has been declared a secular federal democratic republic in the fourth amendment to the Interim Constitution of Nepal on 28 December 2007.[1] The first sitting of the elected Constituent Assembly ratified this statement by overwhelming majority on 28 May 2008. The Constituent Assembly also gave an official status to languages other than Nepali. With this ratification, then King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (hereafter referred to as King Gyanendra) lost all perks and privileges except his rights as a common citizen. This was legally formalized by the new Constitution of the country promulgated on 20 September 2015 by the Constituent Assembly. Article 4(1) of the Constitution of Nepal 2015 has defined the 'State of Nepal' as *an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive democratic, socialist-oriented federal democratic republican state* (Constituent Assembly Secretariat 2015).

The promulgation of the new Constitution has not only ended the prolonged transition that the country had been witnessing, but also formally abolished the centuries-old Shah dynasty. The Constitution proclaims that sovereignty and state authority are vested in the people, not in the monarchy as stated in Nepal's previous constitutions. As written in its Preamble, the Constitution is determined to establish an egalitarian society on the basis of the principles of proportional inclusion and participation ensuring an equitable economy, prosperity and social justice. It has created a federal democratic republic with the introduction of seven provinces, ending all types of possibility of reinstatement of the monarchy and the unitary state. The form of governance of

[1] The fourth amendment guaranteed the republicanism, federalism and secularism by defining the 'State of Nepal' an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive and federal democratic republican state in its Article 4(1) (Law Books Management Board 2012).

the country shall be a multi-party, federal democratic republic with the lower house of parliament elected on the basis of a mixed electoral system (first-past-the-post and proportional representation)[2].

So, passing the new constitution was not just a reform of some aspects of previous constitutions, but a radical overhaul of the fundamental principles of the country's political system. Apart from the election of the Constituent Assembly, this transformation took place without the involvement of the citizens, for example through a referendum on the new constitution. However, the new political system's legitimacy and sustainability depend not only on the majority support of the main political parties, but also, arguably primarily, on that of the general public. A study by Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005) reveals that non-violent civic resistance and changes in public opinion are major factors that contribute to the success and failure of transitions to democracy. They find that non-violent civic resistance during the period of transition has a significant effect on yielding sustainable freedom. Referring to a Freedom House study, Shin (2007) argues that the success or failure of the process of democratization largely depends on the role the general mass played during the transition. The study shows that the likelihood of a successful transition from authoritarian rule to liberal democracy is over four times higher if transitions are supported by strong and non-violent civic coalitions than if they are not. Doorenspleet and Shrestha (2013) pay particular attention to the interactions between the mass level and various elite levels, arguing that the lack of consolidation of previous attempts at democratization in Nepal was caused by different degrees of support for democracy at different levels. They focus on support for the principle of democracy rather than for concrete constitutional arrangements as in my study, but both studies share the same conviction that the relationship between elite actions and public opinion is crucial for the legitimacy of the political system. Similarly, in the context of Uganda, Moehler (2006) argues that although public participation in the constitution-making process is one the most recommended methods for enhancing constitutional legitimacy, consensus among the political elites is a must to enhance constitutional support.

This researcher is fortunate to have raw data of a series of public opinion polls conducted during the period of transformation that enable him to study the structure and the development of public opinion, and to compare this to the positions taken by the main political parties.

1.2 Focus of the Study: Four Reforms

Modern Nepal had been constituted as a unitary Hindu kingdom from its foundation until the recent past. The Nepali monarchy, an institution associated with the formation of the Nepali state in 1768, had a traditional affiliation with Hinduism. The Hindu high caste hill group (that consists of *Chhetri, Bahun and Thakuri*) had the highest social status, by which they were able to control the state's resources, and to enjoy all powers and privileges while excluding others. In addition, only Nepali, which is the mother tongue of the Hindu high caste hill group, had received recognition from the state as an official language. These four fundamental characteristics of the

[2] The electoral system qualifies as Mixed Member Majoritarian (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001), with 165 MPs elected by first-past-the post and 110 MPs elected by nationwide proportional representation.

Nepali political system - (a) the monarchy, (b) the unitary form of governance, (c) the state's official association with Hinduism, and (d) the recognition of Nepali as the sole official language - were regarded as indispensable and inseparable components of the state's structure. These four components were promoted as the four pillars of Nepal's political structure until King Gyanendra lost power in April 2006.

More was at stake than the political institutions as such. Nepali identity, in the past, was moulded out of these four components. Nepali identity had been constructed on the basis of the dominant culture, religion and language of the Hindu high caste hill group. But at the same time Nepali society has been ethnically, culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse since its existence. While the promotion of the four political institutions had been unsuccessful in decreasing this diversity, it had protected the domination of the culture, religion and language of the Hindu high caste hill group and it had marginalized and even excluded cultures, religions and languages of others from the state's structure. This is the main reason that this study focuses on these four components.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The fact that the structure of the Nepali state was inextricably linked to the cultural, religious and linguistic domination by the hill caste group makes it all the more important to examine and compare the positions taken by the political elites (i.e. top-level political leaders of major political parties, legislators and prominent political decision makers) and the decisions taken by the political parties on the one hand with the opinions of the general public and its various segments on the other hand.

From a normative democratic point of view, it may seem preferable that the elites and political parties listen to public opinion. In particular, when it comes to establish or reform the rules and institutions of democratic decision-making, it would seem desirable that political parties seek to translate the concerns of ordinary citizens into a new constitution. But in some respects this line of argument may be too simple. Empirical studies of elite attitudes in a variety of countries have shown that political elites possess higher democratic values than the general public. Elites are more tolerant with regard to minority rights and civil liberties than the general public, and they have more support for democratic institutions and principles (e.g. McClosky 1964; Barnum and Sullivan 1989; Sullivan et al 1993; Farag 2020). Samuel Stouffer (1955) was the first to demonstrate that community leaders in the USA generally were more supportive of democratic principles than ordinary citizens. These studies share a common argument that political elites develop these values due to a process of selective recruitment and due to their socialization, leading to differences in tolerance between political elites and their public (Jackman 1972: 753; Shamir 1991: 1020; Sullivan et al 1993: 52-53). More recently, public opinion surveys conducted in Tunisia between 2010 and 2016 showed that Tunisian elites were more democratic than the mass, and the mass had developed more authoritarian positions that the elites over time (Farag 2020: 553-559). This became the basis for 'the theory of democratic elitism': the principles of democracy are safer in the hands of political elites than in those of the general public.

However, later studies have questioned this argument of political elites as being attitudinally more tolerant. Jackman (1972), for example, reanalysed Stouffer's data and concluded that the elite-mass difference in tolerance disappeared once demographic differences and particularly level of education were controlled for. Similarly, Shamir (1991: 1020) argued that political elites seemed to be more tolerant than their mass public because of the selective recruitment in which people belonging to certain social strata are overrepresented in the elites: the more educated, those of higher social and economic status. Sniderman et al (1991: 369-370) accept that political elites have higher democratic values than the public, but they stress that such attitudes should be studied within political elites because political parties differ significantly in their attitudes. In addition, the evidence of democratic elitism becomes weaker when the focus shifts from civil liberties to other democratic values and in particular when elites are studied in other systems than well-established Western democracies (Peffley and Rohrschneider 2007). The latter finding is especially relevant in a study of democratic reform in Nepal.

This study's comparison of the positions of elites and parties with those of the general public in the context of the recent transformation of the Nepali democratic system may thus contribute to the ongoing discussion of the elitist theory of democracy. For that purpose, this study will also review the empirical literature on the relationship between political parties and public opinion and distil from this literature three positions – parties represent public opinion; parties take decisions without taking public opinion into account; and party decisions and public opinion influence each other reciprocally – and compare these positions in the context of the four political reforms with the available evidence from the case of Nepal. Therefore, the study is basically a comparative case study of the four major political developments that recently took place in Nepal.

1.4 Research Questions and Objectives

The core question in this study is about the relationship between Nepali public opinion and the transformation of Nepal's political system. There can be little doubt that the political parties of Nepal have been the primary decision-makers in this constitutional transition, but this study seeks to ascertain to what extent the concerns of the Nepal's ordinary citizens have been addressed by the political parties.

Research questions that come to the fore in this context are:

1. Are Nepal's recent political changes, which are formalized in the new Constitution with regard to issues such as republicanism, federalism, secularism and multilingualism, reflecting the opinions of the general public?
2. During the transition process, have the positions of the political parties come closer to those of the general public, or conversely: have the opinions of the general public approached the positions of the parties?
3. To what extent can any difference between political parties and public opinion be explained by a composition effect, particularly by different levels of education of elites and ordinary citizens?

In order to answer these questions, the immediate objectives of this study are:

1. To analyse what longitudinal opinion surveys reveal about the concerns and priorities of the general public with regard to the four major constitutional reforms, and about any changes in these concerns and priorities over time.
2. To analyse what the decisions of major political parties and elite opinion surveys (as far as they are available) reveal about the concerns and priorities of the political elites of Nepal.
3. To compare the positions of the political parties with the concerns and priorities of the general public

1.5 Data on Public Opinion and Elite Opinion

Longitudinal opinion polls based on random (probability) sampling, titled 'Nepal Contemporary Political Situation' or NCPS, were conducted with the support from The Asia Foundation Nepal between 2004 and 2012, and this author was one of the principal researchers. In addition, other longitudinal opinion polls (also based on random sampling) called 'People's Perception of Safety and Security' or PPSS were conducted with the support from The Saferworld UK between 2007 and 2010, in which this author has also been involved. The availability of these longitudinal public opinion polls at such a crucial period in Nepal's history means that it is possible to measure and track people's perceptions, choices and priorities during the momentous historical transition and detect the continuities and changes in people's opinions toward the same topics and issues over the period. It would not be possible to do so if such longitudinal public opinion polls had not been conducted. Such longitudinal polls are very rare outside western established democracies. Conducting public opinion polls is even more challenging in a third world country like Nepal due to the paucity or poor quality of roads. In addition, an armed conflict between the state security forces and Maoist rebels increased the risk of collecting data in field. In addition, administering questionnaires at sampling sites in face-to-face mode was sometimes very difficult due to the low literacy of respondents because some questions phrased in the standard Nepali language were not easily understandable to them. Despite these challenges, we were able to conduct these opinion polls without compromising their quality. So, the public opinion data used in this study already constitute an important value in itself.

Ideally we should be able to compare the opinions of the citizens with those of members of the political elite. Fortunately, there is a study called *Nepal Democracy Survey* conducted in 2007. This survey not only measured the opinions of the political elites (i.e. members of the parliament [MPs]), but also compared them with the opinions of the general public. This was the first survey in the country that gauged the opinions of both the elites and the general public using the same instrument. Unfortunately, it was undertaken only once which means that this survey does not allow us to map any changes, any convergence or divergence, between the opinions of the two segments of society over time. However, the first decisions in the transition, taken by the elected Constitutional Assembly in 2008, were in line with the views expressed by the political elites

interviewed in 2007. The decisions of the political parties during the transition period are therefore examined in this study to determine the continuities and changes at the elite level.

1.6 Diversity at the Level of Both Parties and Society

So far, 'the' political elite or 'the' political parties, and 'the' general public or 'the' ordinary citizens have been referred to as if they are monolithic blocs or unitary actors. If they are such blocs or actors anywhere in the world, this is definitely not the case in Nepal. In fact, a considerable part of this study is devoted to analysing the differences of opinion on the four main constitutional reforms at both the mass and elite level. To help understanding those analyses, I briefly discuss the diversity at both the level of political parties and society.

1.7 Nepal's Major Political Parties

Nepal clearly has a multi-party system: currently over 70 parties are registered with the Election Committee of Nepal, but some of these parties are only represented at the provincial or local level. Here, I focus on the most important political parties at the national level.

Most of them were founded in the late 1940s in India since political parties were banned in Nepal at the time. Thus, political parties have had over 70 years of history in Nepal. The first democratic revolution they carried out in Nepal was in the late 1940s to the early 1950s to overthrow the Rana regime[3]. It was a part of a larger wave of decolonization and democratisation developed across the Indian subcontinent (Taras 2006: 52). So, their genesis was closely associated with the democratic movement against the Rana regime. Political parties have had a chequered history since then: from joining with the monarchy to oust the Rana regime in 1950 to participating in the election in 1959 (i.e. the first election to form an elected parliament in Nepal), leading an elected government and introducing multiparty democracy between 1959 and 1960, being banned by the monarchy between 1960 and 1990 (i.e., the period of the party-less authoritarian *Panchayat* regime[4]), reintroducing multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy in 1990

[3] The Rana regime was an oligarchic system always headed by a premier belonging to a particular family group called Rana. Nepal was ruled under this regime for 104 years (from September 1846 to February 1951). The regime had maintained total isolation from the rest of the world.

[4] *Panchayat* was the political system of Nepal from 1960 to 1990. The system was introduced by King Mahendra (who reigned 1955-1972) after overthrowing the first democratically elected government of Nepali Congress Party under the premiership of Bisheswor Prasad Koirala and dissolving the parliament on 16 December 1960. The parliamentary system was immediately abrogated and political parties were declared illegal. The King took back all executive powers proclaiming that the Nepali Congress government had failed to maintain a balanced foreign policy and had encouraged 'anti-national elements' (Joshi and Rose 1966: 385; Rose 1971: 231). The *Panchayat* system was formalized by promulgating a new constitution in December 1962, which introduced a party-less guided democracy giving all executive powers to the monarch. It outlawed all the political parties and their activities, and prohibited fundamental civil rights such as the right to express opinion and organize against the establishment. The *Panchayat* regime moulded Nepali national identity along the Nepali language, Hindu religion, loyalty to the monarchy and *daura suruwal* (a typical kind of costume worn by hill men). Nepali nationalism was often defined as anti-Indianism (Upadhya 2002: 57). The system lacked genuine people's participation and was highly centralized thus preparing the ground for another crisis of legitimacy (Hachhethu 2002: 29).

with the successful end of the people's movement of April 1990 (commonly known as *Jan Andolan I*, which literally means 'the first wave of the people's movement'), governing the post-1990 democratic governments, fighting Maoist rebels, being dismissed by the king in February 2005, and recently abolishing the monarchy.

The Nepali Congress Party

The Nepali Rastriya Congress Party was formed in October 1946 in the Indian city of Banaras and the Nepal Prajatantra Congress Party was created in August 1948 in Calcutta (now renamed Kolkata), India by educated middle class Nepali who were living in India either in exile or to earn their living. Both parties had a common goal of ousting the Rana regime and instating a multiparty democracy with a constitutional monarchy. They were united in April 1950 under a new name of Nepali Congress Party (NCP). The party called for an armed revolt during the Bairgania Conference in Bairgania, India in September 1950. It erected its own *Mukti Sena* (which literally means 'liberation army'), which succeeded in controlling more than fifty percent of the country's territory (Hachhethu 2002: 31). The NCP was one of the three parties which signed the Delhi Accord in February 1951 in Delhi, India with Rana representatives and King Tribhuvan. The accord formally abolished the Rana regime, terminated the armed revolt of the NCP, lifted the ban on political parties and allowed them to engage in political activities openly.

The NCP formally adopted democratic socialism as its ideology in 1956. A multiparty parliamentary democracy, periodic elections, non-violence, the guarantee of fundamental human rights and a constitutional monarchy were the party's basic political ideals. The party won a two-thirds majority (74 of the 109 seats) in the first parliamentary elections in 1959 and formed a government under the premiership of Bisheswor Prasad Koirala. The NCP government took some important steps towards the modernization of Nepal. It introduced some progressive policy measures such as the nationalization of *birta* lands (tax exempted lands), the abolition of the *raja rajauta* system (small feudatory principalities), the abolition of *jamindari* (big land holdings) and the imposition of a ceiling on land holdings, distribution of land to poor and landless peasants, the introduction of a property tax, and increased provision of education, health and communication services in the country (Hachhethu 2002: 33). It was this party which led the *Jan Andolan I* to overthrow the Panchayat regime and reintroduce multiparty democracy in April 1990. A faction of the party split away in September 2002 with the name Nepali Congress (Democratic), but it again merged with the NCP in September 2007.

The Communist Parties

The Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) was formed in Kolkata, India, in September 1949. Like the NCP, the CPN was founded with the main objective of overthrowing the Rana regime. However, its ideology of class-struggle and republicanism distinguished it from the NCP. The party participated in the anti-Rana movement with the NCP from the beginning. However, it did not embrace multiparty democracy and monarchy. In its first official handout published in April

1949,[5] the party declared that Nepal should strive for establishing a Chinese model people's republic and, if necessary, an armed insurgency should be launched to achieve this goal (Upreti 2006: 36). It condemned the 1951 Delhi Accord as a 'betrayal' and demanded the election of a constituent assembly. But its demands were not heard at that time. The influence of the CPN at the public level proved to be very weak when it won only 4 of the 109 seats and received only 7 percent of the popular vote in the first democratic parliamentary elections in 1959. In the post-1960 period, the CPN split into a number of factions. Seven communist parties out of these factions formed a coalition called United Left Front in February 1990, which launched the *Jan Andolan I* movement for the restoration of multiparty democracy, together with the NCP, in April 1990. It was the first time in the history of Nepal that two political camps agreed on common objectives and methods (Sharma 2001: 15). After the successful conclusion of *Jan Andolan I,* and just before the 1991 elections, the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) (CPN [UML]) was formed in January 1991 by unifying two communist parties – CPN (Marxist) and CPN (Marxist-Leninist). The party adopted multiparty democracy as part of its ideology and is against armed struggle since its existence. The CPN (UML) was united with another communist party called CPN (Maoist Centre) in May 2018 forming a new party named the Nepal Communist Party. However, it split again after a judicial decision that this label was already taken by another party.

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN [Maoist]) was formed in 1994 under the leadership of Pushpa Kamal Dahal (commonly known by his guerrilla name 'Prachanda') after splitting away from one of the communist factions - Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre). The CPN (Maoist) went underground immediately after its formation to begin preparations for an armed struggle, which they called the 'People's War'. They announced the 'People's War' against the Nepali state on 13 February 1996, demanding the formation of a constituent assembly and the declaration of a republic. The party basically adopted the philosophy of Mao Zedong. They were also inspired by the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement and Peru's left wing guerrilla movement 'Shining Path'. It is generally believed that the Maoists' armed struggle prepared the ground for the eventual establishment of a republic in Nepal. It also increased political awareness among the general public. After waging the 'People's War' for ten years, the CPN (Maoist) entered into a 12-point Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA)[6] in November 2005 in which they agreed to establish a lasting peace in the country, expressed their commitment to hold elections for a constituent assembly, and agreed to end the 'autocratic monarchy' through a nationwide mass movement (which they called *Jan Andolan II*). The party signed the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) with the government in November 2006 ending the decade-long armed insurgency. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord paved the

[5] It was published by an organizing committee of Nepali leftists which was to become the Communist Party of Nepal in September 1949.

[6] It was an alliance formed by the seven agitating parliamentarian political parties on May 2005 to protest against the King's take-over of 1 February 2005, when the incumbent King Gyanendra dismissed the appointed Deuba government, declared a state of emergency and took all executive powers. The seven parties included in the alliance were Nepali Congress, Nepali Congress (Democratic), CPN (UML), Nepal Workers Peasants Party, Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi), United Left Front and People's Front. The United Left Front mentioned here is different to the one formed in the eve of the *Jan Andolan I* of April 1990. This one is a front of five fringe Nepali communist parties formed on 3 October 2002 to mobilize the mass against the king's takeover.

way for holding elections to a constituent assembly by mid-June 2007, among many other things. Since then, the CPN (Maoist) became a mainstream political party and accepted multiparty democracy with periodic free and fair elections. It was renamed as the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in January 2009 and as the CPN (Maoist Centre) since May 2016. The party briefly merged with the CPN (UML) in May 2018 but they split again in 2021.

Janamorcha Nepal, literary People's Front Nepal, was founded in 2002 as an electoral front of the CPN (Unity Centre-Masal). It was formed by the merger of Samyukta Janamorcha Nepal, literally Joint People's Front Nepal, an electoral front of the CPN (Unity Centre) and Rastriya Janamorcha, literally National People's Front, an electoral front of the CPN (Masal). Janamorcha Nepal and its affiliated party - the CPN (Unity Centre-Masal) - merged with the CPN (Maoist) to form the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in October 2008.

Nepal Majdur Kisan Party (NMKP; literally Nepal Workers and Peasants Party) is one of the factions split from the Communist Party of Nepal in January 1975. It was a part of United Left Front formed in February 1990 – just before the April 1990 mass protest movement (i.e. *Jan Andolan I*).

Madhes-based Parties

Nepal Sadbhawana Parishad was founded in 1985 as a socio-political organization for equal rights of the *Madhesi* people (i.e. Nepali people who live in the plains situated in the southern part of Nepal spread from East to West, and whose languages and cultures are similar to those of the people in Northern India). Its main aim was to strengthen the voice of the *Madhesi* people for citizenship and equal identity, and to introduce Hindi as the second national language.[7] The organization also played an important role in the people's movement of April 1990 (i.e. *Jan Andolan I*). After the restoration of multiparty democracy, this organization transformed itself into a political party named Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP) in 1990. This was the party which pushed for federalism prior to *Jan Andolan II* of April 2006 (Baral 2009: 2). The party merged into the Rastriya Janata Party along with other Madhes-based political parties in 2017. In 2020 this party joined the leftist Samajbadi Party to form the Janata Samajbadi Party.

The Right

Finally, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) is a rightist political party formed by political elites of the Panchayat era in May 1990 (i.e. just after the successful end of *Jan Andolan I*). The party's main stances are pro-monarchy and pro-Hinduism. The party split and re-united numerous times, but one of the factions has always retained the original name - RPP. Although the party still

[7] In or around the same time, Bahujan Samaj Party was established in India in 1984 to attract scheduled caste voters (literally Dalit voters) which has been quite successful in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh where, it is believed that, inclusion of scheduled caste elites was very low in broad-based dominant parties due to unwillingness of upper-caste elites to share power (Chandra 2004).

ideologically stands for monarchism and a Hindu state, it has ratified Nepal's current constitution in September 2015, which guarantees that Nepal is a republican and secular state.

1.8 Ethnic Diversity

The population of Nepal is characterised by significant cultural diversity, due to historic waves of immigration from both the North and the South. According to the 2011 census, we can discern 125 caste or ethnic groups (excluding other unidentified groups), 123 languages, and 10 religious denominations. Ethnicity, language, religion, and region, are intertwined. Here we focus on the ethnic diversity and we follow the practice to simplify matters by combining ethnic groups into eight broad categories. The hill caste group includes upper caste Hindus of the hills: *Chhetri, Bahun, Thakuri* and *Sanyasi*); this is the group that long dominated Nepali politics and society, as mentioned above. The hill indigenous group includes non-Hindu Mongoloid communities of the hills: *Magar, Tamang, Rai, Gurung, Limbu, Sherpa,* etc. The hill *Dalit* includes lower caste Hindus of the hills: *Kami, Damai, Sarki,* etc. The *Newars* constitute a category by themselves: they are the indigenous people of the Kathmandu Valley, many of them Hindus, some Buddhists). The *Madhesi* caste group includes upper and middle caste Hindus of the Tarai region: *Yadav, Teli, Koiri, Kurmi, Brahmin, Rajput, Kayastha,* etc. The Tarai indigenous group includes Hindu Mongoloid communities of the Tarai: *Tharu, Dhanuk, Rajbansi, Danuwar, Dhimal, Meche, Koche,* etc. They prefer to identify themselves as Tarai indigenous group rather than *Madhesi* group).[8] The *Madhesi Dalit* includes lower caste Hindus of the Tarai: *Chamar, Musahar, Paswan, Dhobi, Bantar,* etc.; and finally, the Muslim category includes both the Tarai and the hill Muslims).

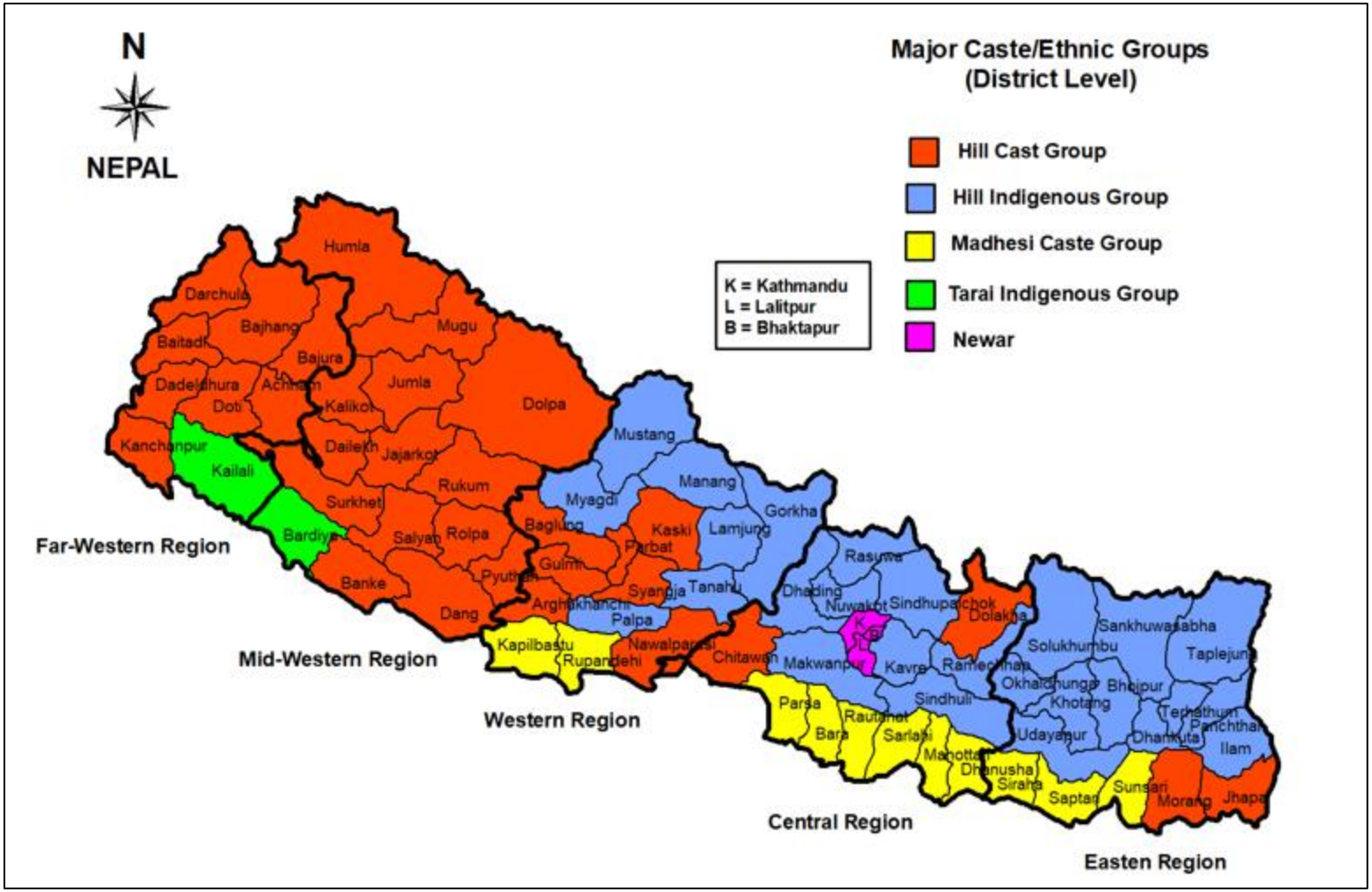
Any Nepali man or woman can be categorized into one of these eight ethnic categories. According to the 2001 National Census (i.e. the nearest census to the years the series of polls were conducted), their proportions to the total population of Nepal were: 31 percent hill caste group; 23 percent hill indigenous group; 8 percent hill Dalit; 5 percent Newar; 16 percent *Madhesi* caste group; 9 percent Tarai indigenous group; 4 percent *Madhesi* Dalit; and 4 percent Muslim. It is important to know the broad categories of ethnicity and their proportions because public opinions on the four major reforms will also be analysed across these groups in the subsequent chapters.

As is already evident from the labels given to the ethnic categories, ethnic groups have their basis in different parts of the country. As can be seen in Figure 1.1, the hill caste group constitutes a majority in the Far-Western and Mid-Western mountain and hill districts of the country. Also, they form a majority in some hill districts of the Western region. They are in majority in some Tarai districts of the Far-Western, Mid-Western, Western, Central and Eastern regions. Hill indigenous group forms a majority in the Western, Central and Eastern mountain and hill districts of the country. In a mountain district located in the Central region of the country, hill caste group is a majority. Newars are the major ethnic group in three districts of the Kathmandu Valley. The Madhesi caste group is the major community in most of the Western, Central and Eastern Tarai

[8] The Tharus - the largest ethnic group scattered east to west in the Tarai - disassociated themselves from the Madhesi identity in 2009 and demanded the recognition of a distinct Tharu identity (Pandey 2022: 98-99).

districts. The Tarai indigenous group is the major community in two districts of Tarai: one in the Far-Western Tarai and another in the Mid-Western Tarai.

Figure 1.1: Distribution of Major Caste/Ethnic Groups by District (as Proportion of District Population), 2001



Source: Sharma, 2008

1.9 Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation contains three parts: An introduction to political developments in Nepal and to the theory, methods and data used, followed by the analysis of public opinion on each of the four major reforms, and finally a comparison of public opinion and the positions taken by the political elites.

In the introductory part, Chapter 2 discusses Nepal's political history and transformation. It highlights the country's political history since the eighteenth century (when the Nepali state was founded) in the context of Nepali identity. Furthermore, major political events and transformations taken place in the country in the most recent three decades are described chronologically in this chapter. Chapter 3 presents a review of the literature relevant to this study. It discusses three positions with regard to the relationship between political parties/elites and public opinion. Chapter 4 describes methods and data used in this study.

In the second part, Chapter 5 analyses the general public's views on the issue of monarchism vs. republicanism in detail. The relationship between public opinion and various independent variables such as demographic variables and party affiliation is also investigated by using multiple regression analysis. Similarly, Chapters 6, 7 and 8 analyse public opinion on the issues of a Hindu state vs. secularism, monolingualism vs. multilingualism and a unitary state vs. federalism respectively. Chapter 9 investigates the underlying relationship between the opinions on the four reform issues through a factor analysis.

In the third part, Chapter 10 compares the general public's opinion and the political elites' opinion on the state restructuring issues in detail. It also compares public and elite opinion with the decisions by the major political parties.

Finally, Chapter 11 concludes the study by summarizing the key findings and formulating answers to the research questions. It discusses the implications of the key findings, data and methods for political science and society. It also recommends some suggestions for further research.

2

Political History and Transformation

2.1 Overview of Major Political Events (1768 - 2015)

This chapter highlights the major political events and developments in Nepali politics from 1768 to 2015. It provides a background to understanding the causes of identity movements, the Maoist insurgency, and the country's recent transformation from a Hindu unitary monarchical state to a secular federal republic. It covers the Hinduization of the country under the Shah regime (since 1768), the promulgation of the first civil code in 1854, the continuation of the Hinduization and the propagation of the Nepali language under the oligarchic Rana regime (1846-1951), the overrepresentation of the Hindu high caste hill group in the council of ministers, parliament, the bureaucracy and the political parties' central committees, the emergence of identity movements after the abolition of the Rana regime in 1951, the authoritarian Panchayat regime (1960-1990), the 1990 people's movement, the Maoist insurgency starting in 1996, the King's takeover in February 2005, the 2006 people's movement, the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Accord, the two Constituent Assembly elections held in April 2008 and November 2013, and, finally, the promulgation of the new constitution in September 2015.

The following table provides the chronology of the major political events and developments in Nepal, which are related to the topic of this study and discussed further in this and subsequent chapters.

Table 2.1: Major Political Events and Developments by Year

Year	Major Political Events and Developments
1324	• Formalization of the Hindu caste system for Newars of the Kathmandu Valley during the reign of King Harisingh Dev
1768	• Foundation of the Gorkha Empire (later to be known as the Kingdom of Nepal)
1805	• Prohibition of cow slaughter during the reign of King Ran Bahadur Shah
1809	• An ordinance was issued by the state, which ordered the Gurung community to perform religious rituals through Hindu Brahman priests instead of Buddhist Lamas, in return exempting them from certain taxes
1816	• The Gorkha Empire and the British East India Company signed the Treaty of Sugauli
1846	• Start of the oligarchic Rana Regime (see Chapter 1, footnote 3)

1854	• Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana introduced the first civil code, *Muluki Ain*, based on the Hindu caste system and values, in the entire Kingdom
1905	• Declaration of the Nepali language (then *Gorkhali* language, *Khas kura* or *Parbate kura*) as the only state language by Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher Rana
1909	• The Rana rulers began to call the country they ruled 'Nepal' instead of Gorkha
1913	• Establishment by the state of the *Gorkha Bhasa Prakashani Samiti* (Gorkha Language Publishing House) which was obliged to publish literature exclusively in the Gorkhali (or Nepali) language
1933	• The *Gorkhali* language, *Khas kura* or *Parbate kura* was renamed 'Nepali language' by the state
1949	• Establishment of the Communist Party of Nepal
1950	• Establishment of the Nepali Congress Party by unifying the Nepali Rastriya Congress and the Nepal Prajatantra Congress • The Nepali Congress Party called for an armed revolt against the Rana regime
1951	• Signing of the Delhi Accord by King Tribhuvan, the Nepali Congress Party, and Rana representatives, which formally abolished the oligarchic Rana regime, introduced a multiparty democracy and ended the armed revolt called by the Nepali Congress Party • The Nepal Tarai Congress raised the issue of an autonomous Tarai region including recognition of the Hindi language as a language of state administration in the Tarai
1954	• The Communist Party of Nepal passed a resolution to establish a republic by an elected constituent assembly
1959	• The first parliamentary elections were held; the Nepali Congress Party emerged as the largest party
1960	• King Mahendra overthrew the first democratically legitimated government of the Nepali Congress Party and dissolved the parliament • Multiparty democracy was abrogated and political parties were banned • The Panchayat system was introduced (see Chapter 1, footnote 4)
1962	• A constitution was promulgated under the Panchayat regime; Nepal was formally declared a Hindu Kingdom
1976	• Nepali Congress Party leader Bisheswor Prasad Koirala adopted a policy of 'national reconciliation' and returned to Nepal from exile in India
1980	• A national referendum was held in which a majority voted to reform, but retain the Panchayat system and to reject a return to multiparty democracy
1985	• Establishment of Nepal Sadbhawana Parishad after reorganizing the Nepal Tarai Congress, which would transform itself into the Nepal Sadbhawana Party in 1990
1990	• Mass protest movement (later commonly known as *Jan Andolan I*) called by the Nepali Congress Party and the United Left Front • Reinstatement of multiparty democracy and abolition of the Panchayat system • Establishment of the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) • Promulgation of a new constitution under the multiparty democracy
1991	• The CPN (UML) was formed by unifying two communist parties – CPN (Marxist) and CPN (Marxist Leninist)
1994	• The United Nations' Declaration of an 'International Decade of the World's Indigenous People' for the period 1995-2005

	• The CPN (Maoist) was formed after splitting away from one of the communist parties– CPN (Unity Centre)
1996	• The CPN (Maoist) put forward 40 demands to the government • The CPN (Maoist) began an armed insurgency against the state (a 'People's War' in their words)
1999	• The Supreme Court of Nepal prohibited the Kathmandu Metropolitan City to use the Newari language in its local administration
2001	• The Royal Palace massacre • The Deuba government rejected the three main demands of the Maoists (the formation of an interim government, election of a constituent assembly and the creation of a republican state) • The CPN (Maoist) unilaterally ended the ceasefire
2002	• Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba dissolved the House of Representatives and called early elections • King Gyanendra dismissed Prime Minister Deuba for not being able to hold general elections (he was reappointed in 2004)
2003	• The CPN (Maoist) issued a political document called *Ekkaisau Satabdima Janbadko Bikaas* (literally: Development of People's Democracy in 21st Century) in which it accepted competitive elections for the first time
2005	• King Gyanendra took over executive authority after dismissing the Deuba government • The King declared a state of emergency in the entire country • The Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) was formed in protest against the King's take-over • The Seven-Party Alliance and the CPN (Maoist) entered into a 12-point agreement in New Delhi
2006	• Mass protest movement (later commonly known as *Jan Andolan II*) called by the Seven-Party Alliance and the CPN (Maoist) • The King reinstated the House of Representatives • The House of Representatives abolished the King's executive authority, and declared Nepal a secular state • A Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed between the government (headed by Girija Prasad Koirala) and the CPN (Maoist)
2007	• Formation of an Interim Parliament • Endorsement of a new Interim Constitution • Protest of the Madhes Movement in the Tarai region against the interim constitution • Protest of the Janajati Movement in Kathmandu and the hill region • Signing of a 22-point agreement between the government and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum expressing a commitment to establishing a federal system of government • The CPN (Maoist) issued an 18-point charter of proposals, one of the demands being that the Interim Parliament proclaim Nepal a republic • The Nepali Congress Party issued a statement supporting republicanism • The Interim Parliament passed a resolution supporting republicanism • The major political parties reached a 23-point agreement to have the Interim Parliament proclaim the country a republic subject to endorsement by the first sitting of a constituent assembly

	• The Interim Parliament amended the Interim Constitution declaring the country to be a secular federal democratic republic
2008	• The first elections were held for a Constituent Assembly (CA). The CPN (Maoist) emerged as the largest political party • The first sitting of the Constituent Assembly proclaimed Nepal a federal, democratic, secular and republican state
2012	• The Constituent Assembly was dissolved without delivering a new constitution
2013	• The second elections for the Constituent Assembly were held. The Nepali Congress Party emerged as the largest political party
2015	• A new constitution was endorsed by the second Constituent Assembly

2.2 Political History in the Context of Nepali Identity

Prithvi Narayan Shah was the King of a small hill kingdom called Gorkha, in the centre of present-day Nepal. He founded the Gorkha Empire (later known as the Kingdom of Nepal[9]) in 1768 by conquering other small kingdoms spread across the region, including three small kingdoms in the Kathmandu Valley. His successors further expanded the empire through conquests and brought the empire to its present geographical shape.[10] During and after the expansion of the Gorkha Empire, Gorkhali (now known as Nepali) identity had been constructed on the basis of the culture, religion and language of the Gorkhali rulers and elites, who belonged to the Hindu high caste hill group (that consists of *Chhetri, Bahun and Thakuri*). These rulers and elites thus attempted to create a homogeneous national identity by promoting the Nepali language (previously known as the Gorkhali language, *Khas kura* or *Parbate kura*)[11] as the only state language, along with the Hindu religion (particularly with the variety of Hinduism practised in the hill region[12], which varies considerably from the orthodox Hinduism found in the plains of the river Ganges), and the monarchy with a Hindu king. To maintain the Gorkha Empire, power was concentrated considerably through a centralized administration and a unitary form of government, and the supremacy of the culture, religion and language of the Gorkhali rulers and elites was imposed. So, the Hindu monarchy of the Gorkhali Shah dynasty, the unitary state

[9] Only from 1909 onwards, the Rana rulers began to call the country they ruled 'Nepal' instead of Gorkha (Gellner 1997: 5).

[10] Prithvi Narayan Shah became the King of Gorkha in 1743. The conquest started in 1744 and came to a halt in 1816 when the Gorkha Empire and the British East India Company signed the Treaty of Sugauli. 1768, the year when the Gorkhas conquered Kathmandu and Lalitpur principalities, is considered to be the date of foundation of the Gorkha Empire.

[11] The mother tongue of the Hindu high caste hill group known as *Gorkhali* language, *Khas kura* or *Parbate kura* was renamed 'Nepali language' only in 1933 as a part of the construction of a homogeneous national identity (Gellner 1997: 5).

[12] Unlike in orthodox Hinduism, Tarai *Brahman* were ranked not only lower than hill *Brahman* but also lower than hill *Chhetri* and *Thakuri* in Nepal's Hindu caste system (Hofer 1979: 9; Gurung 1997: 502; Lawoti 2010: 85). But in Nepal's Tarai and India's gangetic plains, caste rules are followed as closely as possible to the classical Hindu pattern in which *Brahman* (i.e. Tarai *Brahman*) have always had the highest status. Dor Bahadur Bista, a prominent Nepali anthropologist, even calls the Hindu religion practiced in the hills of Nepal a pseudo-Hindu religion (Bista 1967: 110), and states that the caste system in Nepal varies greatly from the orthodox caste societies found elsewhere (Bista 1991: 3).

structure, the state's association with the Hindu religion and the propagation of Nepali as the only official language formed the fundamental structures of the Nepali state since its very foundation in 1768. These four components have been promoted as the four pillars of the Nepali state until April 2006. The Nepali identity was moulded out of these four components. Thus, the Nepali identity had been constructed on the basis of the dominant culture, religion and language of the Hindu high caste hill group.

As a leading scholar of Nepali history and society, Prayag Raj Sharma, wrote about Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founding King of modern Nepal: *"Prithvi Narayan Shah and those after him, based the country's unification on four key ideas: the unquestioning power and authority of the Hindu King of Gorkha, the supremacy of the Hindu ethos in national life, social integration through Hindu social system based on caste division, and recognition of Nepali as the language of government, administration and, in more recent times, education"* (Sharma 1992: 7).

This long-term project of enforced homogenization effectively rejected the notion of a national identity of the Nepali people based on multicultural values. Bhattachan (2001: 47) argues that the rulers of Nepal used coercive measures of Hinduization, Sanskritization[13], and Nepalization to eliminate or at least minimize the diversity in terms of language, religion, society, and culture. Another scholar, Letizia (2013: 33), maintains that the Nepali state pressured the indigenous groups to adopt the language, religion and culture of the dominant group (i.e. *Bahun* and *Chhetri*) under the homogenization and Nepalization scheme. The Hindu high caste hill group, and its cultural values, religion and language became the dominant and privileged features of Nepali state and society while other groups such as non-Hindu *Janajati*[14], Hindu lower-caste *Dalit* (untouchables in the Hindu caste system) and non-Nepali speaking *Madhesi*[15] were excluded from the mainstream of Nepali state and society, and ended up as under-privileged and marginalized groups. These groups were not only marginalized culturally, religiously and linguistically due to the state sponsored supremacy of the Hindu high caste hill group, but also excluded from the mainstream of the state's politics and economy.[16] The Human Development Index (HDI) - measured for the first time in Nepal in 1996- revealed a high degree of disparity among various communities. The HDI was the highest among *Newars*, hill *Brahmins* and *Chhetris* (the latter two are dominant groups) while that for the hill *Janajatis*, *Madhesis* and Dalits were extremely low (Nepal South Asia Centre 1998: 44, 266). A study showed that 70 percent of *Madhesi* Dalits and 50 percent of hill Dalits were landless (Subedi 2073 BS[17]: 45).

[13] Sanskritization is basically an influence on indigenous or tribal groups by making them adapting religion, culture, custom, ritual, ideology and way of living as like those of so-called Hindu upper caste people which are guided by the tradition of Sanskrit texts and Brahmanical ideas.

[14] The term *Janajati* is used as a synonym of indigenous groups in Nepal. Therefore, *Janajati* and indigenous groups are used as interchangeable terms in this dissertation.

[15] *Madhes* is the plain land situated in the southern part of Nepal spread from East to West, which is also commonly known as Tarai. People originally living there are known as *Madhesi* whose languages and cultures are similar to those of Northern India. Therefore, *Madhes* and Tarai are used as interchangeable terms in this dissertation.

[16] See Tables 2.2-2.6 of Chapter-2 to compare the ethnic composition of the government bureaucracy and the parliaments of the past.

[17] Some sources published in Nepal are dated in the local era called Bikram Samvat (BS), which is in advance of the Gregorian calendar by 57 years.

Many historical texts illustrate that Prithvi Narayan Shah wanted to make his kingdom *asal Hindustan*, a true and sacred Hindu land, uncontaminated by Muslim and Christian influences. One of these sources is a famous text known as *Dibya Upadesh*, which is a collection of advice given by Prithvi Narayan Shah to his courtiers before his death. Prayag Raj Sharma (1997: 478) argues that "*The motivation for combining all the hill states into a single, powerful entity was not merely personal ambition but the wish to build a sacred Hindu land, distinct from and secure against the non-believing Muglan and the English 'Phiringis' poised on the coast*". Harka Gurung, a prominent Nepali social scientist, even calls this Hinduization the *raison d'être* of the Nepali state between British India and imperial China (Gurung 1997: 501).

Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors promoted the hill Hindu caste system dividing the society into higher and lower castes in their new empire. The hill Hindu caste system, which is a hierarchy by nature, is not based on equality among different groups in society, but based on unequal social status determined by birth and geographical origin. Thus, an unequal hierarchical society in favour of the Hindu high caste hill group and to the detriment of all the others (including indigenous groups, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Madhesi Hindus and Hindu Dalits) was promoted in Nepal as soon as the country was founded.

It is worthwhile to recall that the hierarchical caste system was already entrenched in the kingdom of Gorkha before unification started,[18] even though the system was not as rigid as it was to become later (Whelpton 1997: 63). In the Kathmandu Valley too, the caste system had already been introduced much earlier. King Harisingh Dev (who reigned 1295-1324) further formalized the caste system for *Newars* (the indigenous people of the Valley) according to the Hindu religious code based on a hierarchical system in 1324 (Levi 2005: 144). King Jayasthiti Malla (who reigned 1382-1395) reformed the caste system in the Valley in the late fourteenth century, which categorized *Newars* into sixty-four[19] castes (Gurung 1997: 501; Ahuti 2004: 484).

In order to strengthen the Hinduization of the country, King Ran Bahadur Shah (reigned as King from 1777 to 1799 and as Regent for his son Girvan Yuddha Shah from 1804 to 1806) prohibited cow slaughter in 1805 (Michaels 1997: 86; Sharma 2004: 128 & 191).[20] The Gorkhali rulers had to face many conflicts with the *Kirati* people of the eastern region and the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley to prevent them from eating beef (Levi 2005: 142 & 168; Levi 2007: 52). Many people from beef consuming communities such as the Tamang and Lumbu fled to Sikkim (a neighbouring

[18] The Hindu caste system was introduced in Gorkha principality by the King Ram Shah (who reigned 1603–1636) (Gurung 1997: 501).

[19] Gyanmani Nepal, a prominent Nepali historian, says that Jayasthiti Malla had categorized *Newars* of the Kathmandu valley (which was called Nepal valley at that time) into 52 castes (2055 BS [1999]: 192). But another prominent historian, Nayaraj Pant, argues that the hierarchical caste system was already in practice in the Kathmandu valley and other parts of Nepal long before Jayasthiti Malla (2058 BS [2002]: 178-179).

[20] The cow is considered to be the most sacred animal in Hindu religion. Killing it and consuming beef are strict taboos in Hindu society. But, non-Hindu indigenous communities living in the hills and mountains of Nepal, including Newars of the Kathmandu valley, had been consuming beef from ancient time prior to this ordinance or until they came under Gorkhali regime (Hamilton 1819: 53-55; Hodgson 1833: 218; Vansittart 1896: 103, 132 and 167; Levi 2005: 142; Sharma 2039 BS: 325 & 378).

independent state at that time, now a province of India) and other parts of India to avoid punishment (Lawoti 2010: 84). With a view to assimilate the Gurung community (one of the major communities which assisted the Gorkhali Shah kings and their army during the conquest) into the Hindu norm, King Girvan Yuddha Shah issued an ordinance in 1809, ordering them to perform religious rituals through Hindu Brahman priests instead of Buddhist Lamas, in return exempting them from certain taxes (Nepal 2055 BS: 263). The assimilation of the Newars into the Hindu religion is remarkable. Historical sources estimate that two-thirds of Newar population were Buddhists and only one-thirds were Hindus until the late nineteenth century (Vansittart 1894: 214). But according to the 2011 national population census, 97 percent of the Newar population were followers of the Hindu religion (Dahal 2014: 20).

Jung Bahadur Rana, then Prime Minister and founder of the oligarchic Rana regime, introduced the first civil code, *Muluki Ain*, based on the Hindu caste system and values, in 1854 to be effective in the entire kingdom. The civil code explicitly stated that the King himself must be a Hindu to rule the country (Toffin 2006: 227-228). It further protected the higher status of the Hindu high caste hill group at the cost of others. It imposed Hindu caste rules (i.e. the Hindu hierarchical caste system) on the indigenous groups, giving them inferior status (Gurung 1997: 501; Subba 2006: 31-32). This civil code formalized discriminatory punishment of people from different castes for the same crimes. For example, *Chhetri*, *Thakuri* (in spite of their higher status in the Hindu society), the indigenous groups and *Dalits* could be enslaved or sentenced to death for crimes such as adultery and murder while *Brahman* received a lighter punishment such as having their hair shaved and subsequent downgrading in caste for the same crimes (Hofer 1979: 80, 108). *Brahmans* were even exempted from some obligations to the state such as certain taxes and compulsory labour (Lawoti 2010: 87). For instance, they were granted an exemption from labour-tax obligations under a system called *jhara* during 1813-14 (Regmi 1978: 109). With the promulgation of *Muluki Ain*, the ban on cow slaughter was made much stricter in order to protect the holiness of the cow. The Rana regime actually wanted to control and homogenize remote areas and the indigenous groups through this civil code (Michaels 1997: 90). The centrality of the Hindu religion and values in the state's structure continued even after the abolition of Rana regime in 1951. Though there were some political and economic reforms, the 'predatory character' of the Nepali state, as it was called by Toffin (2010: 43), did not change much, and the supremacy of the hill *Brahman* and *Chhetri* over political and economic resources continued unabated. The country was formally declared a Hindu kingdom under the new Constitution that was promulgated under the autocratic *Panchayat* regime (1960-1990) in 1962. The executive power of the Hindu king and the entrenchment of Hindu values in the state institutions and public policies were enshrined in this Constitution.

Another important feature of Nepali identity was the promotion of the Nepali language – the mother tongue of the Hindu high caste hill group (and of the hill Dalits too). When then Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher Rana formally proclaimed the Nepali language to be the only state language in 1905, he ordered his government not to use and recognize other languages in the state administration. As a consequence, non-Nepali speakers such as *Janajati* and *Madhesi* groups felt discriminated in subsequent years and officially became second-class citizen. Before

this declaration, the use of the Nepali language was not compulsory in the country's judiciary and bureaucracy (Malla 1979: 175).[21]

The Nepali language was further propagated by the Nepali state to the detriment of other languages with the establishment of the *Gorkha Bhasa Prakashani Samiti* (literally: *Gorkha Language Publishing House*) in 1913, which was obliged to publish literature exclusively in the Nepali language. In the language policy implemented during the Rana regime in 1917, languages of indigenous groups were called *jangali bhasha,* literally meaning 'wild languages' which meant to indicate 'uncivilized languages', and Gorkha language could not progress unless these languages were prohibited (Gurung 2006: 130-131). Even after the introduction of the democracy, the exclusive strategy of the state was apparent when the National Education Planning Commission published a report, *Education in Nepal*, in 1956, which explicitly recommended the government to promote the Nepali language as the only language in schools with a view to gradually ceasing indigenous and regional languages. With the promulgation of the 1962 Constitution (under the *Panchayat* regime), the state adopted a one-language policy declaring the Nepali language to be the national language of the country, because of which speakers of other languages felt suppressed (Gurung 2003; Lawoti 2010; Sapkota 2010). Any attempt to revive other languages was interpreted as communalism (in the sense of an ethnic identity that stimulates communal violence) by the state (Malla 1979: 173). The period of the *Panchayat* regime was the time during which the Nepali state made intensive efforts to evolve itself into a nation-state by creating a homogeneous national identity with a common religion, culture and language (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1997: 423; Pradhan 2002: 11; Hangen 2010: 31).[22]

2.3 Ethnic Composition of Political Leadership and Bureaucracy: From History to the Recent Past

In the Nepali context, not only the ethnic composition of the political leadership but also the ethnic composition of the government bureaucracy is unbalanced. Underrepresentation of marginalized groups can be seen in the ethnic composition of the government bureaucracy (i.e. decision-making level government officials) recorded between 1786 and 1999. Table 2.2 shows the domination of the Hindu high caste hill group at the decision-making level of the bureaucracy since 1786, shortly after the unification of the country. This pattern has not changed significantly

[21] Some scholars of Nepali history contend that *Khas kura* or *Parbate kura* (the earlier form of the Nepali language) had already been used as lingua-franca, and accepted as the state language in various principalities long before the foundation of the Gorkha Empire (Hutt 1997: 109; Whelpton 1997: 65; Dhungel 2010: 180). According to Gaige (1975: 132), it was certain that Nepali language would be gradually learned by the hill and Tarai people through cultural transition even if the state had not promoted it. Hamilton (1819: 26) mentioned that Magars (who were the third largest group after Chhetris and Bahuns, and who had held powerful positions in the state until later) had forgotten their mother tongue and started speaking the Khas language.

[22] Efforts of enforced homogenization were not only made through the state's formal laws and rules during the *Panchayat* period, but also through informal decisions by local government officials. For example, in his memoir, Harka Gurung, wrote that when he was at Jomsom, the headquarter of Mustang district, in 1973, he learned that a school inspector (a local officer from District Education Office) had decreed a decade ago that only pupils with Hindu names could be enrolled in schools because of which local people were encouraged to discard their original Tibetan names (Gurung 1980: 211).

between the late-eighteenth century and the mid-twentieth century. However, some improvement in representation has occurred after the April 1990 people's movement. Although the domination of the Hindu high caste hill group and Newars continued, the representation of the Hindu high caste *Madhesi* group and the hill indigenous group had increased by 1999. However, the former group remains over-represented while the latter one is still under-represented compared to their shares to the country's total population, as measured by the 2001 national census. People from other *Madhesi* caste groups such as the Hindu middle caste *Madhesi* group, the Tarai indigenous group, the *Madhesi* Dalits and Muslims were effectively excluded from positions of authority and responsibility since the foundation of the modern Nepal, a situation which still prevailed in the late-twentieth century.

Table 2.2: Ethnic Composition of the Government Bureaucracy, 1786-1999

Ethnicity	1786-1814	1854	1950	1999	2001 Census
Hindu high caste hill group	82%	78%	82%	66%	31%
Hill indigenous group	18%	3%	1%	8%	23%
Hill Dalit	0%	0%	0%	*	8%
Newar	0%	15%	8%	13%	5%
Hindu high caste Madhesi group	0%	1%	*	12%	1%
Other Madhesi caste group	0%	3%	9%	0%	32%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	102	212	258	1,158	22,736,934

*Note: * represents a percentage below 0.5, but not zero. The category 'Other Madhesi caste group' includes the Hindu middle caste Madhesi group (15%), the Tarai indigenous group (9%), the Madhesi Dalits (4%) and Muslims (4%) (Central Bureau of Statistics 2003).*

Source of the ethnic composition of the government bureaucracy: Gurung 2003: 6 and Lawoti 2010: 98
Source of the ethnic composition of the population: 2001 National Census, Central Bureau of Statistics 2003

The representation of the hill indigenous group in the administrative elite went down drastically since the formation of the country in 1768. Though it had increased in 1999 compared to 1854 and 1950, this group's representation was still lower if compared to the period of 1768-1814. The leading posts in the civil administration were monopolized by noble families, landlords and other privileged groups throughout the Rana period (Regmi 1978: 32). A paragraph by John Whelpton (1997: 43-44) illustrates the marginalization of the hill indigenous group quite clearly: *"Until some years into the nineteenth century, the political elite surrounding the Gorkha monarchy included Magars and Gurungs who were acknowledged at such. By 1830s British observers believed that there were no Magars and Gurungs amongst army officers"*. Magars and Gurungs belong to hill indigenous group. The representation of the Hindu high caste Madhesi group was proportional until 1950, but they were over-represented by 1999. The presence of Newars in Nepal's administrative elite was also substantial and disproportional to their size in the country's population. But even after the Rana period, and in spite of the abolition of caste-based discrimination with the promulgation of the new Civil Code in 1963,[23] the dominant character of

[23] Even though caste-based discrimination was declared illegal in the Civil Code 1963, it was not made punishable until the Constitution of 1990. Article 11(4) declared: "No person shall, on the basis of caste, be discriminated against

the Nepali state did not change much, and Bahuns and Chhetris (who belong to the Hindu high caste hill group) continued to enjoy most power.

The Hindu high caste hill group was always over-represented not only at the decision-making level of Nepal's bureaucracy, but also in the Council of Ministers. This group was over-represented by a factor 2 in 1999 (see Table 2.3). The representation of the hill indigenous group in the Council of Ministers had not only gone down in 1999 compared to 1959, but they were also considerably under-represented compared to their size in the country's total population. The presence of Newars had increased significantly between 1959 and 1999. There were no changes in the representation of the Madhesi groups (including Muslims) in 1959 and 1999. In both years, they were significantly under-represented compared to their share of the total national population.

Table 2.3: Ethnic Composition of the Councils of Ministers, 1959 and 1999

Ethnicity	1959	1999	2001 Census
Hindu high caste hill group	53%	63%	31%
Hill indigenous group	26%	12%	23%
Hill Dalit	0%	0%	8%
Newar	5%	9%	5%
All Madhesi groups	16%	16%	33%
Total	100%	100%	100%
N	19	32	22,736,934

Source of the ethnic composition of the Councils of Ministers: Neupane 2000: 67
Source of the ethnic composition of the population: 2001 National Census, Central Bureau of Statistics 2003

If we look into the ethnic composition of the central committees of the major political parties in office in 1959 and 1999,[24] we find a similar domination of the Hindu high caste hill group and of Newars (see Table 2.4). These groups were over-represented by almost a factor 2 while other groups were under-represented. Hill Dalits were not represented at all.

as untouchable, be denied access to any public place, or be deprived of the use of public utilities. Any contravention of this provision shall be punishable by law." (Law Books Management Board 1990)

[24] Table 2.4 slightly exaggerates the ethnic bias, as the calculations include only broad-based major political parties (excluding region-based and ethnicity-based parties). The Nepali Congress Party, Gorkha Parishad, Sanyukta Prajatantra Party and the Communist Party of Nepal were included in 1959; The Nepali Congress Party, CPN (UML), CPN (ML), RPP Thapa and RPP Chand are included for 1999 (Neupane 2000: 71 & 186).

Table 2.4: Ethnic Composition of the Central Committees of the Major Political Parties, 1959 and 1999

Ethnicity	1959	1999	2001 Census
Hindu high cast hill group	63%	58%	31%
Hill indigenous group	14%	15%	23%
Hill Dalit	0%	0%	8%
Newar	14%	11%	5%
All Madhesi groups	9%	16%	33%
Total	100%	100%	100%
N	79	166	22,736,934

Source of the ethnic composition of the central committees of the major parties: Neupane 2000:71
Source of the ethnic composition of the 2001 National Census: Central Bureau of Statistics 2003

After the reinstatement of multiparty democracy in 1990, there were also no significant changes for the marginalized groups in their political representation. Table 2.5 illustrates the domination of the Hindu high caste hill group in four lower-house parliaments elected in 1959, 1991, 1994 and 1999. The ethnic composition of three successive lower houses of parliament elected after 1990 under multiparty democracy (in 1991, 1994 and 1999) shows that there was no reason for the marginalized groups to feel any substantial changes. Their representation in parliament was not better than in 1959: a continuous underrepresentation compared to their size of the total population. Only Newars were proportionally represented.

Table 2.5: Ethnic Composition of the Lower-House of Parliament in 1959, 1991, 1994 and 1999

Ethnicity	1959	1991	1994	1999	2001 Census
Hindu high caste hill group	59%	56%	63%	59%	31%
Hill indigenous group	15%	17%	12%	14%	23%
Hill Dalit	0%	*	0%	0%	8%
Newar	4%	7%	6%	7%	5%
All Madhesi groups	22%	20%	19%	20%	33%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	109	205	205	205	22,736,934

*Note: * represents a percentage below 0.5, but not zero.*
Source of the ethnic composition of the lower-house parliaments: Neupane 2000: 70 & Baral 2009: 5
Source of the ethnic composition of the population: 2001 National Census, Central Bureau of Statistics 2003

In the upper house of the country's bicameral parliament formed in 1959 and 1999 too, the Hindu high caste hill group and Newars had occupied more seats than expected on the basis of their share of the country's total population. The upper house was composed on the basis of proportional representation of the parties represented in the lower house. However, there was no proportional representation of marginalized groups such as the hill indigenous group and the Madhesi groups (including Muslims) in the Upper House in 1959 and 1999. There was no representation of the hill Dalit at all in 1959, but they were proportionally represented in 1999.

Table 2.6: Ethnic Composition of the Upper House of Parliament in 1959 and 1999

Ethnicity	1959	1999	2001 Census
Hindu high caste hill group	64%	58%	31%
Hill indigenous group	11%	10%	23%
Hill Dalit	0%	7%	8%
Newar	17%	13%	5%
All Madhesi groups	8%	12%	33%
Total	100%	100%	100%
N	36	60	22,736,934

Source of the ethnic composition of the upper-house parliaments: Neupane 2000: 69-70
Source of the ethnic composition of the population: 2001 National Census, Central Bureau of Statistics 2003

2.4 The Demand for Multiculturalism: the 1990 Constitution and Its Aftermath

Identity movements by indigenous and other marginalized groups demanding equal rights, including religious and linguistic freedom, began to emerge after 1951 when the Nepali polity opened up with the abolition of the oligarchic Rana regime and the introduction of multiparty democracy.[25] They even raised the issue of autonomous regions already. A regionally oriented party, the Nepal Tarai Congress, first raised the issue of an autonomous Tarai region in 1951 under the leadership of Vedananda Jha. The party also demanded recognition of Hindi as a language of state administration in the Tarai (Joshi and Rose 1966: 202; Gaige 1975: 109). However, the issue fizzled out after the first parliamentary election held in February 1959 turned out to be a disaster for this party.[26] In his autobiography, Bisheswor Prasad Koirala, the most charismatic political figure of modern Nepal, mentions the *Kirati* people's demand for an ethnic autonomous region in the *Majh-Kirat* region (a region traditionally inhabited by the *Rai* indigenous group in the Dudh Kosi and Arun river basins) during his visit to Bhojpur in 1951 when he was the Home Secretary (Koirala 2055 BS: 162-163). Ethnic and identity movements became active in an organized manner from the 1980s when the *Panchayat* regime became more liberal.[27] Most of these movements confined themselves to the preservation of ethnic and linguistic identities by forming cultural associations and publishing cultural magazines (Gurung 1997: 526; Gurung 2004: 435; Sharma 1997: 483). However, numerous ethnic organizations and political forums that came into existence during the eighties advocated ethnic identity and equal rights.[28] But these movements were not strong enough to change the existing structure of the

[25] Language movements had started in Nepal much earlier than 1951. For instance, the *Nepalbhasa* movement which began in the 1920s was strongly associated with the *Newar* ethnic identity movement (Sapkota 2010: 210). But this movement was organized in an underground manner due to the intolerant Rana regime, because of which the influence of the movement was limited.

[26] All 21 candidates who contested the election on the party's ticket lost (Gaige 1975: 123).

[27] The *Panchayat* system was reformed after the national referendum held on 2 May 1980.For example, members of the parliament (known as *Rastriya Panchayat*) were supposed to be directly elected from their constituencies on the basis of universal franchise.

[28] A forum called *Shetamagurali* was formed during this time to bring together non-Hindu hill indigenous communities such as Sherpa, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Rai and Limbu. The Nepal Tarai Congress was reorganized

Nepali state. It was only after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990 as an outcome of the April 1990 mass movement (i.e. *Jan Andolan I*) that political leaders and activists from historically excluded groups such as *Janajati, Dalit* and *Madhesi* began to demand an inclusive democracy including full religious rights and a multi-linguistic policy.[29]

The issue of federalism also explicitly surfaced in Nepal's political discourse after the successful end of the April 1990 movement. During the time when the Constitution of Nepal 1990 was being drafted to replace the 1962 Constitution, some political leaders of hill *Janajati* and *Madhesi* groups questioned the unitary state structure of Nepal given the country's linguistic, ethnic and geographical heterogeneity, and demanded a federal state structure (Hoftun et al 1999: 327-333; Khanal 2004: 92).[30]

Meanwhile, an umbrella organization of indigenous associations called the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) was established in July 1990 and brought together about twenty ethnic and cultural associations. They began to assert their rights and identities with a new intensity. They demanded that the state recognize their unique culture, religion and language. Various groups and associations contested the Hindu identity of the Nepali state when the Constitution was being formulated between May and October 1990. There were demonstrations by Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim associations, and ethnic organizations representing the predominantly non-Hindu hill indigenous groups, which demanded that Nepal would be declared a secular state. This position was supported by leftist, liberal, and republican elements (Hutt 1993: 37; Pfaff-Czarnecka 1997: 444; Sharma 1997: 488). The grievances of the hill indigenous groups and other non-Hindu groups against the Hindu state were intertwined with their perceptions of the state having privileged the culture and religion of the Hindu high caste hill group. The NEFIN also demanded that Nepal be transformed from a unitary state into a multi-nation state, referring to all indigenous groups as separate nations (Sharma 1997: 489). On the other hand, vigorous obstruction to the demand that Nepal be declared a secular state, came from the palace, the army and orthodox Hindu organizations (with support from their fundamentalist brethren in India) (Thapa and Sijapati 2003: 34-35).

During *Jan Andolan I*, some elements within the United Left Front, notably the CPN (4th Convention), and other radical leftist parties outside of the Front came out in favour of replacing the monarchy with a republic (Hutt 1993: 31-32). Radical leftist parties, including CPN (Mashal)[31]

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under a new name Nepal Sadhvawana Parishad in 1985 (later transformed into Nepal Sadhvawana Party in 1990) with a mission of ensuring equal rights for Madhesi people.

[29] Around the same time leaders of hill Dalits also started a movement demanding their empowerment and inclusion. However, they were not involved in the linguistic movement as their mother tongue is Nepali.

[30] Hoftun et al (1999) mentions this by referring to interviews with Gore Bahadur Khapangi (then General Secretary of the Nepal National People's Liberation Front), Khagendra Jung Gurung (then President of the Nepal Rastriya Janajati Party), and Gajendra Narayan Singh (then President of the Nepal Sadbhavana Party). The former two parties are hill *Janajati*-based parties while the latter one is *Madhes*-based party.

[31] The CPN (Mashal), led by Prachanda, is a pre-incarnation of the CPN (Maoist). The CPN (Mashal) merged with the CPN (4th Convention) in 1991 and formed the CPN (Unity Centre). A faction of the leaders separated from the CPN (Unity Centre) and formed the CPN (Maoist) in 1994. In January 2009, the CPN (Maoist) formally united with the CPN (Unity Centre) and adopted a new name, the UCPN (Maoist).

and CPN (Masal), formed an alliance called the United National People's Movement (*Sanyukta Rastriya Jan Andolan* in Nepali), which demanded the abolition of the monarchy and the transformation of the country into a republic.[32] They demanded the immediate promulgation of an interim constitution and elections of a Constituent Assembly with the intention to abolish the monarchy, but their voice was not strong enough to sustain the movement toward republicanism. On the other hand, the Royal Palace was concerned with the fact that election of a Constituent Assembly would move the country toward republicanism. The major political parties of Nepal, including the Nepali Congress Party and the CPN (UML), did not question the monarchy. They only wanted to transform the country from an autocratic monarchy into a constitutional monarchy. During the writing of Nepal's 1990 Constitution, the Nepali Congress Party was guided by its leader Bisheswor Prasad Koirala's policy of 'national reconciliation' with the monarchy.[33] In contrast, the United Left Front, including the CPN (UML), did not have strong support from the public to challenge, let alone abolish the monarchy (Malagodi 2013: 136).

Despite of these movements and demands, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal of 1990, promulgated under multiparty democracy (after the abolition of the autocratic *Panchayat* regime), proclaimed Nepal to be a 'Hindu and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom'. Even though the 1990 Constitution recognized that Nepal is a multi-ethnic and multilingual nation, it retained the Hindu identity of the state,[34] and did not recognize languages other than Nepali as the official language.[35] Thus, the hegemony of the religion and language of the Hindu high caste hill group continued even under the 1990 Constitution. The Constitution was silent with regard to a federal structure of the state. So, it did not promote an inclusive democracy, and it did not recognize the diversity and plurality of Nepali society. This Constitution failed to incorporate the aspirations of the indigenous and other marginalized groups. Chaitanya Mishra (2007: 115), a renowned sociologist of Nepal, argues that "*The 1990 Constitution, despite its relatively progressive nature, not only failed to resolve several longstanding and key contradictions within the 'cultural' domain, but also continued to provide primacy to Hindu religion and the Nepali language*".

The Constitution did not change the King's legal position either (Hoftun et al 1999: 291). Hoftun et al (1999) illustrate this by citing an interview with former minister Rishikesh Shah in August 1990. Shah said that the 1990 Constitution retained the monarch's special perks and privileges because the King still controlled the army, possessed discretionary powers, had the right not to give assent to cabinet decision and could dismiss the government at any time he wanted. This implies that the fundamental characteristics of the Nepali state remained unchanged in the new

[32] It is worthwhile to recall that the first general assembly of the parent Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) held in January 1954 had already passed a resolution advocating the establishment of a republic by an elected Constituent Assembly (Thapa and Sijapati 2003: 22).

[33] It was the policy called for by Bisheswor Prasad Koirala in December 1976 on his return from exile in India through which he wanted to offer a compromise between his political party, the Nepali Congress Party, and then King Birendra to protect Nepal's national sovereignty and identity.

[34] Article 4(1) of the 1990 Constitution states that "Nepal is a multiethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom" (Law Books Management Board 1990).

[35] Article 6(1) of the 1990 Constitution says that "The Nepali language in the Devnagari script is the language of the nation of Nepal. The Nepali language shall be the official language." (Law Books Management Board 1990)

Constitution, except for the reinstatement of parliamentary democracy in the place of autocratic monarchy. In general, this new Constitution failed to address the political changes envisaged during *Jan Andolan I*. The radical leftist parties immediately refused to recognize the new Constitution. They only considered it as an initial step on the way to a republican state. So, the 1990 Constitution created a conflict with its birth. However, the two major political parties, the Nepali Congress Party and the CPN (UML), compromised and reconciled themselves to the idea of a constitutional Hindu monarchy with a unitary form of government.

The new Constitutional arrangement continued the religious discrimination of non-Hindus and the linguistic discrimination of non-Nepali speaking *Janajati* and *Madhesi* groups. Malagodi (2010: 76), after a careful study of the 1990 Constitution, concludes that the 1990 Constitution envisaged Nepalis as people who ought to be Hindu, Nepali-speaking and 'loyal subjects' of a Hindu king. The constitution did not approve a federal state structure either. However, the issue of federalism along with secularism and multilingualism remained essential topics in Nepal's political discourse since then. Politicians and scholars who were in favour of federalism argued that a federal system was suitable to Nepal because of the country's linguistic and ethnic diversity, federalism would recognize the identity of all groups. They also claimed that a federal system would lead to more efficient development because it would decentralize development policies and ensure ownership to local end-users.

The linguistic monopoly and intolerance of the Hindu high caste hill group became more evident in the subsequent years. In 1993, the Nepali Congress Party government made *Sanskrit*[36] a compulsory subject in secondary schools, and in 1995 the CPN (UML) government decided to broadcast news in *Sanskrit* despite the fact that it is the mother tongue of no one in Nepal. These decisions reflected the influence of top-level politicians in both political parties who belonged to the Hindu high caste hill group (Bhattachan 2001: 48; Toffin 2006: 233). At the same time, the recognition of other languages than Nepali at the level of local administration was rejected in June 1999 when the Supreme Court declared Kathmandu Metropolitan City's decision to recognize the *Newari* language[37] at the local level unconstitutional. This verdict prevented Kathmandu Metropolitan City from using the *Newari* language in its local administration.

Thus, the identity movements could not achieve significant reforms in the structure of the Nepali state after *Jan Andolan I*, either. However, the 1990 Constitution did create an open atmosphere (by guaranteeing freedom of expression and other rights) which provided ample opportunities for ethnicity- and identity-based movements within the established political structure. These movements demanded a more inclusive policy that would recognize the identity and the rights of marginalized groups. This situation compelled the state to recognize cultures, religions and languages of all marginalized groups. It allowed space for the assertion of voices of the excluded, under-privileged and marginalized groups. Non-Hindu indigenous groups and other religious

[36] *Sanskrit* is an ancient language from which many Indo-Aryan languages, including the Nepali language, have originated. Although it is very rich in literature, this language is the mother tongue of no one and nobody speaks this language at the community level.

[37] The *Newari* language (also called *Nepal Bhasa*) is the native language of the *Newar* community who are considered to be the indigenous inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley.

minorities continued to demand that Nepal should become a secular state instead of a Hindu state (Hoftun 1993: 19; Toffin 2006: 233; Malagodi 2010: 68). Many of them also demanded the right to slaughter cows.[38] The United Nations' 1994 declaration of the "International Decade of the World's Indigenous People" for the period between 1995 and 2005 also added fuel to the debate on cultural recognition and minority rights in Nepal. These groups demanded a multi-linguistic policy with the right to use local languages at the local administration instead of only Nepali. They also demanded news to be broadcast in all languages, *Sanskrit* to be an optional instead of a compulsory subject in school education, and state support for school level education in all mother tongues.[39] The demands for religious and linguistic rights were tied up with the demand for federalism. Indigenous and *Madhesi* groups envisaged that they could only achieve these rights if the demand for federalism were fulfilled.

2.5 The Maoist Movement: An Insurgency to Restructure the Nepali State

While communist regimes worldwide were facing a backlash in the 1990s, the CPN (Maoist)[40] began an armed insurgency movement in Nepal in February 1996 to oust not only the constitutional monarchy but also parliamentary democracy. The insurgency triggered a civil war that would last over a decade and would cost more than 17,000 lives. The CPN (Maoist) championed the identity issue as it defied the cultural, religious and linguistic monopoly of the Hindu high caste hill group. Along with other rights, it demanded equal religious rights for indigenous and non-Hindu groups, and called for an end to the state's alignment with Hinduism and the Hindu monarchy. The movement also raised its voice in favour of equal linguistic rights for non-Nepali speaking indigenous and *Madhesi* groups. The Maoist movement further raised the issue of ethnic autonomy. The dominance of the Hindu high caste hill group across ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic lines, and in terms of the distribution of power and resources is regarded as an important cause of the Maoist insurgency (Baral 2006: 197-198; Subba 2006: 52; Mishra 2007: 109; Toffin 2013: 36). Of the 40-point demand issued by the CPN (Maoist) to the government just before the Maoists formally started the armed conflict in February 1996, five demands were directly concerned with the indigenous and other oppressed groups: ethnic autonomy, regional devolution, a secular state, the end of ethnic oppression and equality of all languages (Gurung 2003: 8). Two other demands were related to abolishing monarchy although they did not explicitly mention it. One of these two demands was: "A new Constitution should be drafted by representatives elected for the establishment of a people's democratic system" (Point

[38] According to Clause 7(1) of Part IV of the Civil Code 1963, any deliberate slaughtering of a cow is legally banned. Clause 7(11) of Part IV clearly mentions a punishment of 12 years of imprisonment for those who kill a cow deliberately. Additionally, Clause 4(1) of Part IV states that a person will be exempted from any punishment if that person kills someone to prevent a cow being slaughtered (Kanun Kitab Byawastha Samiti 2061 BS [2005]).

[39] Demands for news broadcast and school level education in major ethnic and regional languages were fulfilled step-by-step in the 1990s. Also, the government withdrew its decision to make*Sanskrit* a compulsory subject in school-level education.

[40] The CPN (Maoist) was united with the People's Front Nepal (*Janmorcha Nepal* in Nepali) in October 2008 and with the CPN (Unity Centre-*Masal*) in January 2009 to form a new party named United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (UCPN [Maoist]). By unifying several other Maoist parties in May 2016, the UCPN (Maoist) was renamed as the CPN (Maoist Centre). Then, it was merged with the CPN (UML) to form a new party named Nepal Communist Party (NCP) in May 2018. See Chapter 1. But its previous name CPN (Maoist) has been used throughout this dissertation.

No. 10) and the second was: "All special privileges of the king and the royal family should be abolished" (Point No. 11) (Thapa and Sijapati 2003: 213). The CPN (Maoist) believed that the country would be transformed into a republican state if a new constitution was drafted by elected representatives. But the other major political parties did not accept the Maoist proposals at that time.

So, abrogation of the 1990 Constitution, election of a Constituent Assembly and abolition of the monarchy held the stage in the country's political discourse since the mid-nineties. The major political parties including the Nepali Congress Party and the CPN (UML) (who had faith in parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy), however, were not in favour of abrogating the 1990 Constitution, but rather wanted to change it. These parliamentary political parties never envisaged to hold elections for a Constituent Assembly to write a new constitution and to abolish the monarchy. They only proposed to reduce some of the perks and privileges of the King by radically amending the 1990 Constitution. This became clear in November 2001, when the government led by Prime Minister Deuba rejected the main demand of the Maoists: elections to form a Constitutional Assembly. Because of the rejection, the Maoists ended their four-month old truce with the government and unilaterally ended the ceasefire declared in July 2001.

During the course of the insurgency, the Maoists increased awareness among indigenous groups, Dalits, women and other oppressed groups regarding their ethnic and cultural identities (Baral 2009: 4). To secure the rights and autonomy of indigenous and *Madhesi* groups, the CPN (Maoist) in September 2001 formed nine autonomous regions under a United Revolutionary People's Council. Of these nine autonomous regions, six were based on ethnicity and three based on region. The six ethnicity based autonomous regions were the Tharuwan autonomous region (for the Tharu ethnic group), the Magarant autonomous region (for the Magar ethnic group), the Tamuwan autonomous region (for the Tamu or Gurung ethnic group), the Tamsaling autonomous region (for the Tamang ethnic group), the Newa autonomous region (for the Newar ethnic group) and the Kirat autonomous region (for the Kirati or Rai-Limbu ethnic group). The three region-based autonomous regions were the Seti-Mahakali autonomous region (for the far-western hill people), the Bheri-Karnali autonomous region (for the mid-western hill people) and the Madhes autonomous region (for the *Madhesi* people). The CPN (Maoist) did not, however, explicitly mention federalism during the insurgency; they only mentioned giving autonomy to local indigenous groups. However, it was the CPN (Maoist) that first tabled the option of creating autonomous regions for addressing the issues of ethnicity, language and religion, and for the equal distribution of the state's power and resources (Baral 2009: 4).

Thus, the two movements - one organized by indigenous people's associations under the leadership of NEFIN, adopting peaceful means of protest, and another one organized by the CPN (Maoist) adopting the means of an armed insurgency - had a cumulative effect on the formation of ethnicity- and regional-based identity. Scholars of Nepali politics agree that the strongest opposition to the cultural domination of the Hindu high caste hill group came from the Maoist and the *Janajati* movements (Khanal 2006: 169-171; Mishra 2067 BS: 3-5; Toffin 2006: 233; Tamang 2006: 271-272). This was one of the areas where the agenda of the indigenous people and that of the CPN (Maoist) converged (Gurung 2003: 12). So, these movements made significant contributions to forcing the Nepali state to accept multiculturalism and inclusive

democracy. The two movements brought the issue of various rights, including religious and linguistic rights, to the forefront. They demanded secularism with equal status for all religions, and multilingualism with the right of using local languages at the local government level instead of only Nepali.

2.6 King Gyanendra's Takeover of February 2005

On 1 February 2005, King Gyanendra dismissed the Deuba government and formed a cabinet under his own chairmanship. The King assumed all executive power.[41] He declared a state of emergency throughout the country and promised to hold local elections within one year and a general election to the parliament within three years. After that time he would hand back power to the elected parliament. The King's takeover was not peaceful and not without resistance. The main political leaders were arrested. The state security forces, took the side of the royal take-over.[42]In advance, the King had already assured himself of the support of the heads of the state security forces (Royal Nepalese Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force and *Rastriya Anusandhan Bibhagh* [i.e. National Investigation Bureau]) for his political move. The security heads had been informed and convinced one day before the take-over (Sharma 2070 BS: 177). The army was ordered to arrest top-level politicians. Army officers were deployed massively to carry out surveillance and exercise strict control over the media (Kumar 2009: 140). There was a physical presence of soldiers in each media organization. This take-over changed the basic character of the monarchy from a constitutional institution to an autocratic force. The King's action heralded constitutional uncertainty and exacerbated the political turmoil. His political move alienated the major political parties that were represented in the dissolved parliament. Despite his promise to hold local elections within one year and parliamentary elections within three years, the major political parties rejected his political plan. In the meantime, the leaders of seven political parties signed a document called the 'Common Agreement and Commitment' on 8 May 2005, and formed an alliance commonly known as the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA), in protest against the King's takeover of 1 February 2005. On 18 June 2005, the Seven-Party Alliance formally declared that it would boycott the municipal elections. The King's move of February 2005 pushed the Seven-Party Alliance closer to the anti-monarchist CPN (Maoist). Instead of seeking a rapprochement with the King, the Seven-Party Alliance began to ally with the CPN (Maoist). Both on the question of elections for a Constituent Assembly and on the relevance of the monarchy

[41] Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had dissolved the House of Representatives in May 2002 to hold early elections. He stated that he intended to hold mid-term general elections within six months, as was stipulated by the 1990 Constitution, but he was dismissed by King Gyanendra in October 2002 for not fulfilling this promise. The King then appointed Lokendra Bahadur Chand as the Prime Minister. Chand resigned in May 2003 and Surya Bahadur Thapa assumed the position in June 2003. Thapa's appointed government did not last long either. When he resigned in May 2004 and no other political party was able to propose a candidate, the King again appointed Sher Bahadur Deuba in June 2004. The main mandate the King gave to the appointed Deuba government was to hold fresh general elections. The government could not announce dates for general elections; as a result, the King dismissed the government on 1 February 2005 and subsequently assumed all executive powers.

[42] The army-monarchy relationship was formalized by King Mahendra with the adaptation of the Military Act of 1959. The relationship between the two institutions was further strengthened through the 'Act on Right, Duty, Function and Terms of the Service of the Commander-in-Chief 1969', which made the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) responsible and accountable to the King rather than to the government (Kumar 2009: 140). The 1990 Constitution retained the privilege of the King to be the Supreme Commander of the Royal Nepalese Army through Article 119(1).

itself, the positions of the Seven-Party Alliance and of the CPN (Maoist) increasingly converged since then. Thus, the King's take-over resulted in a growing rift between the political parties and the Royal Palace and eventually led to the ouster of the monarchy in Nepal.

The King's action also eroded the general public's trust in the monarch. Some political commentators pointed out that the royal palace massacre of 1 June 2001 had already deteriorated the reputation of the Nepali monarchy. The massacre took place in one of the buildings of the Narayanhiti Royal Palace, the residence of the Nepali royal family, in which Crown Prince Dipendra killed nine members of his family, including his father King Birendra, his mother Queen Aiswarya, his sister Princess Shruti, his brother Prince Nirajan, and himself. The massacre impaired the divine aura of the royal family and weakened the base of the traditional and emotional relationship between the monarchy and the general public, which ultimately led to a weakening of the foundation of the monarchy (Hachhethu 2006: 121 & 130; Sharma 2070 BS: 365; Pandey 2072 BS: 425-429). International media too reported that the Nepali public's trust in the monarchy had been ruined by the royal palace massacre (Time Magazine 14 Feb 2005). In a newspaper article, Baburam Bhattarai, the most influential ideologue of the CPN (Maoist), declared that republicanism was already born in Nepal after the palace massacre (Bhattarai 2001).

However, it was only after the then King Gyanendra's assumption of executive authority that the country witnessed a gradual alignment between the parliamentary parties, i.e. the political parties in parliament prior to its dissolution in May 2002, and the CPN (Maoist). These mainstream political parties moved toward the abrogation of the 1990 Constitution, election of a Constituent Assembly, and republicanism for the first time, which were the primary political demands of the Maoists.

The 11th general assembly of the Nepali Congress Party held in August 2005 decided to remove one of its fundamental values – constitutional monarchy – from the party's statute. Around the same time, the central committee of the CPN (UML) decided to demand election of a Constituent Assembly and a transfer from a constitutional monarchical democracy to a republican democracy. These two incidences were an indication of a drastic departure from monarchism of both major political parties.

2.7 The 12-Point Memorandum of Understanding and the Call for *Jan Andolan II*: the Beginning of the Transition

In a series of direct and indirect dialogues, the Seven-Party Alliance asked the CPN (Maoist) to join mainstream politics, to accept the democratic system with competitive elections, and to support their ongoing agitation against the King's authoritarian rule. In response, Maoist leader Prachanda urged the leaders of the Seven-Party Alliance to form a team to initiate a formal dialogue with the Maoists. As a result, the SPA and the CPN (Maoist) entered into a 12-point

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in November 2005 in New Delhi, India.[43] In this Memorandum, the Seven-Party Alliance and the CPN (Maoist) agreed to establish permanent peace in the country by resolving the 10-year-old armed conflict, they expressed their commitment to hold elections for a Constituent Assembly, and they agreed to establish 'full democracy' by bringing the 'autocratic monarchy' to an end by calling for a nationwide mass movement.[44] They also agreed to restore Parliament (which had been dissolved in May 2002) and to form an interim government after the mass movement had succeeded. In turn, the CPN (Maoist) accepted the multiparty competitive system and agreed to join the peace process. Both sides concluded that the long struggle between autocratic monarchy and democracy in Nepal had taken a very grave and decisive turn in Nepali history. In this way, the 12-point MoU paved the way for the Seven-Party Alliance to move toward full democracy (i.e. republicanism by default) on the one hand, and on the other hand brought the insurgent Maoists into mainstream politics by convincing them to accept a competitive democratic system.[45]

In accordance with the 12-point Memorandum of Understanding, the Seven-Party Alliance called a nationwide mass protest movement on 6 April 2006 against the autocratic monarchy and called it *Jan Andolan II*, which literally means the second wave of the mass movement. The Maoists extended their support to this call.. The major political parties and the Maoists had a clear-cut plan about what to do with the old structures of the Nepali state after the successful end of *Jan Andolan II*. Major political parties like the Nepali Congress Party and the CPN (UML) already had a common plan with the CPN (Maoist) to first sideline the King, then abolish the monarchy and declare the country a republic. (Toffin 2006: 220-221). Beside this, they conceptualized new structures for the state: federalism[46], secularism and multi-lingualism.

The movement was amazing for the scale of the mass street demonstrations and the speed with which they gathered momentum. There were two motives underlying the public's support for the movement: popular discontent prompted by the failure of the King's direct rule and the people's hope that the 12-point Memorandum of Understanding would bring lasting peace to the country. The Nepali people were optimistic about *Jan Andolan II*: they hoped that it would bring both democracy and peace in the country. An opinion poll conducted four months after the completion of *Jan Andolan II* (i.e. in September 2006) revealed that three-fourths of the people agreed or strongly agreed with the aims of *Jan Andolan II*. The same survey also showed that in

[43] Some political commentators said that Indian government officials played a decisive role to make the 12-point MoU possible (Sharma 2070 BS: 214-216; Jha 2014: 102-103).

[44] While drafting the 12-point MoU, the CPN (UML) and the CPN (Maoist) had agreed to go for republicanism. However, the final document of the MoU mentioned only the abolition of 'autocratic monarchy' by establishing 'full democracy' because the Nepali Congress party was not ready to accept republicanism at that time (Sharma 2070 BS: 210 & 224). However, the signing of the MoU undoubtedly created a political environment in favour of republicanism.

[45] Here, it is important to note that the central committee of the CPN (Maoist) had already passed a political document called *Ekkaisau Satabdima Janbadko Bikaas* (literally Development of People's Democracy in 21st Century) in May 2003, in which it had accepted a system of competitive elections for the first time (Sharma 2070 BS: 170 & 216).

[46] The Nepal Sadbhawana Party already put forward the idea of federalism before *Jan Andolan II* of April 2006 (Baral 2009: 2).

the general public's opinion the main reasons behind the people's movement were the desire to abolish the King's autocratic rule by establishing full democracy, their fatigue from war and their aspirations for long-term peace (Interdisciplinary Analysts 2006b: 13-14).

Eventually, on the night of 24 April 2006, King Gyanendra succumbed. He acknowledged the sentiments expressed in the mass street demonstrations, affirmed his support for the roadmap of the Seven-Party Alliance and reinstated the House of Representatives. In the first session of the revived House of Representatives, held on 28 April 2006, the leaders of the Seven-Party Alliance presented a proposal for writing a new constitution by an elected Constituent Assembly. On 30 April 2006, the second session of the House of Representatives unanimously approved that proposal. The Seven-Party Alliance formed a seven-member cabinet on 2 May 2006. The ministers were sworn in by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, not at the Royal Palace in the presence of the King as in the past, but at Singha Durbar, the headquarters of the Nepali Government. This swearing in at the Prime Minister's office rather than at the Royal Palace was another indication of the political parties' anti-monarchy attitude.

A declaration to remove the King's executive authority was presented to the House of Representatives on 18 May 2006. It stated that the House of Representatives would be the sole body on which the sovereign rights of the people would rest, declared Nepal to be a secular state, and renamed 'His Majesty's Government' ' the Government of Nepal', removing the title 'Royal' from all state institutions, including the army. Other changes were that sessions of the House would be called by the Prime Minister and that all executive rights would rest with the Council of Ministers which would be accountable to the House of Representatives. The Cabinet, no longer the King, was made the body responsible for appointing the army chief and the King lost his position as Supreme Commander of the armed forces. The proclamation also did away with the Royal Privy Council and declared that all its work would henceforth be performed by the House of Representatives. The House of Representatives was given the power to fix the budget for the palace and it was determined that the King's property would be taxable. The provisions of the 1990 Constitution which gave the monarch discretionary powers in certain cases, were nullified.[47]

2.8 The Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA)

After a series of peace talks between the government and the CPN (Maoist), then Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist Chairman Prachanda signed a peace agreement (commonly known as the Comprehensive Peace Accord, CPA) on 21 November 2006 that brought the decade-long armed insurgency to an end. The Seven-Party Alliance and the CPN (Maoist) expressed their commitment to promulgating an interim constitution, forming an interim parliament and an interim government, and holding elections for the Constituent Assembly by mid-June 2007. The Comprehensive Peace Accord stated that the first session of the Constituent Assembly would decide the fate of the monarchy by a simple majority vote.

[47] For more details of the 18th May Declaration of the House of Representatives, see *The Himalayan Times,* 19 May 2006.

On this basis, an interim parliament, which included representatives of the CPN (Maoist), was formed in January 2007. It endorsed the 'Nepal Interim Constitution 2007', replacing the previous 'Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990'. However, the Interim Constitution 2007 did not satisfy the *Janajati* and *Madhesi* leaders, as it did not explicitly mention republicanism and federalism. It only mentioned in Article 4(1) that "Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive and fully democratic state" (Law Books Management Board 2007). The official status of other languages than Nepali also remained ambiguous.

2.9 The *Madhes* Movement, the *Janajati* Movement and the 22-Point Agreement

A few days after the endorsement of the Interim Constitution 2007, some *Madhes*-based regional political parties, such as a non-violent political party *Madhesi Janadhikar Forum,* and a violent and underground group *Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha*, demanded that it be amended to take the concerns of the *Madhesi* people into account. They argued that the aspirations of *Madhesi* people were not reflected in the Interim Constitution. One of the demands of the *Madhes*-based regional political parties was the transformation of Nepal from a unitary state into a federal state. In line with this, they demanded the creation of a separate federal province in the Tarai (i.e. *Madhes*) region. They coined the slogan *Ek Madhes Ek Pradesh*, which literally means 'one Madhes, one federal province'. To show their strong disagreement with the Interim Constitution, *Madhes*-based political parties called for agitation and blockades in the Tarai region of the country in January/ February 2007, which is commonly known as the *Madhes* Movement of 2007. After the Prime Minister promised to accept federalism after the Constituent Assembly elections, the *Madhesi* groups stopped their protests.

Indigenous organizations also held street demonstration in Kathmandu under the leadership of the NEFIN, demanding several privileges including a federal state based on ethnic identity; this is commonly known as the *Janajati* Movement of 2007. In August 2007, the president of the *Madhesi Janadhikar Forum,* Upendra Yadav, and the coordinator of the government's dialogue team, Ram Chandra Poudel, signed a 22-point agreement in which they expressed their commitment to establishing a federal governing system with autonomous provinces. The event proved to be a shift of Nepal's major political parties towards federalism (Sharma 2070 BS: 263) and, indeed, was a decisive turn in Nepali political history.

2.10 The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Move toward Republicanism

Around the same time, in August 2007, the fifth plenum of the CPN (Maoist) passed an 18-point charter of proposals in which one of the demands was that the interim parliament proclaim Nepal a republic. In September 2007 the national council of the Nepali Congress Party also passed a resolution that supported transforming Nepal into a republic. In October 2007, the interim parliament passed a resolution for the declaration of Nepal as a republic, which was supported by a majority of the members. The passing of the resolution was prompted by the CPN (Maoist)'s position with regard to republicanism. This party had made clear that it would refuse to participate in elections for the Constituent Assembly unless the interim parliament would declare the country a republic.

Even after the passing of the resolution, there was still a divergence between the mainstream political parties and the CPN (Maoist) over various constitutional issues. After several weeks of political negotiations among the major political parties, they reached a 23-point agreement on 22 December 2007. They agreed to have the interim parliament proclaim the republic subject to endorsement by the first sitting of the Constituent Assembly. Among other things, the agreement included holding elections for a 601-member Constitutional Assembly by mid-April 2008, electing 60 percent of the members through proportional representation, and having the Maoists join the government.

Thus, the interim parliament amended the Interim Constitution for the fourth time on 28 December 2007, declaring the country a secular federal democratic republic. After the amendment Article 4(1) stated that Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive and federal democratic republic (Law Books Management Board 2012). This was subject to ratification by the first meeting of the elected Constituent Assembly. Also, it gave an official status to languages other than Nepali.

After several delays, the historic and long awaited elections for the Constituent Assembly took place on 10 April 2008. The Maoists participated in these elections and emerged as the largest political party with 238 seats out of 601, followed by the Nepali Congress Party with 115 seats and the CPN (UML) with 109 seats. The CPN (Maoist) failed to get a majority of the seats in the Constituent Assembly. But this mattered less as there was by now consensus among the major political parties with regard to federalism, republicanism, secularism and multilingualism. Nepal was declared a federal, democratic, secular and republican state by the first sitting of the Constituent Assembly held on 28 May 2008. This declaration was a momentous event in Nepal, through which the transformation of the state's political structure formally began. In this way, King Gyanendra's putsch and his refusal to work with the political parties, and the subsequent alliance between the parliamentary parties and the CPN (Maoist), proved to be fatal first for the autocratic King-chaired government and eventually for the core features of the Nepali state including the centuries-old institution of monarchy of the Gorkhali Shah dynasty.

Initially, the Constituent Assembly was given a mandate of two years to complete the task of formulating a new constitution. But due to the failure of the political parties to reach agreement, the constitution could not be promulgated within the stipulated time, and the Constituent Assembly extended the deadline four times. According to the final extension of the Constituent Assembly's term[48], it should deliver the new constitution by 27 May 2012. However, the Constituent Assembly was dissolved in the night of this day without delivering a new constitution after four years of political disagreement among the major political parties. The main obstacle was the lack of consensus among the political parties on the form of federalism. There were substantial disagreements on the demarcation and naming of the federal provinces, and on the distribution of responsibilities between the central, provincial and local levels.

[48] The Supreme Court had already issued a final verdict on 25 November 2011 that had ended all possibilities of a further extension of the CA term.

New elections for the Constituent Assembly were held in November 2013. This time the Nepali Congress Party emerged as the largest party, winning 196 of the 601 seats, followed by the CPN (UML) with 175 and the CPN (Maoist) with 80 seats. But consensus of the major political parties on the form of federalism could still not be reached. In June 2015, the four major political parties represented in the Constituent Assembly - the Nepali Congress Party, CPN (UML), CPN (Maoist) and *Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (Democratic)* - agreed to form eight provinces considering ethnic identities and financial capacities, leaving the names of the provinces to be decided later by a two-third majority of the respective provincial assemblies. They further agreed to form a federal commission to recommend the demarcation of the boundaries of the eight federal provinces within its six-month term.[49]

Hence, federalism was the major issue on the agenda for the transformation of the Nepali state for Nepal's political parties at that time (Lecours 2014; Sen 2018).[50] The CPN (Maoist) and regional and ethnicity-based political parties were in favour of an ethnicity-based federal system; they also called it identity-based federalism. They claimed that various indigenous groups of the country have an historical attachment to a particular region and that only an ethnicity-based federal system could ensure sufficient or maximum autonomy to local indigenous groups in the decision-making process, thus preserving their identity, language, culture etc. and bring them into the political mainstream. At first, these parties demanded 'priority rights' for the indigenous people on natural resources such as land, forests and water in the respective provinces. Furthermore, they wanted to make sure that only indigenous people could stand for election in the respective provinces for the first two terms (Sen 2013: 41). However, they adjusted their demands and subsequently only asked for the consideration of ethno-geographic history when creating federal provinces.

On the other side, the Nepali Congress Party, the CPN (UML) and various fringe political parties (both communist and rightist parties) said that federalism should be based on economic viability and geography, and not on ethnic identity, because it is not practical given the fact that each district and region of Nepal is ethnically and culturally heterogeneous. There are more than a hundred ethnic and linguistic groups in the country (See Chapter 1). They argued that an ethnicity-based federal system would result in communal disharmony and would eventually drive the country to the point of disintegration. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that indigenous and *Madhesi* leaders within both the Nepali Congress Party and the CPN (UML) were actually in favour of ethnicity-based federalism. In October 2012, dozens of indigenous leaders within the Nepali Congress party resigned from the party due to differences with the party leadership over this issue of ethnicity-based federalism.[51] At the same time, some of the leaders of the CPN (UML) from an indigenous background left the party, accusing their party of being opposed to ethnicity-

[49] The agreement is known as 16-point Agreement (Setopati.com, 8 June 2015).
[50] An opinion survey of CA members conducted in 2010 also showed this (Interdisciplinary Analysts 2011b: 11-12).
[51] On 3 October 2012, 36 district level indigenous leaders of the Nepali Congress quit the party accusing the party of not becoming serious about ethnicity-based federalism (Nepalnews.com, 4 October 2012).

based federalism, and established a new political party.[52] Some others with *Madhesi* background left to join other political parties which did favour ethnicity-based federalism, such as the CPN (Maoist), in April 2013.[53]

2.11 The Promulgation of the New Constitution

In spite of the disagreements over the specific form of federalism, an overwhelming majority of the elected members the Constituent Assembly (over 90 percent) endorsed the new Constitution on 20 September 2015. In Article 4(1), the new Constitution defines the 'State of Nepal' as 'an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive democratic, socialism-oriented federal democratic republican state' (Constituent Assembly Secretariat 2015). This clause of the Constitution unambiguously states that Nepal is a secular federal republican state and has paved the way to formalizing other basic structures related to federalism such as the demarcation and naming of the federal provinces, and the distribution of responsibilities among the central, provincial, and local levels. With regard to the language issue, the new Constitution of 2015 has given the federal provinces the right to select one or more languages as the language(s) of administration in the respective provinces.[54]

Among its other main features, the Constitution adopted a mixed electoral system (Mixed Member Majoritarian, Cf Shugart and Wattenberg 2001), for the first time in the country's history. The House of Representatives shall consist of 275 members of whom 165 (60 percent of the total number of MPs) will be elected through a first-past-the-post electoral system in165 electoral constituencies, while another 110 MPs (40 percent) will be elected using a proportional electoral system where voters vote for party lists, treating the whole country as a single electoral district. A provision has been made to ensure the representation of women, marginalized groups and backward regions. The constitution has established the right to social justice for women, marginalized groups and backward regions in employment by state institutions on the basis of the principle of inclusion.

According to the Constitution, the parliamentary party leader of the political party with a majority in the House of Representatives will be appointed as Prime Minister by the President. If there is not a clear majority of any party, the President shall appoint a member of the House of Representatives as Prime Minister who can have the majority with the support of two or more political parties represented in the House of Representatives (Article 76[2] of the Constitution). On the recommendation of the Prime Minister, the President shall form a Council of Ministers

[52] Then party vice-chairmen of the CPN (UML), Ashok Rai, who is from an indigenous ethnic background, quit the party along with dozens of central level leaders and hundreds of cadres on 4 October 2012 (Nepalnews.com, 4 October 2012). After some days, he announced the formation of a new political party called Federal Socialist Party with the main objective to establish ethnic identity based federalism.

[53] An ex-politburo member of the CPN (UML), Ram Chandra Jha, who belongs to *Madhesi* origin, joined the UCPN (Maoist) on 6 April 2013 (Nepalnews.com, 8 April 2013).

[54] Article 7(2) of the Constitution of Nepal 2015 says that "In addition to Nepali language, a province shall select one or more national language that is spoken by majority of people in that province as the language of official business, as provided for by the provincial law" (Constituent Assembly Secretariat 2015).

(not exceeding 25 ministers) from among the Members of Parliament on the basis of the principle of inclusion, or from non-members subject to them gaining a seat in Parliament within six months of taking the oath of office. The Prime Minister shall be relieved of his/her office if a no-confidence motion tabled by at least one-fourth of the total number of members of the House of Representatives is passed by a majority of the total number of members of the House of Representatives. However, a no-confidence motion cannot be introduced during the first two years of appointment of the Prime Minister, and if a no-confidence motion fails, another motion cannot be tabled within a year of its failure.

The major political parties, however, still had not agreed on the basic structure of federalism. Broad-based political parties, particularly the Nepali Congress Party, the CPN (UML) and the CPN (Maoist), disagreed substantially with *Madhes*-based political parties on numerous aspects of federalism including the demarcation and naming of the federal provinces. Apart from this, *Madhes*-based political parties had questioned the provision of citizenship, the eligibility to employment in state institutions and the demarcation of electoral districts. To show their anxiety, some *Madhes*-based political parties called for mass demonstrations and declared a border blockade in the Tarai immediately after the promulgation of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly,[55] which went on until February 2016 when the new Constitution was amended to meet the demands of *Madhes*-based political parties in respect of eligibility to employment in state institutions on the basis of proportional inclusion (Article 42 [1]), and in respect of the demarcation of constituencies primarily based on population and only secondarily based on geography (Article 285 [5]). But disagreement regarding aspects of federalism and citizenship still remained.

[55] It was believed that India had a soft spot for the *Madhes*-based political parties. Hence, India put an embargo on exports of essential commodities including fuel and medicines to Nepal during the border blockade. However, an analysis of India's role in the political unrest in the Tarai is beyond the scope of this study.

3

Literature Review

This study aims to shed light on the recent radical transformation of the political system of Nepal. It does so from the perspective of the relationship between the decisions taken by the political elites in this transition and public opinion on the main aspects of the transformation.

Chapter 1 introduced the following research questions about this relationship:

1. Are Nepal's recent political changes, which are formalized in the new Constitution with regard to issues such as republicanism, federalism, secularism and multilingualism, reflecting the opinions of the general public?
2. During the transition process, have the positions of the political parties come closer to those of the general public, or conversely: have the opinions of the general public approached the positions of the parties?
3. To what extent can any difference between political parties and public opinion be explained by a composition effect, particularly by different levels of education of elites and ordinary citizens?

In this chapter, I sketch the international literature in order to derive expectations about the public opinion/ policy making relationship that may guide the empirical study of the Nepali case in subsequent chapters.

3.1 Public Opinion and Policy Decisions: Three Positions

Among empirical studies into the relationship between public opinion and the decisions of political parties and their representatives (i.e. policymakers, legislators in particular)[56] in western democracies (especially in the United States, Canada and Western European countries), three positions can be discerned.

3.1.1: Position 1: Political Parties Represent Public Opinion in Decisions

A first strand of studies reports a significant impact of public opinion on policy decisions. These studies argue that policymakers respond to public opinion and consequently say that public

[56] The studies reviewed in this chapter do not always mention political parties explicitly. Some of them use terms such as 'political elites' or 'representatives'.

opinion is reflected in policies (e.g. Key, 1961; Miller and Stokes 1963; Erikson 1976, 1978; Monroe 1979, 1998; McCrone and Kuklinski 1979; Page and Shapiro 1983; Page et al 1984; Dalton 1985; Petry and Mendelsohn 2004; Bartels 1991; Hartley and Russett 1992; Hobolt and Klimmensen 2005, 2008; Erikson, Wright and McIver 1989; Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1994, 1995; Hill and Hurley 1999; Hurley and Hill 2003; Adams et al 2009). We shall label this position: 'Political parties represent public opinion in decisions'.

In *Public Opinion and American Democracy*, Key (1961) analyses the relationship between public opinion and political leaders' opinions. He argues that if political elites are to be kept from misusing their power, public opinion must come into play. He contends that democracy is nonsense if public opinion is not heeded while public policies are shaped (Key 1961: 7). In this context of policymaking, he has developed the concept of 'Opinion Dikes', comparing public opinion to a system of dikes that prevents political leaders from deviating from those they represent, and compels them to think and act in accordance with public opinion (Key 1961: 552).

McCrone and Kuklinski (1979) argue that representatives purposively reflect the preferences of their constituencies in their roll call behaviour with regard to salient issues. For this to happen, they suggest that two fundamental conditions should be met simultaneously: first, the representatives must feel obliged to act in accordance with their constituency's preferences; and second, the constituency must provide consistent preferences so that the representatives get a clear perception or impression of what their constituency wants. They call this the 'delegate theory of representation' (McCrone and Kuklinski 1979: 280-282). In the absence of one of these conditions, the link between constituency preferences and representatives' roll call behaviour significantly weakens.

Erikson (1976) explores the relationship between public opinion and policy on three salient issues – capital punishment, child labour and female jurors - using large-sample Gallup Poll data from the 1930s. He finds a strong association between public opinion and policy even after introducing several socio-economic control variables, which supports the argument that public opinion in fact does influence policy decisions, at least on the three issues examined (Erikson 1976: 33). Moreover, Erikson, Wright and McIver (1989) discover a strong positive correlation between public opinion and policies at the state level in the US. They present evidence of party positions responding to public opinion, and state elections rewarding or punishing parties depending on their responsiveness to public opinion. They also find that both Republican and Democratic legislators moderate their positions while making policies (Erikson, Wright and McIver 1989: 743). Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson (1994) also see an electoral connection between public opinion and policies, and mention that voters tend to vote for those representatives who adapt their preferences to public opinion (Stimson et at 1994: 30). By examining four decades of post-war United States history, they further assert that governments respond to shifts in public sentiment and accommodate them in policy changes. This behaviour helps politicians to please their constituencies and increase their chances of re-election (Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1995: 545).

3.1.2 Position 2: Political Parties Take Decisions Based on Their Own Judgement

A second strand of studies takes a different perspective on the cause and effect dynamics and contends that political parties and their representatives control the entire process of policy making on major issues and do not necessarily reflect public opinion (e.g. Miller and Stokes 1963; Converse 1964; Zaller 1992; Hill and Hurley 1999; Paul and Brown 2001; Jacobs and Page 2005; and Schneider and Jacoby 2005). These studies are based on data from representative democracies, and at first sight their findings may therefore seem counter-intuitive. However, from a Burkean perspective on representative democracy, the discrepancy between the public's preferences and the decisions by their elected representatives is arguably much less problematic. The 18th century political philosopher Edmund Burke famously argued that representatives, once elected, should not act as mere delegates of their voters, but as 'trustees' who are elected to use their good judgement to deliberate about the common good. Trustees take decisions based on what they think right or just; they do not just follow citizens' views (Burke 1774: 81). From that perspective the empirical findings of these studies do not contradict this particular version of normative democratic theory. We label this position: 'Political parties take decisions based on their own judgement'.

Eulau, with several colleagues, studied the roles of representatives during the 1957 sessions of the state legislatures in California, New Jersey, Ohio and Tennessee. Among other questions, representatives were asked how they would describe the job of being a legislator, and what the most important things are that they should do. The authors use Burke's normative theory to develop an empirically based typology of major representational roles: Trustee, Delegate and Politico. Trustees primarily follow their own judgement even if it is at odds with their voters' preferences; Delegates represent the preferences of their voters even if, personally, they have different views; and for Politicos it depends on specific circumstances whether they follow public opinion or their own judgement. Eulau and his colleagues compare the representatives' areal focus (i.e. district-oriented vs. state-oriented) with the representatives' roles. They find that state-oriented representatives are more likely to be Trustees than district-oriented representatives while the latter ones are more likely to be Delegates than the former ones. They also argue that representatives become less Delegate and more Trustee as the business matter at hand becomes more intricate and technical (Eulau et al 1959: 751).

While Eulau et al focus on the political representatives, Converse does so on the role of ordinary citizens. By using data from the 1956-1960 American National Election Study, Converse (1964) argues that relatively few members of the general public understand ideological politics and hold ideologically consistent attitudes. In his influential book chapter, he argues that in the general public, political attitudes are highly unstable, and that ordinary citizens essentially lack a structured belief system unlike political leaders. Hence, he argues that the general public is incapable of coherently guiding policy. Finally, he also concludes that belief systems are constructed and used by political parties and their representatives, not by ordinary citizens.[57]

[57] Even though Converse's chapter indeed is an important contribution to the debate, many later studies contain major criticisms on this chapter and its conclusions.

In some respects of similar vein, Zaller (1992) argues that public opinion is largely dependent on the most recent information obtained through exposure to the mass media which itself is driven by political discourse. He contends that the general public does not have meaningful and stable political opinions on many issues and concludes that public opinion consequently is not very reliable; public preferences are likely shaped by 'others' (Zaller 1992: 6), in practice often by political leaders and other opinion leaders. He affirms that political communications from party leaders in the mass media shape public opinion, but he also argues that the level of political awareness of people is relevant for the impact of political discourse on them. Politically more aware people are more likely to get their cues from political leaders than those who are politically less aware. Based upon the United States National Election Studies (1986-1987), he develops a model (which he calls Receive-Accept-Sample [RAS] model) to explain how people acquire information from leaders and mass media and form opinions across a broad range of topics such as domestic and foreign policies, trust in government, racial equality, and presidential approval, as well as voting behaviour for the US House, Senate and Presidential elections.

By examining welfare policy of the United States based on findings from the 1992, 1996 and 2000 CPS National Election Studies, Schneider and Jacoby (2005) also argue that political leaders' positions guide and shape public opinion although the effect is short-lived. They suggest that political discourse is the prime factor to bring about changes in public opinion (Schneider and Jacoby 2005: 377).

After investigating the opinions of both the general public and the local political elites on the constitution-making process of Uganda, Moehler (2006: 293-302) argues that public participation had a weak and uneven influence on constitutional support, and opinions of political leaders shaped public evaluations of the constitution-making process. It was so because the general public lacked sufficient knowledge and information to evaluate the constitution on their own and that's why they turned to local elites for cues. She finally concluded that public participation during the constitution-writing process alone could not substitute the roles of the political elites. Consensus among political elites, including opposing elites, was essential to get the outcome.

3.1.3 Position 3: Public Opinion and Political Parties Adapt to Each Other's Decisions/ Preferences

A third group of scholars or studies argues that a reciprocal relationship exists between public opinion and the parties' decisions. These studies add a dynamic or longitudinal perspective to the debate. Policymakers or elected representatives of political parties, on the one hand, respond to changes in the public's preferences over time, and the general public, on the other hand, adjusts its preferences in reaction to the policy changes made by policymakers (e.g. Hill and Hurley 1999, Hill and Hinton-Anderson 1995; Wlezien 1995, 1996, 2004; Soroka and Wlezien 2004, 2005, 2010; Wlezien and Soroka 2011, 2012). We label this position: 'Public opinion and political parties adapt to each other's decisions/ preferences'.

Based on public opinion surveys and elite opinion surveys conducted in American states, Hill and Hinton-Anderson (1995) find strong evidence of a reciprocal relationship between the preferences of the general public and of the political elites that shape state policies (specifically social welfare policy). They also show that this relationship is even stronger when they compare mass and elite members of the same political party (Hill and Hinton-Anderson 1995: 933).

Employing time-series regression analysis on the United States' spending on defence, Wlezien (1995, 1996) describes the general public as a thermostat and argues that not only do policymakers respond to public preferences, but also that the public adjusts its preferences over time for 'more' or 'less' policy in response to what policymakers do (he calls this phenomenon a 'Thermostatic Model'). If policymakers provide more than the public's preference, the preference for more policy decreases; if policymakers provide less than their preference, the preference for more policy increases. This results in a negative feedback in the public's adjustment. Ultimately, he observes that the signals the public sends to policymakers in the form of a preference for 'more' or 'less' policy lead to corresponding changes in policy, evidencing that policymakers represent public preference in policy; their response to the public preference is positive (Wlezien 1995: 997-998; Wlezien 1996: 100; for a more general overview see Soroka and Wlezien, 2010).

3.2 Sources of Variation

The three positions with regard to the relationship between public opinion and policy making are not mutually exclusive. Some authors discuss several positions, and some studies hint at conditions or contexts that affect the extent to which a particular position describes the political reality. The primary source of such variation that is discussed in the literature seems to be issue content and context. Although some studies merely mention variation across different issue domains, others make explicit that public preferences are better reflected in those public policies that are more salient to the public. Variation across political systems features less prominently in the literature, but this may at least partly be an artefact: most studies are confined to a single country (e.g. USA), and only comparative studies can show this source of variation. Finally, responsiveness to public opinion is not the same for all political parties.

Issue Domain and Issue Saliency

Miller and Stokes (1963), after a careful examination of voters' opinions and roll call behaviour of US Congress Representatives (on the basis of 1958 representation data) on three issues (civil rights, social welfare and foreign policy), conclude that the constituency influences the policy actions of its representatives on two of these issues. While no congruence, as an indication of influence, is found between public opinion and Congressmen's roll call behaviour on matters of foreign policy, the relationship between public opinion and politicians' behaviour on civil rights and social welfare is substantial (Miller and Stokes 1963: 48-51). This study was the first to examine the link between public opinion and roll call voting in the American Congress through systematic empirical methods. Erikson (1978) re-examined the Miller-Stokes representation data, and argues that Congressional representatives were even more responsive to constituency opinion than had previously been suggested by Miller and Stokes. Hill and Hurley (1999: 126-127)

find evidence of public opinion influencing politicians' opinion on the issue of civil rights. In their subsequent published work too, they explicitly assert that politicians pay attention to constituency preference on an issue such as civil rights (Hurley and Hill 2003: 306). By analysing a Eurobarometer citizen survey and a survey of candidates for the European Parliament conducted in nine member nations in 1979, Dalton (1985: 293-294) finds that Western European parties and their representatives are 'successful' in representing mass preferences in economic and security issues.

Miller and Stokes' finding that foreign policy is an issue or policy area in which public opinion does not seem to influence representatives' actions is usually explained by assuming that foreign policy is less salient to many voters. Hill and Hurley (1999: 126-127) also find different patterns for different issue areas. They also do not find any linkage between public and elite preferences on foreign policy, but they find a reciprocal relationship with regard to social welfare policy. Also, they find evidence of a one-way relationship - public opinion influencing elite opinion – on the issue of civil rights.

Using data from eight quadrennial pairs of surveys conducted between 1974 and 2002, Jacobs and Page (2005) assert that the US foreign policy is heavily and consistently influenced by internationally oriented business leaders; they find little or no significant influence of public opinion on the makers of the US foreign policy (Jacobs and Page 2005: 121). This suggests that influence of public opinion may vary from policy domain to domain because, as one of these two authors has argued, policies closely reflected the views of ordinary citizens on salient domestic issues such as social welfare, women's rights and racial issues (see Page and Shapiro 1983; Page et al 1984).

However, some studies actually find a stronger correlation between public opinion and foreign policy making. Monroe (1979) compares published national survey results of the United States conducted from 1960 to 1974 with policy outcomes and found that about two-thirds of the cases show congruence between public opinion and public policy. Most remarkably, unlike the findings of Miller and Stokes (1963), his analysis suggests that foreign policy decisions are *more* consistent with public preferences than domestic policies such as social welfare, economic affairs and labour, defence, civil rights and liberties, energy and environment, and political reform (Monroe 1979: 10-11). He re-analyses the data of the national surveys from 1981 to 1993 and finds the highest degree of consistency between public preferences and policy decisions with respect to foreign policies albeit at a lower level compared to the 1960-1979 period (Monroe 1998: 14). However, and most remarkably, the consistency was higher in foreign policies than other issues like social welfare, economic and labour, and political reform. Similarly, after studying defence spending during the Reagan administration Bartels (1991: 467) finds that changes in public opinion tend to precede changes in policy decisions and Hartley and Russett (1992), after conducting sophisticated analyses of time-series data, find strong evidence that changes in military spending in the United States are largely influenced by changes in public support or opposition to military expenditure. However, these authors add that the urgent need of arms (compared to the Soviet spending) and the budget deficit also play an influential role (Hartley

and Russett 1992: 911-912). The findings of these latter studies seem to suggest that foreign policy need not always be less salient than other policies or issues.

After examining public opinion and policy outcomes on more than 300 issues taken from surveys conducted between 1935 and 1979 in the United States, Page and Shapiro (1983) conclude that considerable congruence exists between public preferences and policies, especially on salient issues (such as social issues and economic issues) where the proportion of respondents answering 'do not know' or 'no opinion' is relatively low. Although they do not rule out the possibility of policy affecting opinion, they claim that public opinion affects policy more than policy influences public opinion, at least in the United States (Page and Shapiro 1983: 189). Page and associates (1984) further support this argument by showing considerable congruence between Congressmen's roll call votes and their constituencies' policy preference on issues such as social welfare, women's rights and the racial issue. They also say that Congressmen's personal characteristics do not have a significant effect on their roll call behaviours, except in the case of abortion (Page et al 1984: 753).

Manza and Cook (2002) conclude that even though policy represents public opinion most of the time, there is wide variation in the extent of policy representation across different issues and at different points in time. They call it a 'third contingent view' and say that the relationship between public opinion and policy responsiveness is significantly strong under some conditions and with some kinds of issues, while under other conditions and with other issues, it is weak (Manza and Cook 2002: 651).

Petry and Mendelsohn (2004) examine the consistency between public opinion and policy decisions during the period 1994-2001 in Canada by correlating public responses to survey questions on 230 issues with enacted policy proposals on the same issues. On the one hand, they find divergences between public opinion and policy decisions on low-profile issues of which the public is not much aware such as the Free Trade Agreement and Goods and Services Taxes, but on the other hand they find a stronger positive correlation between public opinion and policy decisions on high-profile issues (of which the public is much more aware) such as Deficit Reduction and Canadian Unity (Petry and Mendelsohn 2004: 506). Their findings indicate that both the direction and strength of the relationship between public opinion and policy decisions may differ by the degree of saliency of issues in the public's mind.

Issue saliency also affects the model in which public preferences and public policy influence each other. Wlezien (2004) asserts that politicians respond to public preferences differently in different domains. Congruence between representatives and public preferences is more apparent in defence and welfare domains (Wlezien 2004: 21). Soroka and Wlezien test the Thermostatic Model in the United States, Britain and Canada and find that the public responds 'thermostatically' to changes in public spending on defence and welfare (which are salient policy domains to the public), and policymakers respond to public preferences accordingly in these three advanced representative democracies (Soroka and Wlezien 2004, 2005, 2010; Wlezien and Soroka 2011, 2012).

Political Institutions

Based on time-series data of the public's policy preferences and of the government's policy intentions (as expressed in the opening speeches of the head of government or state rather than the actual policy behaviour) for the 1970-2002 period from Britain and Denmark, Hobolt and Klemmensen (2005) conclude that public opinion tends to drive public policy intentions (with a one-year time lag) rather than vice-versa. They further argue that policy representation is more pronounced in democracies with a proportional electoral system (such as Denmark) than with a majoritarian system (such as Britain) due to the higher degree of party competition and government vulnerability in democracies with proportional representation (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005: 380). In later work, Hobolt and Klemmensen (2008) come to similar findings when the United States (a presidential system) is included in the analysis along with Britain and Denmark, and the studied period runs from 1970 to 2005. They argue that different institutional structures produce different levels of public influence on policy representation and government responsiveness. Their research shows that government incentives to respond to the public are highest in the case of presidentialism (as in the US) followed by democracies with a parliamentary system and proportional representation (as in Denmark) and those with a parliamentary system and a majoritarian electoral system (as in Britain) (Hobolt and Klemmensen 2008: 332).

Soroka and Wlezien also show important differences in the application of their Thermostatic Model across political systems (Soroka and Wlezien 2004, 2005, 2010; Wlezien and Soroka 2011, 2012). First, public responsiveness is less pronounced in the United States and Canada than in Britain, arguably since public reactions are more pervasive in a unitary system (as Britain is) than in a federal system (as the United States and Canada are), because a federal system increases the number of different governments at different levels and makes it difficult for the general public to distinguish which levels of government are doing what. Consequently the public cannot easily differentiate between sources of, for instance, policy spending leading them to be less responsive to policy changes. On the other hand, policy representation is less evident in Britain and Canada than in the United States, because the cabinet substantially controls policymaking decisions in all domains in parliamentary systems (as Britain and Canada are) leading policymakers to be less responsive in such systems than in presidential systems, whereas the strong checks and balances between executive and legislature in presidential systems (as the United States is) enhance policy responsiveness. Therefore, both vertical (federalism) and horizontal (presidential system) divisions of powers impact on the relationship between public opinion and policy.

Political Parties

After investigating the ideological dynamics of political parties of eight Western European representative democracies from 1976 to 1998, Adams, Haupt and Stoll (2009) conclude that both public opinion and global economic conditions influence parties' ideological positions, but the type of party has a significant mediating role in the reaction to the shifts in public opinion and global economic conditions. They find that centrist and rightist parties adjust their positions to changes in both public opinion and global economy conditions, while leftist parties show no

reaction to public opinion and are less responsive to global economic conditions (Adams et al 2009: 611).

In addition to party ideology, party unity may play a role. By using data on referendums about sports facilities, Paul and Brown (2001) first claim that the influence of parties is substantial on those issues which are not salient to the public. The public would depend on political leaders' cues to form their opinions or to make a political decision because of their ignorance of those less salient issues. What is more important in this context is their finding that the level of the leaders' influence on the general public is stronger if leaders are united (Paul and Brown 2001: 873). Zaller (1992: 99) also mentions elite consensus, but extends it to the party system as a whole. He predicts that the level of support for the parties' positions increases with the level of citizens' political awareness when parties show consensus on an issue, but that this relationship weakens when parties are divided and polarized.

3.3 Public Preferences and Elite Preferences: A Composition Effect?

Early public opinion studies on democratic principles and political tolerance already revealed that education may have a significant effect on political attitudes on democratic principles (Prothro and Grigg 1960; Jackman 1972; Barnum and Sullivan 1989; Finifter and Mickiewicz 1992; Hoffmann-Lange 2008). For instance, the high-education group and the low-education group showed the greatest differences on all statements that were used in the surveys to measure public opinion on fundamental principles of democracy with the high-education group giving the most democratic response to each statement (Prothro and Grigg 1960: 291). Compared to other explanatory variables, education was the most important variable to determine public tolerance (Jackman 1972: 762). Other later studies (e.g., Barnum and Sullivan 1989: 143) concur with this established finding of a positive correlation between education and tolerance. Similarly, a public opinion survey conducted in the former USSR just two years before its dissolution revealed a positive relationship between education and support for political change. The more highly educated public was more tolerant of political deviance and more likely to engage in political participation (Finifter and Mickiewicz 1992: 866). After examining many quantitative surveys, Hoffmann-Lange (2008: 61-62) concluded that there was a tremendous impact of formal education on the opinion-formation of individuals. She further stated that non-elite people with higher educational levels and higher levels of political information were more supportive of civil liberties like lawyers and journalists were.

Furthermore, several empirical studies on elite attitudes, conducted in Britain, Canada, Israel, New Zealand and the USA, have shown that political elites have more elaborate democratic values than the general public. As discussed in Chapter 1, the 'elite theory of democracy' argues that elites are more tolerant than the general public toward civil liberties and minority rights, and have more support for democratic institutions and principles (McClosky 1964; Barnum and Sullivan 1989; Sullivan et al 1993). Samuel Stouffer was the first to demonstrate that community leaders of the USA were generally more tolerant than the general public (Sullivan et al 1993: 54). Since his seminal study, it has become widely accepted that, as a general rule, political elites are more committed to civil liberties and democratic values than the general public. These studies

have a common argument that political elites develop these values due to a process of selective recruitment and due to their socialization, leading to differences in levels of tolerance between political elites and the citizenry at large (Jackman 1972: 753; Shamir 1991: 1020; Sullivan et al 1993: 52-53). Other studies show that the political elites are different from the general public in these respects because they are better educated in and more familiar with politics, have a better understanding of basic democratic values, and/or have better access to political information than the general public (Hoffmann-Lange 2008: 55; Converse 1964: 246-247; Soroka and Wlezien 2010: 18).

However, various studies have questioned or nuanced this argument of political elites as such being attitudinally more tolerant than the general public (Jackman 1972; Shamir 1991; Sniderman et al 1991). Jackman (1972: 762) re-analysed Stouffer's data and concludes that the elite-mass difference in tolerance disappears once demographic differences, and in particular education is controlled for. Shamir (1991: 1020) argues that political elites seem to be more tolerant than the mass public because of the selective recruitment which results in an overrepresentation in the political elite of people belonging to particular social strata i.e. better educated, of higher social and economic status. As said, the level of education and political and democratic tolerance are strongly correlated. In short: previous findings of higher levels of tolerance and democratic values among political elites are most likely mainly the result of a composition effect, with educational level as its core.

3.4 Expectations

It is not simple to extrapolate from this literature on democratic representation to the case of Nepal's political transformation, for at least two reasons.

First, most of the literature on the relationship between public opinion and elite decisions reviewed above deals with issues of 'daily' policy making such as foreign policy, socio-economic policy, etc., not with the relatively rare issue of changing the basic rules of the political system itself. The literature on constitutional reform, on the other hand, is largely silent on the interaction between public preferences and elite decisions. This study is innovative in focusing precisely on the relationship between public preferences and elite decisions in the domain of political reform. So far, there are only few earlier related studies on the topic. In a comparative study of democratic reform and legitimacy, Ziemann (2014a), for example, argues that public involvement in the reform process is quite rare. She mentions the two referendums (2011 and 2014) about a new electoral system in New Zealand as an exceptional case (Ziemann 2014a: 138-143). Moreover, she finds little congruence between the structural reforms that are implemented and mass level cultural changes (Ziemann 2014b). In another study, Renwick (2010:11) distinguishes several processes of electoral reform – from imposition by external (foreign) actors to mass imposition, but focuses on two processes: elite majority imposition and elite-mass interaction. The latter process, he argues, starts with a minority within the political elite seeking reform. When the general public becomes dissatisfied for some reason, the reforms are portrayed as a solution to their problems. This mass mobilization then forces the majority of the

elites to accept reforms. The electoral reforms in New Zealand are also analysed as a case of such interaction (Renwick 2010: 20-21).

Second, the literature reviewed focuses primarily on advanced western democracies. On the UN's Human Development Index, these countries rank in the category of 'very high human development', whereas Nepal is listed in the category of 'medium human development' (UNDP 2020: 243). Among other things, this implies a significant difference in the average level of education. In Nepal, the mean number of years of schooling is 5.0, compared to, for example 13.4 years in the UK, 13.4 years in the US and Canada, or 12.4 in the Netherlands. If we may assume that level of education and political awareness are positively correlated, it is likely that the saliency of the reform issues is also affected. Also, the risk of a composition effect accounting for differences between elite and public preferences increases.

Given these difficulties in extrapolating findings from the literature reviewed, I do not propose to actually test hypotheses. Rather, I formulate a few general expectations to guide the analyses and interpretation of findings in the following chapters.

Expectation 1: Position 1 does not apply: public opinion does not unilaterally direct the reform decisions.

Expectation 2: On reform issues that are not salient to the general public, Position 2 applies: the political parties take decisions based on their own judgment. Over time, public preferences move closer to party decisions.

Expectation 3: On reform issues that are salient to the general public, Position 3 applies: public opinion and elite decisions reciprocally affect each other. Over time, public preferences and party decisions converge.

Expectation 4a: The political elites are more likely to support the political reforms than the general public.

Expectation 4b: The higher the educational status of the general public, the higher the support for the political reforms.

Expectation 4c: The political elites and the higher-educated general public are more likely to support the political reforms than the low-educated public.

4

Methods and Data

4.1 Genesis of Public Opinion Polls in General and in Nepal

Since a main role of political parties in a democratic system of governance is to represent the people, it is important for them to know what public opinion toward a particular issue is. As V. O. Key, Jr (1961: 7) argued: *'Unless mass views have some place in the shaping of policy, all the talk about democracy is nonsense'*. At the beginning of his *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries*, Arend Lijphart states that an ideal democratic government should always work perfectly in accordance with the preferences of its citizens (Lijphart 1984: 1). However, he acknowledged that such a perfect correspondence between citizens' preferences and the government's actions has never existed.

Some scholars say that politicians responsible for drafting a bill should listen to the voices of ordinary people without ignoring the desires of minorities and marginalized groups (see e.g. Eisinger 2008). Whether public opinion is duly reflected in the formulation and implementation of their policies, plans and programmes is, however, a different issue.

One of the conditions for such congruence between public opinion and policies to materialize is that politicians (and policymakers) are aware of the general public's preferences. Public opinion polls provide a means for communicating the public's views and concerns by offering input and feedback to policy- and decision-makers (Mattes 2008: 119; Oberschall 2008: 83-84). A series of public opinion polls - if conducted scientifically - can be a valid and reliable means to gauge the general people's view on contemporary issues and identify ruptures and continuities in their opinion toward particular issues over time. Once a poll result on a major policy issue is made public, it likely draws the attention of political parties, politicians, government, planners, and of citizens themselves.[58]

[58] Many academics found that what others think or believe, and how those opinions are changing, have an effect on an individual's subsequent opinion and behaviour (Traugott 2008).

United States and United Kingdom

Surveys or opinion polls have different ancient ancestors – from a straight population count in ancient civilizations to a landmark statistical study by Charles Booth on the life and labour of poor inhabitants of London conducted between 1893 and 1903 (Converse 1987: 11). However, it was in the United States that this tool was introduced in an attempt to predict the outcome of a presidential election in the early part of the nineteenth century. Two newspapers *The Harrisburg Pennsylvanian* and *The Raleigh Star* conducted public opinion polls on the presidential race between Andrew Jackson and John Quincy Adams in 1824. The event went down in history as the first known (modern) public opinion polls in the world (Bethlehem 2018: 20). The polls predicted that Andrew Jackson would win; Jackson indeed received more votes than any of his opponents.[59]

Public opinion polls conducted during those days were not only unscientific, at least from a contemporary perspective, but also extremely limited in being concentrated in cities. It was only in 1916 that a nation-wide public opinion poll took place. This was organized by a weekly magazine, *The Literary Digest Magazine,* and correctly predicted Woodrow Wilson's election as US president in that year (Oberschall 2008: 86). It went on to also correctly predict the next four presidential elections. Even though *The Literary Digest Magazine* obtained correct results, its polling technique was unscientific.[60] The failure to predict the presidential election of 1936, despite a huge sample size of 2.3 million voters, contributed to the magazine's demise (Oberschall 2008: 87; Bryson 1976: 185) and, more importantly, resulted in a major development in scientific polling.[61]

At the same time, the American Institute of Public Opinion, founded by the statistician George Horace Gallup, conducted a poll with a far smaller sample size of 50,000 respondents interviewing a demographically representative sample of the voters representing genders, various age groups and various income groups of the voters. The Gallup Poll, as it became known, correctly predicted Roosevelt's landslide victory over Alf Landon in 1936 (Oberschall 2008: 87; Zetterberg 2008: 107; Bethlehem 2018: 20). It is considered as the most immediate ancestor of a public opinion poll (Converse 1987: 87). An important lesson from the Gallup Poll was that it

[59] Even though Jackson received more votes, he did not receive a majority in the Electoral College, nor did any other candidate. As a result, the election went to the House of Representatives which decided in favour of John Quincy Adams (World Book International 1997).

[60] These polls were unscientific in the sense that their sampling was not done properly. For instance, in mailing out sample ballots to 10 million persons selected primarily from telephone books, automobile registration lists and from the list of its own subscribers in the presidential poll of 1936, and in making a prediction by simply counting the voting preference of 2.3 million returned mails, *The Literary Digest* assumed that its readers and the telephone owners of that time represented the American voters, but actually its sample was biased and did not represent a cross section of the American voters. The sample only represented a subset of the population with a relatively intense interest in the politics (Bryson 1976: 185), and was biased to upper income groups (Oberschall 2008: 87).

[61] Squire (1988: 130-131) cites the very low response rate rather than the sample behind the failure of the Literary Digest Poll. He concludes that the poll would have, at least, correctly predicted Roosevelt a winner if everyone who received a sample ballot had returned it.

empirically showed that the size of the sample was not as important as the method used to select the sample.

The success of the Gallup Poll became an inspiration for the promotion of public opinion research throughout the world. Gallup conducted a poll in the United Kingdom in the 1945 general elections correctly predicting Labour's victory. At the time, many commentators had expected an easy victory for the Conservative Party led by the then popular British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (Grolier Incorporated 1996). The Gallup Poll, however, suffered a major setback when, in 1948, its prediction of a victory by Republican presidential candidate Thomas E. Dewey proved wrong. Upon introspection the Gallup Poll recognised that the error was mainly due to the failure of quota sampling as a method for getting truly representative samples. Unlike random sampling, quota sampling can have serious flaws resulting in a failure to select a sample that validly represents the population, i.e., the electorate.

India

By the 1950s, the polling exercise had spread to most Western democratic countries. Other parts of the world followed. For instance, in India, even though speculative election forecasting started during the late 1960s, the first scientific public opinion poll was held in 1980 with a joint effort by the magazine *India Today* and the Marketing and Research Group (MARG). They first identified the swing zones for the dominant party, the Indian National Congress, to measure shifts in votes.[62]Next they selected constituencies from the swing zones for their sample. It was the first survey-based opinion poll ever conducted in India. The two institutions continued to work together in the opinion polls of 1984, 1989, 1991 and 1996, using the same methodology. Their predictions in 1989and subsequently were more accurate, particularly in predicting the seats for the Congress Party, but they failed to predict the seats for other parties accurately (Karandikar et al. 2002: 77). Nevertheless, the opinion polls of Indian voters conducted by *India Today* and MARG made significant contributions to Indian electoral studies since they succeeded in delivering the message that a survey-based election forecasting is more valid and reliable than speculation-based forecasting. It also signalled that the use of this survey or polling instrument is not confined to highly developed countries only.

From 1998 onwards, many other institutions and magazines entered the opinion poll scene in India. A significant contribution to the public opinion polls was made by a team from the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDC) and *India Today*, because this was the first team that disclosed its methodology and made it available in the public domain (see Karandikar et al. 2002).

[62] The swing zones were those areas where the voters tended to swing i.e., vote for one party during one election and for another party during the next election. This is in contrast to other zones which tended to be consistent i.e., vote for a particular party consistently.

Nepal

The history of opinion polls in Nepal goes back to 1991, when the Political Science Association of Nepal (POLSAN) and the Institute of Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) separately conducted opinion polls on the 1991 parliamentary elections, i.e. the first general elections after the restoration of the multiparty democracy (see chapter 2). POLSAN conducted a poll of 1,004 individuals in 10 districts using a quota sampling technique while IIDS applied a purposive sampling technique to solicit responses from 445 people in 9 districts (POLSAN 1991; Hachhethu 2004: 6). In 1993, the Nepal Opinion Survey Centre (NOSC), employing a multistage random sampling technique, conducted an opinion poll of 522 respondents from the three districts of the Kathmandu Valley (NOSC 1993). Though limited to only three districts, this was probably the first opinion poll in Nepal that used a random (probability) sampling technique.

A large scale nation-wide opinion poll with a sample size of 7,841 individuals distributed across 29 districts representing every ecological and development zone was undertaken by the Himal Association in 1999 on the eve of the third general election; the data collection fieldwork was carried out by ORG-MARG Nepal. The Himal Association used a stratified random sampling technique at the district level and a quota sampling technique (which is a type of non-random sampling) to select respondents (Himal Association 1999: 3-4). The objective of this poll was to predict the popular vote for the parties – not the numbers of seats political parties would occupy in the next parliament. This was the first poll conducted in Nepal that could be validated based on the actual election results. The poll results showed that the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, RPP, CPN-ML and RPP Chand would obtain the highest popular votes respectively. The actual election results listed the party sizes in the same order as the opinion poll had predicted, but with some deviation in the actual percentages of the popular vote. The Nepali Congress obtained 36.3 percent while the poll predicted it to get 39.7 percent. The popular vote of the CPN (UML) was 30.7 percent while the prediction was 39.3 percent. The popular vote of the RPP was 10.1 percent while the prediction was 8.6 percent. In the case of the CPN (ML), the popular vote was 6.4 percent while the prediction was 4.8 percent. The popular vote of the RPP (Chand) was 3.4 percent while the prediction was 3.7 percent. So, the differences were not huge.

With the beginning of the new millennium, mass public opinion polling occurred quite often in the country. Since 2001, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies (NCCS) and the fortnightly magazine *Himal Khabarpatrika* jointly with the Himal Association, for example, have been conducting public opinion polls regularly on participatory democracy and other contemporary issues. The NCCS carried out its first public opinion polls in 2001, which was one on elections. It used a purposive sampling technique to select 500 respondents from 5 districts (Hachhethu 2004: 6). In 2001 *Himal Khabarpatrika* entered this field with a large-scale opinion poll including 3,902 randomly selected respondents in its sample from 20 districts (Himal Association 2001: 2).

In 2004, a survey entitled 'State of Democracy in Nepal' was undertaken by State of Democracy in South Asia/Nepal Chapter in collaboration with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). This opinion poll covered the entire country using a systematic random sampling technique at each of three stages: the constituency, the polling-

centre (i.e. the sub-constituency) and the voters. A sample of 3,249 respondents was drawn from 163 polling centres in 39 constituencies spread over 38 districts (Hachhethu 2004: 5-6).

Also in 2004, The Asia Foundation Nepal (TAF Nepal) conducted a nation-wide opinion poll called 'Nepal Contemporary Political Situation'. The poll included 3,059 respondents from 35 districts representing the five development regions and three ecological zones of the country. Among others, the poll included a booster sample of victims of the ongoing armed conflict from both sides – the state security forces and the Maoists[63] (Sharma and Sen 2005: 342; Interdisciplinary Analysts 2005: 13). Since then, TAF Nepal has been regularly conducting large scale nationwide public opinion polls on the country's contemporary political and social issues. The TAF Nepal's polls have become one of the most important sources of quantitative time series data on public opinion in Nepal. This study has used these poll data collected between December 2004 and April 2012. They are discussed in detail below.

4.2 Longitudinal Public Opinion Polls Used in This Study

4.2.1 The Public Opinion Polls

By analysing longitudinal data from public opinion polls conducted when major political changes occurred in Nepal, we can examine ruptures and continuities in people's opinions at important historical junctures, re-examine Nepal's political transition in light of mass public opinion, and reflect on the relationship between mass public opinion and elite political decisions. It would not be possible to do so if we had not conducted longitudinal public opinion polls.

The 'Nepal Contemporary Political Situation' (NCPS) was a series of nationwide public opinion surveys that mapped changes and continuities in the opinions of the public as these related to the country's contemporary politics. Nine public opinion polls have been carried out in this series between 2004 and 2012, eight of which are used in this study.[64] In addition, this study uses three nationwide public opinion polls in the 'People's Perception on Safety and Security' (PPSS) series, undertaken between 2007 and 2010.[65]See Table 4.1 for an overview.

[63] A booster sample targets respondents from specific groups that have a high possibility of being excluded in a standard sample. In the case of Nepal these could be groups like Dalit women, a small Janajati community, people internally displaced by the conflict, etc.

[64] Data obtained from the fourth survey in this series (i.e. NCPS IV that was conducted in 2007) are not used in this research, because this survey was based on purposive sampling and not on random sampling. Since generalization is not possible from a survey which is based on purposive sampling, this study excluded this survey from the analysis. Since the first wave of another survey series, the People's Perception on Safety and Security (PPSS), was conducted in 2007 which also measured public opinion on the state restructuring issues, this study could still examine data from 2007.

[65] The People's Perception on Safety and Security (PPSS) surveys were primarily conducted to measure public opinion on community safety and armed violence. However, some questions relating to the state restructuring were included in the questionnaires of these surveys.

The non-response rates in these surveys were negligible. Very few people refused to be interviewed. In a third-world country like Nepal, people generally give time if somebody wants to talk to them.[66] Consequently, no records of non-response were kept and the sample sizes mentioned in this table are actual or gross sample sizes as well as principally realized sample sizes. The opinion polls from both the NCPS and PPSS series geographically covered every part of the country and employed random (probability) sampling techniques at all stages. Also, every wave of polls in these series more or less followed the same design and methodology, because of which their findings are comparable and a trend analysis can be conducted on the basis of the data (see e.g. Hellevik 2008).

[66] In large-scale surveys like Nepal Demographic and Health Surveys 2011 and 2016, household response rates were 99.4 percent and 98.5 percent respectively. Similarly, Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys 2010, 2014 and 2019 had household response rates 99.7 percent, 98.5 percent and 98.6 percent respectively. These indicate that non-response rates were very small in these surveys. Therefore, there is a reason to believe that non-response rates in the surveys used in this study were negligible.

Table 4.1: Brief Description of the Longitudinal Opinion Polls

Title of the Poll	Sample Size	No. of Sample Districts	Sampling Technique	Fieldwork
NCPS I	3,059	35	Districts: Stratified random sampling VDCs*: Simple random sampling Wards: Simple random sampling Households: Right-hand-rule Respondents: Kish grid	26 Nov–16 Dec, 2004
NCPS II	3,000	28	Identical to NCPS I	5 Jan – 25 Jan, 2006
NCPS III	3,000	32	Identical to NCPS I	18 Aug – 10 Sep,2006
PPSS I	3,010	30	Identical to NCPS I	8 May – 2 June, 2007
NCPS V	3,010	30	Identical to NCPS I	23 Dec 2007 – 12 Jan, 2008
PPSS II	3,025	30	Identical to NCPS I	3 Aug – 30 Aug, 2008
PPSS III	3,004	32	Identical to NCPS I	24 Jun – 23 July, 2009
NCPS VI	3,000	35	Identical to NCPS I	19 Aug – 11 Sep, 2010
NCPS VII	3,000	35	Identical to NCPS I	31 Jan – 22 Feb, 2011
NCPS VIII	3,000	35	Identical to NCPS I	10 Jun – 30 June 2011
NCPS IX	3,010	30	Identical to NCPS I	27 Mar – 23 Apr, 2012

* VDC stands for Village Development Committee, which are smaller administrative units than districts. Nine wards, which are the smallest administrative units in Nepal, constitute a VDC.

4.2.2 Methodology of the Public Opinion Polls

Before the new constitution was promulgated on 20 September 2015, Nepal was administratively divided into five development regions along the east-west axis, namely the Eastern Development Region (EDR), Central Development Region (CDR), Western Development Region (WDR), Mid-Western Development Region (MWDR) and Far-Western Development Region (FWDR). Along the north-south axis three ecological regions are distinguished: the mountains, the hills and the Tarai. Considering these two parameters – ecological region and development region – Nepal is divided into 15 distinct eco-development regions (i.e., 3 ecological regions x 5 development regions), namely eastern mountain, eastern hill, eastern Tarai, etc. In addition, the Kathmandu Valley was treated as a separate sixteenth region given the fact that it contains the capital city of the country,

not to mention its big population size. These 16 eco-development regions constituted the 'strata' of the sample design. Each stratum has distinct features (i.e., physical, cultural-linguistic and social) and within a stratum there is a relatively high degree of homogeneity, while across strata there is generally a high degree of heterogeneity.

In the first stage, sample districts were selected using a stratified random sampling technique, i.e. representing all 16 distinct strata.[67] The number of districts from a particular stratum in the sample was decided by employing a proportional allocation. Also, the total sample size of respondents was proportionally distributed across these sample districts.

In the second stage, proportional numbers of village development committees (VDCs) and/or municipalities were selected from each sample district by simple random sampling. The numbers of sample VDCs varied according to the size of the sample districts. One VDC was selected for every 20 respondents: for example, if 40 respondents had to be selected from a sample district, two VDCs, each with around 20 respondents, were selected.

In the third stage, a sampled VDC was further distributed into wards. For a VDC of the sample size of 20, two wards were selected by employing simple random sampling, and then for each ward 10 households were identified.

In the fourth stage, households in each sample ward were selected randomly by employing the Right-Hand-Rule random walk method. The starting points for the random-walk were recognizable locations such as schools, crossroads, *chautaras* (raised platforms of earth and stones with a tree at the centre made beside roads and used as resting places), bazaars, temples, mosques, etc. In this method, interviewers started to walk towards any direction randomly from a starting point counting the number of households on the right hand side of his/her route. He/she returned the same way from the point where the settlement ended – again counting number of households on his/her right hand side. In this way, households located on both sides of the road or path were included. Based on the number of households available there and the number of interviews to be conducted, he/she selected the households by skipping a certain number of households (i.e., systematic sampling).

Finally, in the fifth stage a member of the selected household was selected using a Kish-grid (i.e. a table of random numbers) and the selected respondent was interviewed face-to-face[68]. In this method, one individual is randomly selected from the household to be interviewed from a list of all household members of 18 years of age and above. Using the grid ensures that each eligible

[67] Stratified random sampling is more representative of the population than simple random sampling (Snedecor and Cochran 1980: 434).

[68] Though there are many ways to collect public opinion data, the history of polling has made clear that one of the ways to gauge public opinion is to ask them directly using a face-to-face interview mode (Weisberg et al 1996). This interview mode allows the adoption of more complicated selection methods like the Kish-grid method excluding those who are younger than 18 years, and yields a better cooperation from respondents than a telephone survey or a post card survey. In addition, visual aids such as show cards, 10-point scales, smiley scales and pictures etc. can be used effectively in face-to-face interviews (Dykema et al 2008).

member in a selected household has an equal chance of being selected. Equal numbers of male and female respondents were selected for an interview in each of the sample wards. In this way, the surveys followed random (probability) sampling techniques at every stage so that the findings of these surveys can be generalized to the entire population under study (see e.g., Patton 1990; Sayer 1992; Weisberg 2008). Random (probability) sampling is arguably the only scientific basis that allows drawing inferences from a sample to a population, although there inevitably remains a (small) margin of error between sample statistics and population parameters (Kumar 1996; O'Muircheartaigh 2008).

Field supervisors and experienced interviewers were deployed in the field to interview respondents at their homes. The survey teams were as inclusive as possible in terms of language, ethnicity, region, and gender. Before deploying the teams, two-day orientation trainings were conducted to acquaint them with survey research methodology, their roles and responsibilities, and the field operations plan. They also had the sampling techniques explained. They were also acquainted with the structured questionnaire format, so that they became fully familiar with the intention and wording of each of the questions. The Nepali language was used to administer the questionnaires. However, interviewers were allowed to translate the questions into local dialects without changing the meaning of the questions.

The samples of these surveys indeed truly represent the national population. The sample composition in terms of ethnicity, sex, age group, region, religion etc. is very much consistent with the population composition as per Nepal's 2001 national census (See Interdisciplinary Analysts 2005; 2006a; 2006b; 2008 and 2011a for comparisons between sample compositions and the population composition). Therefore, findings of these surveys are likely to closely mirror the opinions of the entire adult Nepali citizenry (with the usual margin of error, of course) and not only of the sample respondents. In other words, the findings of these surveys are generalizable to the entire population.

4.2.3 Risk Measures

Some sampled sites were not easily accessible, particularly in the mountain region, due to the lack of road infrastructure. The field researchers had to reach such sites on foot. It obviously took a long time to reach such places. In addition, the mountain sites were prone to bad weather. Sleeping bags and medicine were provided to interviewers to cope with adverse weather conditions or its consequences (e.g. natural calamities such as heavy snow falls, landslides, floods, etc.). If the roads were inaccessible, they had to spend more days than anticipated in such locations. Therefore, they were provided additional funds and working days to mitigate the situation.

Sometimes, the interviewers had to confront problems during the fieldwork due to political turmoil. Various political parties or groups used to call highway blockades or closure (*bandh*) to compel the government to fulfil their demands. In such situations, the field researchers were not able to reach some places on time. Sometimes, they were restricted in conducting interviews with respondents at specific locations in the Tarai by Madhes based armed groups. Sometimes,

cadres of the CPN (Maoist) hindered the field activities. The principal researchers were fully aware of the situation prevailing in the country. They had taken on board all the Madhes based political parties as well as the CPN (Maoist) from the beginning. They were in regular contact with Madhes based leaders and the CPN (Maoist) leaders, had convinced them of the rationale of the survey, and got cooperation from them.

4.3 A Political Elite's Opinion Poll and Its Methodology

It is important to also measure the value-preferences of the political elites in order to compare them with those of the general public, and if they do not concur, to identify the issues on which the opinions of the political elites differ from those of the general public.[69] One study conducted in Nepal documented the opinions of the Nepali political elites (in this case the members of the Interim Parliament) on the major reform issues. This was the Nepal Democracy Survey, undertaken by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) in 2007.

This political elites' opinion poll (hereafter referred to as the Elites Opinion Poll 2007) was conducted between 1 July and 31 July 2007, i.e. about one year prior to the elections of the Constituent Assembly. Interviewers were deployed to interview as many members of the Interim Parliament (MPs) as possible during a period of one month. The interviewers were able to obtain interviews with 300 MPs out of a total of 330 MPs (International IDEA 2008: 11). Unfortunately, the original data are not available, and I was confined to using the published results. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to discuss the findings of this political elites' poll and compare these findings with mass public opinion polls because it not only illustrates the wide chasms in opinions held by the political elites and the general public, but also may help explain why the Interim Constitution of 2007 declared Nepal a secular and a federal democratic republic (with the fourth amendment in December 2007) and why the elected Constituent Assembly endorsed the resolution declaring Nepal a secular and federal republic in its first sitting held on 28 May 2008.

[69] A detailed comparison between the political elites' opinions and the general public's opinions on the major reform issues is presented in Chapter-10.

5

Monarchy or Republic?

5.1 Transition from Monarchy to Republic

In the nine years after the *Jan Andolan II* of April 2006, the political upheavals in Nepal have led to the abolition of the monarchy and the introduction of a republican form of government with the promulgation of the new constitution in September 2015. For the outside world, this has perhaps been the most visible aspect of Nepal's political transformation.

The transition from monarchy to republic in Nepal is hardly unique. Historically, monarchy has been the dominant political system in the world for many centuries. In 2020, however, only 43 of the 193 UN member states formally remained monarchies. In most of these political systems the hereditary head of state mainly performs symbolic and ceremonial functions. Depending on the definition, only in ten to eighteen countries the monarch still actually rules (Sunik 2020: 715).

Given this global transition from powerful hereditary rulers to republics, one might expect that it has been widely studied, and that we can build on well-established theory in our discussion of the abolition of the monarchy in Nepal. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Most work on monarchical political systems and their demise is of a qualitative nature with a narrow regional focus, and the findings do not lend themselves to easy generalization (Sunik 2020: 720). The few comparative studies, for example of authoritarian monarchies in the Middle East, have identified several factors that may have contributed to their survival or breakdown. As Andre Bank and his colleagues argue, for example, the chances of abolition of the monarchy increase if there is no external support from leading Western powers; if there are insufficient revenues from the export of natural resources such as oil or natural gas; if there has been no participation in political decision-making by members of the extended royal family; if the monarchy cannot claim legitimacy on historical and/or religious grounds; and if there has been no hard repression to quell opposition (Bank et al 2015: 186). It is difficult to determine whether these factors played a role to end the Nepali monarchy, and even more difficult to pinpoint which factor or combination of factors has been decisive: no distinct breakdown-centered study has been conducted in Nepal. However, it is safe to say that there has been no (change in) support from foreign powers, no (change in) rent revenues, and no (change in) royal family members' participation in political decision-making. This leaves repression of the opposition and the monarchy's claim to legitimacy. That the Maoist armed insurgency met with an attempt at repression should hardly surprise anyone, but the monarch's stubbornness leading to his decision

to assume all powers and also repress the other political parties may have weakened the monarchy's legitimacy. That legitimacy, based on its association with the Hindu religion, was the strongest asset of the Nepali monarchy. Even before King Gyanendra's power grab, the monarchy's legitimacy is likely to have been affected already by the royal palace massacre of 2001 (see Chapter 2). That tragedy probably led to a deterioration of public faith in the divine aura of the monarch, and of the emotional bond between the monarchy and the general public.

Because of the importance of its legitimacy claim for the Nepali monarchy, and because of the recent events that are likely to have eroded that claim, no analysis of the abolition of this monarchy can ignore the views of the Nepali people on this issue and any developments in public opinion that have occurred over time. Of course, it may be misleading to talk about 'the' public opinion of 'the' Nepali people: especially the considerable cultural diversity of Nepali society, which survived centuries of attempts at homogenization, calls for attention to variation in opinions due to that cultural diversity: ethnicity, religion, geographical region, but also age group, gender, and party preference. In addition, level of education may be relevant as we need to control for that factor when discussing the link between public opinion and the decisions by the political elites, later in this study.

Some of these explanatory factors or independent variables are strongly interrelated: ethnicity and region, ethnicity and religion, ethnicity and education, age and education, region and party preference, etc. For that reason the bivariate analyses of the public's views on monarchy vs. republic and each of the selected independent variables will be followed by a multiple regression analysis to disentangle the interrelationships between these variables and determine which of the independent variables has had most impact on the preference for a monarchy or a republic.

5.2 Monarchy vs. Republic: Development of Public Opinion over Time

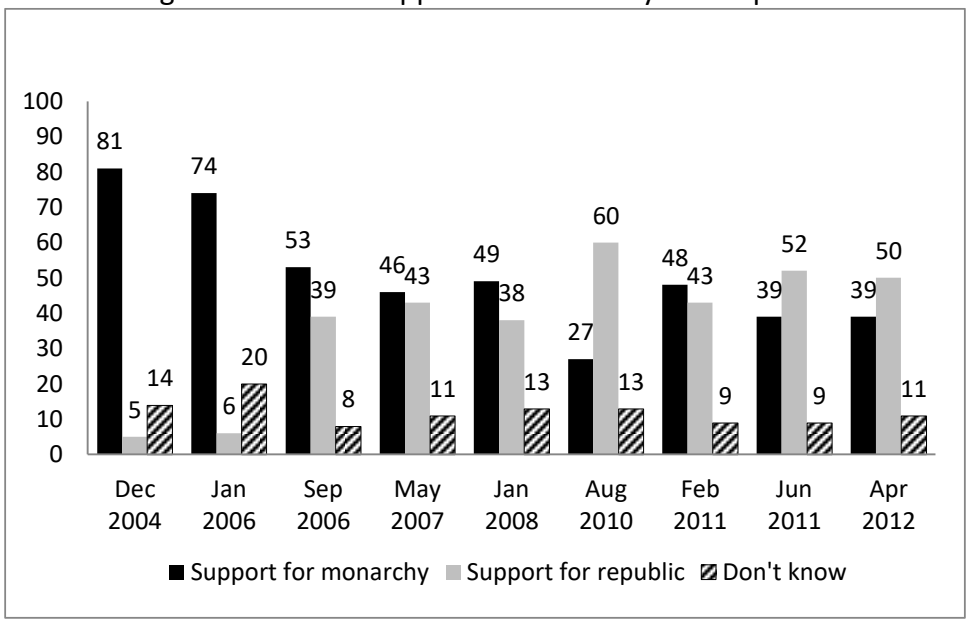
This section presents and discusses what the Nepali people have been thinking about the issue of the monarchy, and how their views on this issue underwent changes over time. As Figure 5.1 shows, major changes occurred in the attitude of the public towards monarchy between 2004 and 2012.[70] In December 2004, 81 percent still supported monarchy in some form or another. That figure significantly decreased to 74 percent in January 2006 (χ^2 = 216.037, significant at p<.001) and further declined to 53 percent in September 2006 (χ^2 = 6093.424, significant at p<.001) – a few months subsequent to the *Jan Andolan II*. Support for monarchy further dwindled to 46 percent in May 2007 (χ^2 = 116.167, significant at p<.001) and 49 percent in January 2008 (χ^2 = 80.781 and significant at p<.001). Public support for the monarchy was at its lowest level with only 27 percent in August 2010 (χ^2 = 1869.228, significant at p<.001); this was the first time a survey was conducted after the country had been proclaimed a republic by the elected Constituent Assembly. Afterwards, support for the monarchy recouped some of its losses in February 2011 (48 percent) (χ^2 = 760.347, significant at p<.001), but this recovery proved temporary with support dropping to39 percent in June 2011 (χ^2 value = 103.741, significant at

[70] The wording of the question was: 'If you could vote for a monarchy or a republic, which would you vote for?'.

p<.001) and April 2012, the last survey in our series. Overall, the surveys show how support for the monarchy more than halved in that eight-year period.

The decline in support for the monarchy is mirrored by a trend in the opposite direction with respect to support for a republican form of government. In June 2011 and April 2012, support for a republic included about half of the adult population with 52 percent and 50 percent respectively, compared to 39 percent support for the monarchy. This shows that the people's affection for a republic had increased substantially between 2004 and 2012: support for a republic was only 5 percent in December 2004 and 6 percent in January 2006. The major increase in support to 39 percent in September of that same year is noteworthy, and probably related to *the Jan Andolan II* which took place in between these two surveys (i.e., in April 2006).

Figure 5.1: Public Support for Monarchy and Republic



Note: N for Dec 2004: 3,059, for Jan 2006: 3,000, for Sep 2006: 3,000, for May 2007: 3,010, for Jan 2008: 3,010, for Aug 2010: 3,000, for Feb 2011: 3,000, for Jun 2011: 3,000 and for Apr 2012: 3,010.

However, the surveys also show that until January 2008 a plurality of the Nepali people still preferred retaining the monarchical institution over the transformation to a republic. This meant that most people were in favour of the institution until only a few months prior to its abolition in May 2008.[71] These figures suggest that a plurality – until September 2006 even a majority, preferred the monarchical institution, even though the transformation process was heading in another direction (and the incumbent king was very unpopular). As mentioned before, the June 2001 Palace Massacre very likely may have reduced the popularity and divine status of the King even though the general public still had trust in the monarchy as the supreme constitutional institution of the Nepali state.

[71] Note that survey data also showed that King Gyanendra was very unpopular at the time: of all the political leaders, he received the lowest score - only 2.8 on a scale of 0 to 10 (Interdisciplinary Analysts 2008).

Once an alternative was offered and presented in practice, the reduced popularity and divine aura of the King translated into lower support for the monarchy. Two years after the formal proclamation of the republic by the Constituent Assembly, the survey conducted in August 2010 (i.e., the first survey after the proclamation) divulged that there was a substantial decline of public support for the monarchy (to only 27 percent) while 60 percent now supported the republican alternative. This might be the effect of that proclamation, and because the Maoists emerged as the largest political party in the elections for the Constituent Assembly. In February 2011, the survey registered a drop in support for the republic while support for the monarchy increased, but this proved temporary: public support for the republic increased again in January 2011 and April 2012 to 52 and 50 percent respectively. Most probably, the electoral success of the Maoists had a direct effect on support for the republic.

The concepts of 'monarchy' and 'republic' may seem abstract, but the general public in Nepal had clear opinions on the issue, or at least did not massively show a lack of knowledge. The percentage who replied to the question of monarchy vs. republic with 'Don't know' is small. It was 14 percent in December 2004 and increased slightly to 20 percent in January 2006. Since then it fluctuated between 8 and 13 percent: the decline in support for the monarchy did not lead to higher percentages of 'Don't know'. One plausible explanation is that the issue of monarchy vs. republic received considerable public attention already before the first survey in 2004, allowing people to form an opinion on this issue. Among others, Page and Shapiro (1983: 176) argue that the proportion of respondents answering 'Don't know' is lower if an issue receives more public interest and attention. Another explanation would be that this is a salient issue to many citizens of Nepal. The literature strongly suggests that people develop clear opinions on issues that are salient to them, and which are directly connected to their daily lives (e.g., Paul and Brown 2001: 871-872; Parker et al 2008: 412-413). Obviously, these explanations do not exclude each other, and both may have been at work here.

5.3 Supports for Monarchy and Republic across Groups

What is striking when we look at the patterns of support for monarchy and republic over time in different population groups and categories, is that the general patterns are almost universally similar: with an exception for supporters of a few parties (see below), we see similar trends of declining support for the monarchy and increasing support for a republic among different groups of citizens. That does not imply that there are no differences at all: some groups seem to have 'converted' to republicanism earlier than others, and the levels of support for the monarchy and the republic at the beginning of the survey series varied across groups, as did those same levels at the end of the series. It is to such differences that we now turn.

Ethnicity

Given the association of the Nepali monarchy with efforts to assimilate other groups into the culture of the hill caste group, one might expect that support for the monarchy was strongest and declined least and latest among members of the hill caste group, while support for the

republic increased more and earlier among more marginal ethnic groups such as indigenous groups, Madhesi groups, and Dalit. However, this is not what the data show (see Table 5.1)

Table 5.1: Public Support for Republic and Monarchy by Ethnicity

	Support for	Dec 2004	Jan 2006	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Republic	5%	6%	39%	43%	38%	60%	43%	52%	50%
	Monarchy	81%	74%	53%	46%	49%	27%	48%	39%	39%
	DK	14%	20%	8%	11%	13%	13%	9%	9%	11%
	N	3059	3000	3000	3010	3010	3000	3000	3000	3010
Hill caste group	Republic	7%	7%	48%	54%	48%	70%	54%	63%	63%
	Monarchy	84%	80%	47%	33%	41%	21%	37%	32%	32%
	DK	9%	13%	5%	13%	11%	9%	9%	5%	5%
	N	1282	1149	1008	941	930	926	969	926	930
Hill indigenous group	Republic	4%	6%	40%	47%	35%	63%	40%	56%	53%
	Monarchy	80%	64%	45%	41%	46%	16%	46%	29%	30%
	DK	16%	30%	15%	12%	19%	21%	14%	15%	17%
	N	382	368	533	624	648	633	655	635	646
Hill Dalit	Republic	1%	8%	48%	45%	34%	69%	45%	55%	56%
	Monarchy	72%	48%	44%	44%	48%	19%	44%	33%	29%
	DK	27%	44%	8%	11%	18%	12%	11%	12%	15%
	N	100	73	143	167	212	244	253	242	242
Newar	Republic	4%	7%	37%	38%	32%	55%	32%	36%	38%
	Monarchy	79%	70%	60%	48%	55%	26%	54%	60%	49%
	DK	17%	23%	3%	14%	13%	19%	14%	4%	13%
	N	312	670	222	173	165	164	198	164	165
Madhesi caste group	Republic	4%	2%	26%	27%	32%	41%	31%	37%	37%
	Monarchy	78%	75%	69%	66%	63%	45%	64%	51%	55%
	DK	18%	23%	5%	7%	5%	14%	5%	12%	8%
	N	273	369	465	459	497	528	478	532	438
Tarai indigenous group	Republic	5%	5%	39%	33%	38%	75%	41%	55%	47%
	Monarchy	79%	58%	50%	55%	46%	20%	52%	38%	44%
	DK	16%	37%	11%	12%	16%	5%	7%	7%	9%
	N	212	101	326	277	284	248	226	247	302
Madhesi Dalit	Republic	4%	4%	25%	29%	22%	32%	35%	34%	26%
	Monarchy	76%	73%	68%	59%	62%	57%	60%	50%	59%
	DK	20%	23%	7%	12%	16%	11%	5%	16%	15%
	N	306	184	139	228	144	128	93	125	160
Muslim	Republic	1%	4%	29%	35%	30%	44%	30%	38%	34%
	Monarchy	79%	82%	67%	59%	60%	52%	60%	55%	37%
	DK	20%	14%	4%	6%	10%	4%	10%	7%	29%
	N	156	56	132	122	129	128	128	128	129

χ^2		78.2	137.2	201.5	190.0	150.0	371.7	151.2	216.4	263.1
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Among all ethnic groups, support for a republic was still negligible or at least very low in 2004. The first group to shift to a republican preference was the hill caste group: already in September 2006 a narrow plurality of this group was in favour of a republic and this plurality only grew in size. Even if we take into account that the proportion who answered 'Don't know' was lowest in this group for most years, the development of attitudes toward monarchy and republic is impressive: at the end of the survey series, in April 2012, nearly two thirds of the hill caste group preferred a republic, more than of any other group. The hill indigenous groups and the hill Dalit also ended up with majority support for a republic in 2012, and the Tarai indigenous group with plurality support, but there has been considerable fluctuation in their preference for a form of state. On the other hand, a plurality of Newars, Muslims, Madhesi caste group and Madhesi Dalit changed least in this regard and still showed plurality support for the monarchy by April 2012.There is no obvious explanation for this pattern. It might be due to these groups' trust in the centuries-old traditional power rather than a new and uncertain new political alliance, but without any further empirical support this remains mere speculation or a hypothesis.

Religion

Given the strong association between the Nepali monarchy and the Hindu religion, one might expect Hindu believers to be most reluctant to switch allegiance from the monarchy to a republic. Indeed, in September 2004 support for the monarchy was slightly higher among Hindus than among Buddhists for example, but by April 2012 such differences had disappeared. Muslims are the only religious group that, despite growing support for a republic, continued to show plurality support for the monarchy. It is worthwhile to note that data on Muslims in the sense of ethnicity and in the sense of religious affiliation do not match perfectly: some people from the *Madhesi* caste group such as *Dusadh, Kanu, Musahar, Kewat, Dhanuk, Dhobi, Teli, Hajam, Halwai,* etc. (in which overwhelming majorities are Hindus) identify themselves as Muslims in terms of religion. On the other hand, a few ethnic Muslims do not mention Islam as their religion. Some Muslims may have felt safer under the Hindu monarchical state than under a new structure while other Muslims might have felt discriminated under Hindu monarchy. It has even been reported that some Muslim leaders appeared to support the Hindu state identity, arguing that the country's new secular status increased insecurity for their communities (Sen 2015b). Christians showed the highest level of support for republicanism in most years.

Table 5.2: Public Support for Republic and Monarchy by Religion

	Support for	Dec 2004	Jan 2006	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Republic	5%	6%	39%	43%	38%	60%	43%	52%	50%
	Monarchy	81%	74%	53%	46%	49%	27%	48%	39%	39%
	DK	14%	20%	8%	11%	13%	13%	9%	9%	11%
	N	3059	3000	3000	3010	3010	3000	3000	3000	3010
Hindu	Republic	5%	6%	40%	43%	38%	61%	43%	53%	51%
	Monarchy	81%	75%	54%	45%	49%	27%	48%	39%	40%
	DK	14%	19%	6%	12%	13%	12%	9%	8%	9%
	N	2695	2614	2566	2567	2532	2504	2530	2481	2514
Buddhist	Republic	5%	9%	33%	42%	30%	58%	37%	45%	49%
	Monarchy	76%	63%	54%	47%	58%	17%	49%	35%	37%
	DK	19%	28%	13%	11%	12%	25%	14%	20%	14%
	N	170	280	213	198	219	248	244	240	249
Muslim	Republic	1%	4%	29%	35%	30%	44%	30%	38%	34%
	Monarchy	79%	82%	67%	59%	60%	52%	60%	55%	37%
	DK	20%	14%	4%	6%	10%	4%	10%	7%	29%
	N	156	56	132	122	129	128	128	128	129
Christian	Republic	8%	13%	25%	38%	49%	79%	65%	76%	58%
	Monarchy	85%	56%	56%	53%	40%	17%	29%	20%	21%
	DK	7%	31%	19%	9%	11%	4%	6%	4%	21%
	N	13	16	16	34	35	48	31	55	48
Kirati	Republic	0%	0%	54%	46%	53%	80%	61%	58%	45%
	Monarchy	96%	66%	22%	43%	30%	6%	20%	27%	19%
	DK	4%	34%	24%	11%	17%	14%	19%	15%	36%
	N	25	29	65	74	92	70	51	86	67
χ^2		17.2	62.8	90.0	18.2	38.9	147.0	62.0	84.7	112.6
P		.143	.000	.000	.444	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000

Region

In terms of geographical region, this period ended with the highest level of public support for republicanism in the Mid-West development region (see table 5.3). As of April 2012, three-quarters of the people (76 percent) living in this region supported a republican state. Yet, this region started out with the highest percentage in favour of monarchy in the first survey of the series in December 2004. Another region with majority support for a republic was the Far-West development region, but here support for the monarchy was already relatively low in 2004. As one travels to the East of the country, the shift towards republicanism is less pronounced. The Eastern development region is the only region where the 2012 survey still showed plurality support for the monarchy.

Table 5.3: Public Support for Republic and Monarchy by Development Region

	Support for	Dec 2004	Jan 2006	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Republic	5%	6%	39%	43%	38%	60%	43%	52%	50%
	Monarchy	81%	74%	53%	46%	49%	27%	48%	39%	39%
	DK	14%	20%	8%	11%	13%	13%	9%	9%	11%
	N	3059	3000	3000	3010	3010	3000	3000	3000	3010
Eastern	Republic	5%	4%	40%	36%	48%	61%	34%	48%	40%
	Monarchy	82%	66%	46%	57%	42%	28%	52%	41%	46%
	DK	13%	30%	14%	7%	10%	11%	14%	11%	14%
	N	896	510	581	759	648	646	694	633	710
Central	Republic	4%	8%	29%	35%	26%	49%	36%	42%	47%
	Monarchy	77%	71%	66%	58%	63%	32%	57%	48%	44%
	DK	19%	21%	5%	7%	11%	19%	7%	10%	9%
	N	1237	1588	1239	978	1202	1157	1039	1018	1078
Western	Republic	9%	3%	50%	48%	44%	54%	48%	51%	48%
	Monarchy	84%	89%	42%	32%	43%	35%	39%	39%	43%
	DK	7%	8%	8%	20%	13%	11%	13%	10%	9%
	N	622	461	526	529	463	552	592	625	551
Mid-Western	Republic	1%	1%	45%	59%	41%	83%	46%	66%	76%
	Monarchy	91%	83%	48%	31%	34%	9%	43%	29%	15%
	DK	8%	16%	7%	10%	25%	8%	11%	5%	9%
	N	221	181	344	352	397	369	389	397	369
Far-Western	Republic	6%	7%	53%	54%	50%	89%	71%	74%	59%
	Monarchy	64%	70%	42%	30%	38%	7%	29%	16%	23%
	DK	30%	23%	5%	16%	12%	4%	0%	10%	18%
	N	83	260	310	392	301	276	286	328	302
χ^2		125.5	118.0	178.7	248.8	237.4	326.2	194.5	188.4	191.4
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Education

Level of education, which was strongly and positively related to levels of political knowledge and political interest, had an important bearing on the choice between monarchy and republic (see Table 5.4). It is not a major surprise that illiterates show most ignorance with regard to this issue in each of the surveys. Even those with informal education only were less likely to answer that they 'Don't know'. In general, public support for republicanism was higher and increased more as educational status increased. In most surveys in this period, the lowest level of support for republicanism and the highest level of support for the monarchy was found among those who were illiterate: although the general trends are also visible in this group, it is alone in still showing a plurality preferring monarchy over republic in 2012.

Table 5.4: Public Support for Republic and Monarchy by Educational Status

	Support for	Dec 2004	Jan 2006	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Republic	5%	6%	39%	43%	38%	60%	43%	52%	50%
	Monarchy	81%	74%	53%	46%	49%	27%	48%	39%	39%
	DK	14%	20%	8%	11%	13%	13%	9%	9%	11%
	N	3059	3000	3000	3010	3010	3000	3000	3000	3010
Illiterate	Republic	2%	2%	28%	24%	20%	42%	23%	38%	29%
	Monarchy	66%	54%	62%	59%	61%	37%	63%	41%	47%
	DK	32%	44%	10%	17%	19%	21%	14%	21%	24%
	N	642	665	1146	1033	1210	881	850	849	903
Informal education	Republic	3%	2%	38%	38%	35%	62%	40%	49%	48%
	Monarchy	78%	72%	53%	49%	49%	24%	46%	43%	43%
	DK	19%	26%	9%	13%	16%	14%	14%	8%	9%
	N	530	326	438	391	429	506	506	452	562
Primary/ lower secondary	Republic	4%	3%	42%	48%	47%	63%	42%	50%	59%
	Monarchy	82%	77%	52%	44%	44%	27%	50%	43%	34%
	DK	14%	20%	6%	8%	9%	10%	8%	7%	7%
	N	654	598	628	695	673	579	663	688	567
Secondary	Republic	6%	7%	53%	59%	61%	72%	58%	63%	63%
	Monarchy	89%	81%	43%	35%	35%	20%	38%	34%	33%
	DK	5%	12%	4%	6%	4%	8%	4%	3%	4%
	N	642	639	466	501	484	690	638	637	599
Higher secondary	Republic	8%	10%	51%	64%	65%	79%	69%	72%	69%
	Monarchy	88%	84%	46%	30%	30%	17%	28%	27%	29%
	DK	4%	6%	3%	6%	5%	4%	3%	1%	2%
	N	433	476	242	277	153	277	261	271	290
Bachelor's & above	Republic	10%	16%	63%	73%	55%	77%	66%	71%	79%
	Monarchy	88%	80%	33%	22%	40%	16%	29%	26%	20%
	DK	2%	4%	4%	5%	5%	7%	5%	3%	1%
	N	158	296	80	113	62	68	82	102	90
χ^2		295.4	462.3	153.5	334.0	376.6	261.7	319.4	292.3	404.9
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Age Group

At the start of the series of surveys, in 2004, there were but small differences in support for either monarchy or republic across age groups, but this changed in subsequent surveys: from January 2006 onwards, people from younger age cohorts were more supportive of a republican state while older aged people were more supportive of the monarchy. Since January 2006 the support for a republic among people below the age of 35 was above the overall average. People older

than 65 were the only group remaining more in favour of the monarchy than of republicanism. However, this difference had decreased compared to previous years.

Table 5.5: Public Support for Republic and Monarchy by Age Group

	Support for	Dec 2004	Jan 2006	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Republic	5%	6%	39%	43%	38%	60%	43%	52%	50%
	Monarchy	81%	74%	53%	46%	49%	27%	48%	39%	39%
	DK	14%	20%	8%	11%	13%	13%	9%	9%	11%
	N	3059	3000	3000	3010	3010	3000	3000	3000	3010
25 and Below	Republic	6%	9%	43%	50%	43%	68%	53%	59%	57%
	Monarchy	80%	77%	52%	43%	48%	21%	39%	35%	33%
	DK	14%	14%	5%	7%	9%	11%	8%	6%	10%
	N	865	722	738	828	676	780	691	758	775
26-35	Republic	4%	7%	40%	42%	40%	68%	45%	53%	52%
	Monarchy	82%	75%	52%	48%	47%	22%	47%	39%	38%
	DK	14%	18%	8%	10%	13%	10%	8%	8%	10%
	N	898	933	802	833	846	794	783	810	743
36-45	Republic	5%	5%	41%	44%	39%	58%	41%	52%	47%
	Monarchy	79%	72%	52%	43%	46%	29%	50%	37%	42%
	DK	16%	23%	7%	13%	15%	13%	9%	11%	11%
	N	600	606	586	594	635	609	646	627	657
46-55	Republic	5%	3%	34%	39%	33%	54%	40%	48%	51%
	Monarchy	78%	73%	55%	47%	54%	30%	47%	40%	38%
	DK	17%	24%	11%	14%	13%	16%	13%	12%	11%
	N	417	412	460	399	427	391	458	377	397
56-65	Republic	3%	3%	37%	29%	30%	44%	28%	48%	44%
	Monarchy	83%	68%	56%	53%	56%	39%	61%	40%	38%
	DK	14%	29%	7%	18%	14%	17%	11%	12%	18%
	N	208	226	268	256	299	289	270	266	258
Above 65	Republic	1%	1%	28%	26%	29%	39%	21%	29%	33%
	Monarchy	87%	63%	64%	62%	59%	41%	63%	53%	53%
	DK	12%	36%	8%	12%	12%	20%	16%	18%	14%
	N	71	101	146	100	128	136	152	161	183
χ^2		14.9	84.2	30.6	78.4	37.9	122.0	102.9	68.1	60.9
P		.462	.000	.010	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000

Political Party

The pattern of support for monarchy or republic by political party preference[72] differs from the preceding bivariate relationships: the trend from monarchism to republicanism is not visible in all parties. The supporters of the two main communist parties' supporters, in general, were more in favour of republicanism than any other party's supporters. For both communist parties there has been some fluctuation in their voters' preferences for a republic or monarchy, but hardly any clear trend. The CPN (Maoist) supporters consistently had the highest level of support for a republican state, which of course is to be expected: this CPN was the first political party in the country to publicly reject monarchism and formally started the political campaign for republicanism.[73] On the other side of the political spectrum, supporters of the small rightist parties (including the supporters of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal, the Rastriya Jansakti Party, and the Nepal Janta Party) also show some fluctuation without a clear trend, but in majority these party supporters were in favour of the monarchy rather than the republic, the only group of parties with this position.

In between these two opposing or most distinct clusters of parties we find the Nepali Congress Party, the small leftist parties, and the Tarai based regional parties: the supporters of these parties do exhibit the trend of majority support for the monarchy at the start of the survey series in September 2006 to majority support for a republic only several years later. The voters of the small leftist parties (including Janmorcha Nepal, Nepal Majdur Kisan Party [NMKP], CPN [ML] and Sanyukta Janmorcha) changed their preference earliest, in May 2007, but temporarily returned to majority support for the monarchy in 2011. A plurality of the voters for parties based in the Tarai briefly favoured the republic in January 2008, but continued to favour the monarchy until June 2011. A plurality of the Nepali Congress Party's voters supported the monarchy until 2008. Since then a majority preferred a republican form of state, with a brief return to monarchism in February 2011.

[72] The political party preference of respondents was identified either based on which party they reported to have voted for in the latest election or based on which party they intended to vote for in the upcoming election. The party they would vote for in the upcoming election was taken as the basis for the identification of political party preference in the surveys conducted in September 2006, January 2008 and April 2012, while the party they reported to have voted for in the most recent election was the basis in the surveys conducted in August 2008, August 2010, February2011 and June 2011.

[73] This is the case even though the Communist Party of Nepal [CPN], which was at the base or the origin of other communist parties, already included republicanism in its ideology when it was formed in September 1949, but it never campaigned for republicanism openly and publicly.

Table 5.6: Public Support for Republic and Monarchy by Political Party Preference

	Support for	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Republic	39%	43%	38%	60%	43%	52%	50%
	Monarchy	53%	46%	49%	27%	48%	39%	39%
	DK	8%	11%	13%	13%	9%	9%	11%
	N	3000	2987	3010	2998	2994	2997	3010
CPN (Maoist)	Republic	70%	76%	69%	79%	52%	68%	79%
	Monarchy	28%	20%	27%	14%	41%	25%	15%
	DK	2%	4%	4%	7%	7%	7%	6%
	N	492	267	247	819	568	635	370
Nepali Congress Party	Republic	32%	42%	46%	55%	43%	52%	52%
	Monarchy	63%	53%	49%	34%	51%	44%	45%
	DK	5%	5%	5%	11%	6%	4%	3%
	N	418	384	333	488	619	494	419
CPN (UML)	Republic	51%	61%	49%	56%	48%	61%	56%
	Monarchy	46%	33%	46%	29%	45%	33%	38%
	DK	3%	6%	5%	15%	7%	6%	6%
	N	356	272	380	388	505	342	263
Small rightist parties	Republic	9%	7%	23%	29%	25%	21%	5%
	Monarchy	89%	91%	72%	57%	71%	74%	92%
	DK	2%	2%	5%	14%	4%	5%	3%
	N	170	114	53	42	76	42	37
Small leftist parties	Republic	43%	68%	69%	68%	39%	46%	79%
	Monarchy	50%	26%	27%	21%	55%	50%	21%
	DK	7%	6%	4%	11%	6%	4%	0%
	N	28	31	26	56	33	24	42
Tarai based regional parties	Republic	12%	37%	45%	39%	32%	41%	58%
	Monarchy	88%	63%	35%	59%	63%	58%	38%
	DK	0%	0%	20%	2%	5%	1%	4%
	N	24	32	110	174	146	120	78
χ^2		468.0	407.6	314.9	357.1	181.5	295.3	389.2
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Note: Party support was not asked in the Dec 2004 and Jan 2006 surveys

5.4 A Comprehensive Analysis of Support for Monarchy vs. Republic

Multiple regression analysis allows to empirically explore the relationship of several independent variables with a dependent variable, and shows the (statistical) significance and direction of this relationship (e.g., Snedecor and Cochran 1980: 149 & 334; Field 2009: 198). I analysed which independent variables had a statistically significant impact on support for republicanism rather than monarchism through a binary logistic regression analysis.[74] The bivariate analyses discussed above indicate that the independent variables studied (ethnicity, religion, development region, educational status, age group and party preference) indeed seem to impact on public opinion regarding this issue. However, it was already noted that these variables are interrelated, and it is necessary to determine what the separate impact of each of these independent variables is when analysed in combination with the others in a more comprehensive analysis. For each of the variables, one answering category is used as the reference category; this is indicated in Table 5.8.

With regard to the dependent variable, responses that showed a preference for monarchism were coded '1' and responses showing a preference for republicanism were coded '2'. Consequently, a positive Beta coefficient indicates that compared to the reference category of the independent variable, there is an impact in the direction of republicanism, while negative coefficients indicate that the direction of the effect is towards monarchism. 'Do not know/ cannot say' responses are treated as missing data here and are excluded from the regression analysis, because the purpose of the analysis is to see the relationship between public support toward monarchism or republicanism and the selected independent variables only.

Nagelkerke R^2, which is one of the types of pseudo R^2 (i.e. coefficient of determination), can be considered to be an indication of the percentage of variation in a dependent variable that is explained by the model. Falk and Miller (1992: 80) consider an R^2 equal to or greater than 0.10 as moderately satisfactory. This means that the regression model that I have developed is acceptable. However, there is also an argument that R^2 is simply a measure of the spread of points around a regression line, and it is even a poor measure of that (King 1986: 675 citing Achen 1982). Achen disagrees that a higher R^2 of a model means that that model fits better. In my study, multiple logistic regression analyses are primarily used to see if there are mathematically reliable or robust empirical relationships between dependent variables and independent variables, and only secondary to estimate the total impact of all independent variables combined.

As was clear from Figure 5.1, there has been considerable change over time (i.e. across the surveys) in people's attitudes towards monarchy and republic. Given these trends it is not advisable to pool the surveys into a single dataset.[75] I have conducted the analysis for each of the surveys separately (see Annex 1). However, with few exceptions, the results are very similar, that is: the impact of the independent variables does not differ much across the surveys or over time.

[74] The reason for employing binary logistic regression is the nature of the dependent variable. Binary logistic regression is performed when there are only two categorised outcomes (Field 2009: 265). For example, when public opinion on the issue of republicanism (i.e. opinion on "Monarchy vs. Republic") is taken as the dependent variable, there are only two substantive responses (outcomes): "Monarchy" (coded as '1') and "Republic" (coded as '2').

[75] Surveys which did not include the question about party preference were not part of the pooled dataset.

This allows, for practical reasons, for a presentation of findings from the analysis of the pooled data in the main text and mention any important differences with the analysis without pooling.[76]

Table 5.7 shows that all explanatory or independent variables for which we found an association or correlation with attitudes about republicanism/ monarchism in the preceding bivariate analyses retain their impact when analysed in combination with the other independent variables. To be more specific: for at least some of an independent variable's answering categories the Beta coefficient is statistically significant at least at the .05 level.

Having said that, some variables do not have strong and robust effects. With the hill caste group as reference, being a member of some ethnic groups (Newars, Madhesi groups and the Tarai indigenous groups) increases the likelihood of support for the monarchy in the pooled dataset, but if we look at the analyses for the individual surveys, the coefficients are not statistically significant in all years, and occasionally the coefficients even change sign. This is also the case with religion. The pooled analysis shows significant positive effects of being a Christian or Kirati believer compared to the Hindu reference group, but looking at the individual surveys all religious groups show statistically significant effects in some years, and even the coefficients for Christians and Kirati are not always significant. The development region in which a citizen lives has effects that confirm the split found in the bivariate analysis between the more pro-republican Western regions and the more monarchy-minded Central and Eastern regions, but again: the analyses of the individual surveys show considerable fluctuation in statistical significance and direction of the coefficients. In the pooled analysis we see that being older than 25 only starts having a significant (negative) effect only above the age of 56, but the individual surveys show a less consistent pattern.

The patterns are clearer for the other independent variables. The trend of growing support for a republic over the monarchy over time is confirmed by the significant coefficients for all surveys except the February 2011 survey, compared to the 2006 survey. Party preference has a clear effect: for all political parties other than the CPN (Maoist) which serves as the reference, the coefficients are negative and significant: supporters of other parties than the Maoist party are less likely to favour a republic. With few exceptions this pattern repeats itself in each individual survey. Level of education shows a consistent strong and positive effect on republicanism, although there are a few insignificant coefficients in individual surveys.

[76] Note that pooling of the surveys implies that we add an extra independent variable to the model: the date of the survey.

Table 5.7: Beta Coefficients of Binary Logistic Regression with Support for a Republic rather than the Monarchy as the Dependent Variable (1 = Monarchy, 2 = Republic); Pooled Analysis

		B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Survey	Sep 2006 (Reference)			
	May 2007	.292***	.062	1.339
	Jan 2008	.149*	.062	1.160
	Aug 2010	.992***	.066	2.696
	Feb 2011	-.006	.063	.994
	Jun 2011	.434***	.064	1.544
	Apr 2012	.606***	.062	1.833
Ethnicity	Hill caste group (Reference)			
	Hill indigenous group	.030	.058	1.030
	Hill Dalit	-.129	.069	.879
	Newar	-.541***	.075	.582
	Madhesi caste group	-.689***	.054	.502
	Tarai indigenous group	-.393***	.062	.675
	Madhesi Dalit	-.678***	.086	.508
Religion	Hindu (Reference)			
	Buddhist	-.117	.075	.890
	Muslim	-.301	.284	.740
	Christian	.336*	.155	1.399
	Kirati	.701***	.130	2.016
Development region	Eastern (Reference)			
	Central	-.120*	.046	.887
	Western	.318***	.053	1.374
	Mid-Western	.770***	.062	2.161
	Far Western	.889***	.067	2.433
Education Status	Illiterate (Reference)			
	Informal education	.385***	.052	1.470
	Primary/lower sec.	.520***	.050	1.681
	Secondary	1.026***	.055	2.790
	Higher sec.	1.177***	.071	3.246
	Bachelor's+	1.430***	.109	4.180
Age	<= 25 years (Reference)			
	26-35 years	.001	.047	1.001
	36-45 years	.027	.052	1.028
	46-55 years	-.021	.060	.979
	56-65 years	-.201**	.070	.818
	Above 65 years	-.611***	.091	.543
Party Preference	CPN (Maoist) (Reference)			
	Nepali Congress	-1.075***	.060	.341

	CPN (UML)	-.621***	.064	.537
	Small rightist parties	-2.555***	.138	.078
	Small leftist parties	-.417**	.159	.659
	Tarai based regional parties	-.982***	.101	.375
	Constant	-.143	.089	.867
	N	18811		
	Nagelkerke R square	.268		

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05; Party preference was not asked in the Dec 2004 and Jan 2006 surveys

5.5 Concluding Remarks

On the issue of 'monarchy versus republicanism', there has been a drastic change in Nepali public preferences. The majority of the people were in favour of retaining the institution of monarchy until a few months prior to the May 2008 proclamation of the republic. No clear majority had supported republicanism at the time of this declaration, but the people gradually came to accept republicanism, in particular following the proclamation of the republic by the Constituent Assembly. The actions of the King and the royal government's inability to solve the problems may have contributed to the people's changing attitudes. When the King took political power into his own hands with a view to end the ten-year long conflict and failed to do so, people likely grew rapidly disillusioned with the institution itself. Arguably not only the monarchy but the monarch was to blame. These factors seem to have contributed to the sharp decline in its popularity. It is striking that this development can be found in most groups and population categories: ethnic groups, religious groups, age groups, levels of education and regions. It is even visible in the few categories that in 2012 still showed a plurality preference for the monarchy. The only exceptions are the voters of the Communist parties where the support for the republic was already high from the beginning and the small rightist parties where the support for the monarchy hardly changed.

In April 2012, i.e. the end of the period for which comparative survey data are available, the profile of a typical supporter of republicanism was: a young, highly educated voter for the Maoist party. The profile of a typical supporter of the monarchy in 2012 was an elderly, illiterate voter for a small rightist party. And although the effects of other variables are less robust, we might add that members of the hill caste group, Christians, and residents of the Mid-Western region were also prone to republicanism, while Newars, Madhesi people, Muslims and residents of the Eastern development region were likely to retain a monarchist preference. Finally, the strong effect of educational status is something we need to return to when we compare elite and mass attitudes, and will discuss whether any differences between them is not first and foremost an artefact of the higher level of education, and its implied or associated levels of political knowledge and interest of the political elites.

6

Hindu State or Secular State?

6.1 Transition from Hindu State to Secular State

In 2015, 43 countries officially proclaimed to have a state religion, mostly Islam, but also Christianity (or a particular Christian denomination). There are only two Buddhist states and one Jewish state (Pew Research Center 2017). At the time of this study, Nepal had already transformed into a secular state, but otherwise it would have been listed as the only Hindu state in the world.

The category of secular states to which Nepal now belongs is very diverse, however, and the concept of secularism may have a different meaning in Nepal than in many Western countries (also see Toffin 2013, 67-68). Unlike in Europe, the concept of secularism did not emerge in Nepal due to an escalated conflict between a state (and a king) and a church (and a clergy). The concept of secularism gradually took shape in Europe as kings took the initiative to reduce the authority and interference of the church in state matters. In Nepal, however, the role of religion and religious leaders was seen in legitimating the King religiously, and they always remained allies of the King and the state. Therefore, the influence of religion became ingrained in the state apparatus. Long before the 1962 Constitution proclaimed Nepal to be a Hindu kingdom, Hinduism was the predominant religion in Nepal and Hindu values were entrenched in state institutions and public policies. The demand for secularism emerged because of the grievances of the hill indigenous groups and other non-Hindu groups against the Hindu state. They perceived the state to have given more privileges to the culture and religion of the Hindu high caste hill group, and demanded that Nepal should become a secular state.

Although the term 'secular state' is now written into the Constitution, the influence of Hinduism on every aspect of the state is unchanged. The transformation has not made major substantive changes to the daily lives of the Nepali people, about 81 percent of whom identify as Hindu. Cow slaughter and proselytization, for instance, are still prohibited by law. To the declaration that Nepal is a secular state in Article 4.1 of the Constitution, an explanation is added which says that 'secular' means religious and cultural freedom, but also the protection of religion and culture as practiced since ancient times (*Sanatan Dharma ra Sanskriti* in Nepali) (Constituent Assembly Secretariat 2015). This definition of secularism is intended as a compromise: Buddhists, Muslims and indigenous people are beginning to feel more equality than before, while Hindus are relieved of the fear that the abolition of the Hindu state would threaten their way of life.

This chapter explores and analyses what the Nepali people think of the choice between the Hindu state and a secular state, and how opinions on this issue have evolved over time. Although this issue is linked to the question about the (Hindu) monarchy, it is arguably even more related to the cultural diversity of Nepali society. As a consequence, I shall examine the variation of public opinion by the same subgroups as in Chapter 5: religion, of course, but also ethnicity, geographic region, educational status, age group and political party preference. And given the interrelatedness of several of these variables, the bivariate analyses are followed by a multiple regression analysis to disentangle the interrelationships and determine which of the independent variables are most influential.

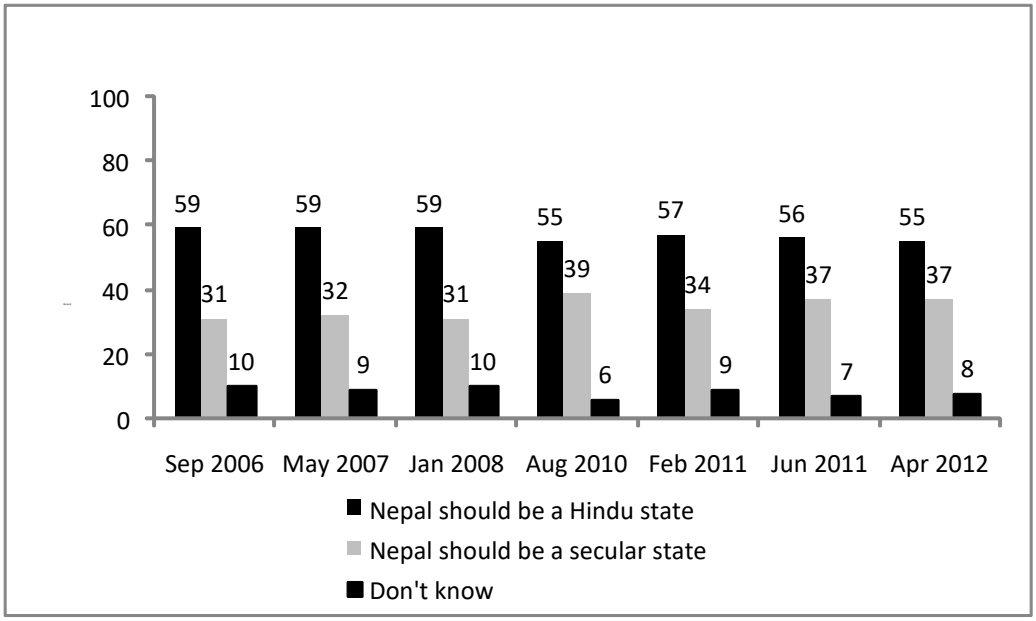
6.2 Hindu State vs. Secular State: Development of Public Opinion over Time

I examined what ordinary Nepali citizens thought about the relationship between state and religion. In September 2006, only months after the House of Representatives first opted for severing the link between the state and the Hindu religion, a majority (59 percent) preferred Nepal to be a Hindu state and 31 percent favoured Nepal becoming a secular state.[77]Other than with the choice between monarchism and republicanism, there has been remarkable continuity in public opinion on this issue. Between September 2006 and April 2012, there were fluctuations, but no substantial ruptures or trends (see Figure 6.1). If we compare the pattern of support for both options over time (between surveys), the χ^2 values were not significant between September 2006 and May 2007, and between May 2007 and January 2008. Support for a Hindu state significantly decreased to 55 percent in August 2010 (χ^2 = 240.069, significant at p<.001), but slightly increased again to 57 percent in February 2011 (χ^2 = 73.551, significant at p<.001).A few months later support for a Hindu state decreased to 56 percent (χ^2 = 22.136, significant at p<.001). But, there was no significant difference between June 2011 and the final survey of the series in April 2012. So, in spite of Nepal's political parties' decision to declare the country a secular state, a majority of the general citizens continue to prefer their country to remain a Hindu state.

The issue of the relationship between state and religion was well understood by the general public: the proportion of the people who responded 'Don't know' was very small on this issue. This proportion was 10 percent in September 2006 and had remained almost at the same level until April 2012. As I discussed with regard to the issue of monarchism vs. republicanism, the literature would suggest that this indicates that the issue is probably salient to the general public, and/or received considerable attention at the time.

[77] The exact phrasing of the question was: 'Do you think Nepal should be a Hindu state or a secular state?'.

Figure 6.1: Public Support for a Hindu State and a Secular State



Note: N for Sep 2006: 3000, for May 2007: 3010, for Jan 2008: 3010, for Aug 2010: 3000, for Feb 2011: 3000, for Jun 2011: 3000 and for Apr 2012: 3010

The survey conducted in September 2006 is the only public opinion survey discussed in this dissertation in which questions were asked about the reasons people gave for their preference for a Hindu state or for a secular state. It shows that a majority of the people that wanted Nepal to be a Hindu state did so because the Hindu religion is a part of the tradition, because Nepal had always been a Hindu state and was identified as such by the world at large. People who wanted Nepal to be a secular state did so because religious freedom and the rights of the religious minorities could be ensured only in a secular state (Interdisciplinary Analysts 2006b: 34-35). Contemporary researchers on religious issues argue that the former group of people's desire to maintain the Hindu state is also connected to their fear of proselytization by other religions and of cow slaughter (Sharma 2002: 30; Letizia 2011: 81), while the latter group's desire for a secular state was associated with their demand of equal religious, cultural and linguistic identity rights, thereby rejecting Hindu high caste domination (Letizia 2011: 71, 2013: 34; Malagodi 2013: 129).

6.3 Support for a Hindu State and a Secular State across Groups

In the following subsections I shall discuss whether the levels of support for either a Hindu state or a secular state varied across groups, but also whether the overall absence of a trend in public opinion on this issue is replicated in all groups.

Religion

Given the nature of this issue, we start with the impact of one's religion on the preference for a Hindu state or a secular state. The obvious expectation is that Hindus are most positive about the Hindu state while adherents of other religions are more likely to prefer a secular state. As Table

6.1 shows, the highest support, although far from unanimous, for a Hindu state is indeed found among Hindus: slightly over 60 percent of Hindus preferred Nepal to be a Hindu state between September 2006 and April 2012. This proportion was stable throughout this period.

Table 6.1: Public Support for a Hindu State and a Secular State by Religion

	Support for	**Sep 2006**	**May 2007**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2010**	**Feb 2011**	**Jun 2011**	**Apr 2012**
All groups	Hindu state	59%	59%	59%	55%	57%	56%	55%
	Secular state	31%	32%	31%	39%	34%	37%	37%
	DK	10%	9%	10%	6%	9%	7%	8%
	N	3000	3010	3010	3000	3000	3000	3010
Hindu	Hindu state	65%	66%	68%	62%	64%	63%	62%
	Secular state	27%	26%	23%	32%	29%	31%	31%
	DK	8%	8%	9%	6%	7%	6%	7%
	N	2566	2567	2532	2504	2530	2483	2513
Buddhist	Hindu state	35%	23%	12%	23%	31%	18%	24%
	Secular state	47%	62%	71%	68%	49%	67%	64%
	DK	18%	15%	17%	9%	20%	15%	12%
	N	213	198	219	248	244	241	248
Muslim	Hindu state	15%	6%	9%	10%	17%	13%	10%
	Secular state	73%	79%	83%	90%	73%	75%	71%
	DK	12%	15%	8%	0%	10%	12%	19%
	N	136	131	131	124	137	124	129
Kirati	Hindu state	8%	10%	13%	9%	16%	16%	6%
	Secular state	75%	78%	75%	87%	69%	64%	81%
	DK	17%	12%	12%	4%	15%	20%	13%
	N	65	74	92	70	51	86	67
Christian	Hindu state	31%	6%	18%	23%	10%	24%	2%
	Secular state	56%	91%	79%	77%	90%	76%	84%
	DK	13%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	14%
	N	16	34	34	48	31	55	49
χ^2		296.5	466.6	623.3	398.2	329.8	396.8	390.8
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

On the other hand, a majority, or at least a plurality, of people who practice Buddhism, Islam, *Kirat* and Christianity, favoured a secular state in each survey. Among these groups, relatively more Buddhists preferred to maintain the Hindu state. This is not surprising given the fluid boundary between Hinduism and Buddhism. There has been but little change in these patterns over time: among Buddhists and Christians we actually see an increase in support for a secular state and a concomitant decrease in support for a Hindu state; among Kirati and Muslims there has been fluctuation but no clear trend.

It is noteworthy that in a country in which more than 80 percent of the people identify themselves as Hindu, only slightly over 50 percent favour a Hindu state. This implies that a sizeable proportion of the Hindu population also thought that the Hindu religion should not be closely or preferentially associated with the state. Indeed, as Table 6.1 shows, nearly a third of Hindus prefer a secular state. This begs the question why they have this preference. One might speculate that especially Hindus who suffer from religiously inspired discrimination (e.g., Dalit, women) favour a secular state. But it is not so simple: about one-third of the hill caste group, who are mostly Hindus, supported a secular state in each survey year (see Table 6.2 below), and this is the group that may have profited most from the association between the Hindu religion and the state of Nepal. That a secular state was made more palatable for Hindus by the definition of secularism in the new constitution is likely to have played a role.

Ethnicity

Given the relationship between religion and ethnicity, it is not surprising that there was a clear division of opinion along the various ethnic groups with regard to the preference for a Hindu state or a secular state. Table 6.2 shows that a majority of the hill caste group, the hill Dalit, Newars and the Madhesi communities (i.e. the Madhesi caste group, the Tarai indigenous group and the Madhesi Dalit), excluding Muslims[78], wanted to see Nepal as a Hindu state. Most members of these groups identify themselves as Hindus. The surveys also show that a clear majority of two communities - the hill indigenous group and the Muslims - wanted Nepal to be a secular state, not a Hindu state. Support toward a Hindu state was remarkably low in these communities, especially among Muslims. The former group has a tenuous connection with Hinduism and strong connection with Buddhism and Shamanism, while the latter group has no connection with Hinduism.

The overall impression is one of stability, or at least trendless and minor fluctuation, over time. Groups where there has been something of a (weak) trend of weakening popularity of the Hindu state and growing popularity of secularism are the hill indigenous group, the Tarai indigenous group, and the Madhesi Dalit.

[78] See Chapter 5 for an explanation of the difference between Muslims as a religious group and Muslims as an ethnic group.

Table 6.2: Public support for a Hindu State and a Secular State by Ethnicity

	Support for	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Hindu state	59%	59%	59%	55%	57%	56%	55%
	Secular state	31%	32%	31%	39%	34%	37%	37%
	DK	10%	9%	10%	6%	9%	7%	8%
	N	3000	3010	3010	3000	3000	3000	3010
Hill caste group	Hindu state	59%	61%	65%	64%	65%	67%	62%
	Secular state	34%	32%	27%	31%	28%	30%	34%
	DK	7%	7%	8%	5%	7%	3%	4%
	N	1008	941	930	926	969	927	929
Hill indigenous group	Hindu state	36%	41%	31%	29%	38%	31%	31%
	Secular state	45%	46%	50%	59%	45%	58%	56%
	DK	19%	13%	19%	12%	17%	11%	13%
	N	533	624	648	633	655	635	646
Hill Dalit	Hindu state	52%	66%	55%	57%	57%	60%	56%
	Secular state	41%	22%	25%	33%	34%	30%	32%
	DK	7%	12%	20%	10%	9%	10%	12%
	N	143	167	213	244	253	242	241
Newar	Hindu state	65%	54%	59%	60%	56%	66%	56%
	Secular state	31%	38%	36%	35%	34%	30%	39%
	DK	4%	8%	5%	5%	10%	4%	5%
	N	222	173	166	164	198	164	165
Madhesi caste group	Hindu state	75%	75%	84%	66%	71%	76%	76%
	Secular state	15%	20%	15%	32%	24%	19%	20%
	DK	10%	5%	1%	2%	5%	5%	4%
	N	465	459	497	527	478	531	437
Tarai indigenous group	Hindu state	81%	75%	69%	66%	70%	36%	62%
	Secular state	14%	14%	19%	32%	25%	52%	30%
	DK	5%	11%	12%	2%	5%	12%	8%
	N	326	277	284	248	226	246	302
Madhesi Dalit	Hindu state	74%	69%	91%	71%	73%	70%	63%
	Secular state	12%	24%	6%	22%	24%	16%	22%
	DK	14%	7%	3%	7%	3%	14%	15%
	N	139	228	145	129	93	125	160
Muslim	Hindu state	15%	6%	10%	15%	18%	15%	10%
	Secular state	73%	81%	82%	85%	72%	73%	70%
	DK	12%	13%	8%	0%	10%	12%	20%
	N	132	122	129	128	128	128	129
χ^2		435.5	357.7	655.1	420.2	304.8	471.1	406.8
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Region

Out of the five development regions, the highest levels of public support for a Hindu state tend to be found in the Far-Western region (see Table 6.3). Nearly three fourths of the people living in this region wanted Nepal to be a Hindu state as of April 2012. This is the region which also has the lowest presence of indigenous groups. The Eastern and Central development regions also showed above average levels of support for a Hindu state, at least in 2012.

Table 6.3: Public Support for a Hindu State and a Secular State by Development Region

	Support to	**Sep 2006**	**May 2007**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2010**	**Feb 2011**	**Jun 2011**	**Apr 2012**
All groups	Hindu state	59%	59%	59%	55%	57%	56%	55%
	Secular state	31%	32%	31%	39%	34%	37%	37%
	DK	10%	9%	10%	6%	9%	7%	8%
	N	3000	3010	3010	3000	3000	3000	3010
Eastern	Hindu state	58%	59%	41%	44%	61%	46%	64%
	Secular state	32%	33%	48%	53%	29%	43%	29%
	DK	10%	8%	11%	3%	10%	11%	7%
	N	581	759	649	645	694	633	710
Central	Hindu state	68%	62%	68%	54%	54%	64%	58%
	Secular state	23%	34%	28%	40%	35%	30%	35%
	DK	9%	4%	4%	6%	11%	6%	7%
	N	1239	978	1201	1155	1039	1017	1078
Western	Hindu state	46%	55%	66%	58%	48%	58%	39%
	Secular state	41%	33%	27%	35%	43%	36%	51%
	DK	13%	12%	7%	7%	9%	6%	10%
	N	526	529	464	553	592	624	551
Mid-Western	Hindu state	33%	63%	49%	59%	58%	41%	33%
	Secular state	56%	25%	21%	31%	33%	47%	60%
	DK	11%	12%	30%	10%	9%	12%	7%
	N	344	352	397	369	389	397	369
Far-Western	Hindu state	76%	52%	61%	69%	80%	60%	73%
	Secular state	20%	34%	28%	27%	20%	37%	11%
	DK	4%	14%	11%	4%	0%	3%	16%
	N	310	392	300	276	286	328	301
χ^2		230.5	61.8	362.3	96.7	121.1	109.1	270.1
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

As of April 2012, the highest level of support for a secular state was in the Mid-Western and Western development regions. Although in these regions most survey years still showed majority or plurality support for a Hindu state, both regions ended (in the time period under study) with a majority preferring secularism. This might be due to a large presence within these two regions

of indigenous groups in the hills and of Muslims in the Tarai, a majority of whom favoured a secular state.

Education

The level of education had an important impact on the public's view in this matter with a clear difference between the two highest levels of education versus the lower levels. Table 6.4 shows that support for a Hindu state was highest among those who were either illiterate, had received only informal education, or had primary to secondary education. Meanwhile, the highest levels of support for a secular state are found among those who had completed either higher secondary level or bachelor level education. It is among these two groups that we see a majority or plurality favouring secularism, but not in all survey years. Please note that the proportion 'Don't know' was significantly higher among illiterate respondents. Again, there has been little structural change over time.

Table 6.4: Public Support for a Hindu State and a Secular State By Educational Status

	Support for	**Sep 2006**	**May 2007**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2010**	**Feb 2011**	**Jun 2011**	**Apr 2012**
All groups	Hindu state	59%	59%	59%	55%	57%	56%	55%
	Secular state	31%	32%	31%	39%	34%	37%	37%
	DK	10%	9%	10%	6%	9%	7%	8%
	N	3000	3010	3010	3000	3000	3000	3010
Illiterate	Hindu state	60%	60%	62%	55%	58%	57%	53%
	Secular state	22%	23%	20%	32%	24%	27%	27%
	DK	18%	17%	18%	13%	18%	16%	20%
	N	1146	1033	1210	880	850	849	902
Informal Education	Hindu state	58%	58%	57%	60%	57%	56%	58%
	Secular state	32%	31%	31%	34%	33%	34%	34%
	DK	10%	11%	12%	6%	10%	10%	8%
	N	438	391	429	505	506	451	563
Primary/lower secondary	Hindu state	58%	61%	63%	57%	61%	59%	54%
	Secular state	37%	33%	33%	40%	32%	36%	43%
	DK	5%	6%	4%	3%	7%	5%	3%
	N	628	695	673	579	663	688	566
Secondary	Hindu state	63%	61%	52%	50%	57%	51%	57%
	Secular state	35%	37%	47%	48%	40%	47%	41%
	DK	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%	2%
	N	466	501	483	691	638	636	599
Higher secondary	Hindu state	56%	51%	48%	47%	51%	56%	48%
	Secular state	43%	49%	50%	51%	48%	43%	51%
	DK	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%
	N	242	277	153	277	261	271	290

Bachelor's and above	Hindu state	42%	43%	48%	56%	48%	47%	49%
	Secular state	58%	57%	50%	44%	52%	52%	51%
	DK	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%
	N	80	113	62	68	82	103	90
χ^2		222.2	236.8	277.8	164.3	202.4	213.4	275.4
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Age Group

Table 6.5 indicates that a majority of the people, irrespective of age, preferred a Hindu state in all survey years except 2010 (when a majority of the youngest age group preferred a secular state). At the start of the survey series, in September 2006, there were hardly any differences between age groups in support for a Hindu state, with people belonging to younger age groups somewhat more likely to favour a secular state than older citizens. At the end of the series, in April 2012, the differences were slightly more pronounced, especially for support of secularism: 42 percent of the youngest age group (25 years old and below) and 30 percent for the oldest age group (above 65). The two oldest age groups were more likely to answer 'Don't Know' to the question about a Hindu or a secular state, which may be related with their level of education.

Table 6.5: Public Support for a Hindu State and a Secular State By Age Group

	Support for	**Sep 2006**	**May 2007**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2010**	**Feb 2011**	**Jun 2011**	**Apr 2012**
All groups	Hindu state	59%	59%	59%	55%	57%	56%	55%
	Secular state	31%	32%	31%	39%	34%	37%	37%
	DK	10%	9%	10%	6%	9%	7%	8%
	N	3000	3010	3010	3000	3000	3000	3010
25 and Below	Hindu state	59%	57%	52%	44%	52%	53%	52%
	Secular state	35%	36%	39%	52%	41%	43%	42%
	DK	6%	7%	9%	4%	7%	4%	6%
	N	738	828	677	780	691	758	774
26-35	Hindu state	60%	57%	60%	58%	58%	54%	52%
	Secular state	30%	33%	32%	37%	34%	39%	39%
	DK	10%	10%	8%	5%	8%	7%	9%
	N	802	833	846	794	783	811	743
36-45	Hindu state	58%	59%	61%	57%	59%	57%	57%
	Secular state	32%	32%	30%	37%	33%	35%	35%
	DK	10%	9%	9%	6%	8%	8%	8%
	N	586	594	635	610	646	627	657
46-55	Hindu state	58%	62%	62%	60%	57%	60%	59%
	Secular state	32%	28%	28%	33%	31%	32%	32%
	DK	10%	10%	10%	7%	12%	8%	9%
	N	460	399	427	392	458	377	396

56-65	Hindu state	60%	63%	63%	59%	61%	53%	52%
	Secular state	28%	28%	20%	27%	26%	38%	38%
	DK	12%	9%	17%	14%	13%	9%	10%
	N	268	256	299	288	270	267	257
Above 65	Hindu state	61%	64%	63%	57%	61%	62%	57%
	Secular state	23%	27%	22%	32%	22%	21%	30%
	DK	16%	9%	15%	11%	17%	17%	13%
	N	146	100	129	136	152	161	181
χ^2		32.8	21.5	59.6	115.6	53.3	65.8	34.0
P		.005	.122	.000	.000	.000	.000	.003

Political Party

The choice for a Hindu state or a secular state was strongly influenced by political party preference (see Table 6.7). Supporters of the CPN (Maoist) and the small leftist parties (including Janmorcha Nepal, NMKP, CPN [ML] and Sanyukta Janmorcha) were less likely to prefer a Hindu state than any other party's supporters. The CPN (Maoist) has been the first political party in Nepal to formally start a campaign with the objective to replace the Hindu state with a secular state. But even a majority of this party's supporters were in favour of a

Table 6.6: Public Support for a Hindu State and a Secular State By Political Party Preference

	Support for	**Sep 2006**	**May 2007**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2010**	**Feb 2011**	**Jun 2011**	**Apr 2012**
All groups	Hindu state	59%	59%	59%	55%	57%	56%	55%
	Secular state	31%	32%	31%	39%	34%	37%	37%
	DK	10%	9%	10%	6%	9%	7%	8%
	N	2963	2987	3010	2998	2994	2999	3010
CPN (Maoist)	Hindu state	51%	45%	53%	49%	51%	45%	41%
	Secular state	45%	51%	45%	46%	43%	50%	57%
	DK	4%	4%	2%	5%	6%	5%	2%
	N	492	265	247	818	568	635	370
Nepali Congress Party	Hindu state	70%	62%	64%	67%	67%	64%	60%
	Secular state	24%	32%	32%	28%	27%	33%	38%
	DK	6%	6%	4%	5%	6%	3%	2%
	N	418	386	334	488	619	495	418
CPN (UML)	Hindu state	53%	52%	62%	54%	59%	59%	57%
	Secular state	43%	42%	35%	40%	33%	37%	40%
	DK	4%	6%	3%	6%	8%	4%	3%
	N	356	272	379	387	505	343	264
Small rightist parties	Hindu state	71%	74%	77%	74%	78%	67%	70%
	Secular state	26%	23%	19%	23%	17%	31%	24%
	DK	3%	3%	4%	3%	5%	2%	6%

	N	170	114	53	43	76	42	37
Small leftist parties	Hindu state	50%	55%	68%	65%	52%	64%	38%
	Secular state	50%	42%	32%	35%	48%	28%	60%
	DK	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	8%	2%
	N	28	31	25	57	33	25	42
Tarai based regional parties	Hindu state	79%	84%	80%	65%	68%	78%	76%
	Secular state	13%	13%	20%	34%	27%	18%	22%
	DK	8%	3%	0%	1%	5%	4%	2%
	N	24	32	109	175	146	119	78
χ^2		199.3	219.3	242.6	145.1	164.7	332.9	289.5
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Hindu state in most survey years: only in 2007, June 2011 and 2012 did more Maoist voters opt for a secular state than a Hindu state. Supporters of the small leftist parties showed majority support for a Hindu state even more often, but in April 2012 they had highest level of support for a secular state (60 percent) of all parties. On the other hand, we find the highest levels of support for a Hindu state among voters of the Tarai-based regional parties and the small rightist parties (including RPP, RPP Nepal, Rastriya Jansakti Party, Nepal Janta Party, and those who support the King). Voters preferring the Nepali Congress Party and the CPN (UML) showed moderate levels of support for a Hindu state. For most parties we observe fluctuation in the patterns of support for both options, but no real or clear trend. Among supporters of the Nepali Congress Party there seems to have been a trend of decreasing proportions favouring a Hindu State, and increasing proportions favouring a secular state.

6.4 A Comprehensive Analysis of Support for a Hindu State vs. a Secular State

Given the interrelatedness of some of the independent variables discussed above, a binary logistic regression analysis was performed on public support for a secular state rather than a Hindu state (see Table 6.7). The procedure is the same as in the preceding chapter, except for the fact that we found very little in terms of a developments over time with regard to the issue of secularism. This implies that there are no obstacles to pooling the seven surveys in this analysis. However, a pooled analysis also results in a very large number of observations (N=19,268), so that even small effects easily reach statistical significance (at any conventional level). As a check on the robustness of the results of the pooled analysis, we also include binary logistic regression analyses for the individual surveys (see Annex 2).

Answers that showed support for a Hindu state were coded '1', while answers that showed support for a secular state were coded '2'. Answers of 'Don't Know' were treated as missing and excluded from the regression analyses, because I want to focus on the relationship between public support toward Hinduism or secularism and the independent variables only. Also, the relative low proportion of respondents with 'Don't Know' allow for this choice.

The absence of a trend is confirmed by the lack of significance of effects for all survey years except April 2012. As expected, the strongest effects are for religion: with Hinduism as the reference category, adherents of all the other religions are statistically significantly and substantially more likely to opt for a secular state. This pattern repeats itself in each individual survey, although the effects for being a Christian or a Muslim were not significant in September 2006.

The impact of religion on attitudes about a Hindu state or a secular state does not reduce the independent effects of variables that are related to religion (such as ethnicity) to statistical insignificance, with a few exceptions. Only if we look at the analyses of the individual surveys, we see that the effect of most other variables is not very robust. With belonging to the hill caste group as the reference, being a Newar, a hill Dalit or an (ethnic) Muslim has no significant effect in any survey and for belonging to any of the other groups we observe significant effects only in some of the surveys. For the Tarai indigenous group, the direction of the effect changes from mostly negative to positive in June 2011. Living in one of the four development regions other than the Eastern region also has no consistently significant and unidirectional impact on preferences for secularism or a Hindu state. The same is true for age (with 18-25 years old as reference). Although the general pattern for political party preference is clear - supporting a party other than the Maoists dampens the enthusiasm for secularism - none of the effects are significant in all surveys.

Table 6.7: Beta Coefficients of Logistic Regression with Support for a Secular state rather than a Hindu state as the Dependent Variable (1 = Hindu state, 2 = Secular state); Pooled Analysis

		B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Survey	Sep 2006 (Reference)			
	May 2007	-.006	.064	.994
	Jan 2008	-.024	.065	.977
	Aug 2010	.091	.065	1.096
	Feb 2011	-.084	.066	.919
	Jun 2011	.007	.066	1.008
	Apr 2012	.153*	.064	1.165
Ethnicity	Hill caste group (Reference)			
	Hill indigenous group	.582***	.055	1.790
	Hill Dalit	.094	.068	1.099
	Newar	.089	.074	1.093
	Madhesi caste group	-.322***	.057	.724
	Tarai indigenous group	-.191**	.063	.826
	Madhesi Dalit	-.341***	.093	.711
	Muslim	.162	.309	1.176
Religion	Hindu (Reference)			
	Buddhist	1.397***	.075	4.044
	Muslim	2.943***	.308	18.963
	Christian	2.308***	.176	10.056

	Kirati	2.236***	.156	9.358
Development Region	Eastern (Reference)			
	Central	-.204***	.048	.816
	Western	.211***	.054	1.235
	Mid-Western	.333***	.061	1.395
	Far-Western	-.342***	.067	.711
Education Status	Illiterate (Reference)			
	Informal education	.267***	.055	1.306
	Primary/lower sec.	.364***	.052	1.439
	Secondary	.723***	.055	2.060
	Higher sec.	.990***	.068	2.692
	Bachelor's+	1.294***	.098	3.647
Age	<=25 years (Reference)			
	26 – 35 years	-.142**	.047	.868
	36 – 45 years	-.112*	.052	.894
	46 – 55 years	-.138*	.060	.871
	56 – 65 years	-.165*	.072	.848
	Above 65 years	-.383***	.095	.682
Party Preference	CPN (Maoist) (Reference)			
	Nepali Congress	-.746***	.058	.474
	CPN (UML)	-.443***	.061	.642
	Small rightist parties	-1.284***	.128	.277
	Small leftist parties	-.229	.149	.796
	Tarai based regional parties	-.933***	.115	.393
	Constant	-.645***	.090	.524
	N	19268		
	Nagelkerke R square	.258		

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05; Party preference was not asked in the Dec 2004 and Jan 2006 surveys

The effect of level of education (with being illiterate as reference) on the other hand is consistent in direction (higher levels are more likely to favour secularism), and for having completed secondary education or higher, also in being statistically significant.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

The transformation of Nepal from a Hindu state into a secular state may be less radical than it seems, because of the protection of Hindu culture and religion implied in the definition of secularism that is used in Nepal. Yet, the most striking finding in this chapter is that a majority of the citizens remained in favour of the Hindu state. Over the 2006-2012 period, the size of this majority did not change structurally. If there has been any change due to the public debate about this issue, it must have occurred before the first survey in September 2006. Unsurprisingly, non-

Hindus, i.e. Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and Kirati, are the only subgroups that consistently favour a secular state. Even supporters of the Maoist party which championed the cause of secularism tended to favour a Hindu state in some of the years between 2006 and 2012. And if we were to draw up the profile of someone who is likely to be in favour of a secular state, in addition to being a non-Hindu, being a supporter of the CPN (Maoist) or a small leftist party, being highly educated, belonging to the hill indigenous group and perhaps living in the Mid-Western development region are the most important characteristics (see also Sen 2015a also).

7

Nepali-Only or Multilingualism?

7.1 Transition from Nepali-Only to Multilingualism

'… the degree of language diversity in Nepal was probably surpassed only by that of Papua New Guinea' (Sonntag 2007: 208). Indeed, the 2011 census counted no fewer than 123 different languages spoken as mother tongues by citizens of Nepal. About 82 percent speak one of 48 Indo-European languages, including Nepali which, being the first language of 45 percent of the population, is the most widely used language. 17 Percent speak one of 63 Sino-Tibetan languages, including Newar (3 percent). Moreover, different scripts are used and within some languages very different dialects can be discerned.

The language diversity is closely related to Nepal's ethnic diversity, which was discussed in Chapter 1, but the relationship is not always one-to-one: some ethnic groups share a language, and within some other ethnic groups several languages are spoken.

As in most multilingual societies, the consequences of language diversity for nation-building have been the topic of fierce and longstanding debate in Nepal: should this diversity be regarded as an integral part of the national identity, and be facilitated and protected? Or does language diversity stand in the way of the national development, and should one language be promoted as a lingua franca at least? In this chapter, I focus primarily on the discussion about the official, administrative, language or languages of Nepal, but it is closely linked to the discussion about the language of education (See for example Weinberg 2013).

Until very recently, the emphasis has been on the disadvantages of language diversity: as shown in Chapter 2, from the unification of Nepal, the use of Nepali has been promoted at the expense of the other languages. This choice of Nepali as the only official language of the state (and of education) was far from neutral. Khas or Gorkhali, as the language was originally known, was the language of the Gorkha rulers that conquered the rest of the country. Calling their language Nepali and making its use part of their effort at enforced cultural homogenization contributed to the spread of the language as a first or second language, but it also reinforced the dominant position of the Hindu high caste hill group as well as the growing resentment and eventual resistance by other marginalized groups.

The positions of the Newari language (formally known as Nepal Bhasa, not to be confused with Nepali) of the Newar ethnic group in the Kathmandu Valley, and of the Hindi language, one of the two official languages of neighbouring India, and also spoken in the Tarai region of Nepal, were at the centre of the political debate. Newar elites had started to revive their language since the 1920s. The Rana regime at the time imprisoned and exiled several Newari writers and poets to suppress their creative contribution to the Newari language (Malla 1979: 174). And in 1951, the then leader of the Nepal Tarai Congress, Vedananda Jha, demanded an autonomous Tarai region and the recognition of Hindi as an administrative language. However, the state did not recognize multilingualism and did not adopt a multilingual policy. On the contrary, the 1962 Constitution promulgated under the Panchayat regime led by King Mahendra adopted an explicit one-language policy declaring Nepali to be the only national and administrative language of the country. This arrangement made speakers of other languages feel the suppression by the state. During the Panchayat regime, any activities to revive languages other than Nepali were totally prohibited.

It was only after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990 that political leaders and social activists from historically excluded groups such as *Janajati, Dalit* and *Madhesi* groups overtly raised their voice to demand a multilingual policy. Even though the 1990 Constitution recognized all the indigenous languages of the country as national languages, it did not recognize languages other than Nepali as administrative languages. The Constitution only guaranteed each community the right to preserve and promote its own language and script, and to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongue. Incidents such as the 1993 conflict about the introduction of Sanskrit and the 1999 Supreme Court ban on the use of Newari in local government in the Kathmandu Valley (See Chapter 2), show that the Nepali-only policy continued in most respects.

After the start of their insurgency in 1996, the CPN (Maoist) came out in favour of the other indigenous languages, which added a new chapter to the debate about the language politics of Nepal. The CPN (Maoist) decried the linguistic monopoly (along with the cultural and religious domination) of the Hindu high caste hill group. A Tarai-based regional party, Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, also demanded recognition of all the indigenous languages in the state's administration and of Hindi in the administration of the Tarai region. An agreement was reached between the government and the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum in August 2007 which contained the intention to establish a tri-lingual policy consisting of mother tongue, Nepali and English in government administration, education and international communication.

Given the growing pressure for a multilingual policy, continuation of the Nepali-only policy was not a viable option, especially after the country had been declared a federal democratic republic. The new Constitution of 2015 has reconfirmed that all indigenous languages spoken in Nepal are national languages, but also that Nepali is the administrative language at the national level. However, the new federal provinces were given the right to select, in addition to Nepali, one or more languages spoken by a majority of the people in the respective province as language(s) of administration.

This chapter explores and analyses what the Nepali people think of the choice between a Nepali-only language policy and a multilingual language policy, and how public opinion on this issue evolved over time. As with the issues of republicanism (Chapter 5) and secularism (Chapter 6), I shall examine the variation of public opinion on language policy by ethnicity, religion, region, educational status, age group and political party preference. The bivariate analyses are followed by a multiple regression analysis to account for the interrelationships between the independent variables and to find which of the independent variables are most influential.

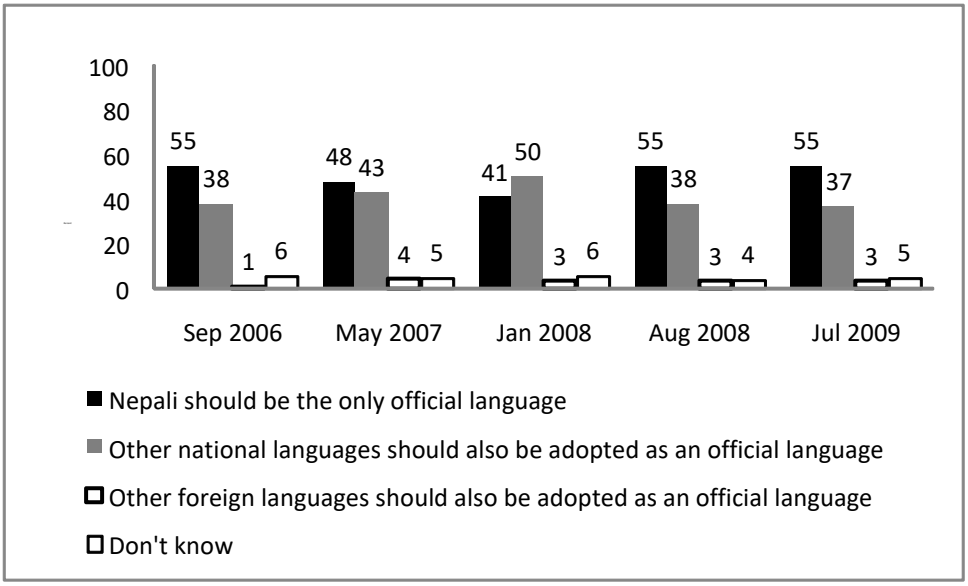
7.2 Monolingual vs. Multilingual Policy: Development of Public Opinion over Time

Unfortunately, the question about the official language(s) was not asked in the surveys after July 2009, giving us a rather brief period to look for longitudinal trends.[79] However, even in this brief period we can observe a decline in support for monolingualism followed by a restoration to previous levels, with a mirror image for support of multilingualism (see Figure 7.1). In September 2006, a majority (55 percent) said that Nepali should be the only official language. This proportion of the people who preferred a monolingual policy subsequently decreased significantly to 48 percent in May 2007 (χ^2 = 573.322, significant at p<.001) and reached its lowest level, 41 percent, in January 2008 (χ^2 = 130.118, at p<.001). This was the only time (in the period wherein data are available) that the proportion of people preferring that other languages spoken in the country also receive recognition as official languages was higher than that of those who preferred Nepali to be the only official language. The decline in public support for Nepali as the only official language in May 2007 and January 2008 may be due to the outbreak of the *Madhesi* and *Janajati* protests in January/ February 2007. One of the demands of these movements was the recognition of other regional and ethnic languages as official languages. Nevertheless, public support for a monolingual policy significantly increased to a simple majority (55 percent) in August 2008 (χ^2 = 254.932, significant at p<.001). The support remained unchanged in July 2009. The surveys show that in most years a majority of the Nepali people wanted to retain the monolingual policy i.e. Nepali should be the only official language in the country. However, the proportion of those who wanted the state to adopt other national languages as the official language was also sizeable with about 40 percent. People with a preference to also adopt foreign languages (including Hindi) as an official language were marginal throughout.

Like the issues of republicanism and the relationship between the state and Hinduism, the issue of language policy was well understood by the general public. In fact, the proportion who replied 'Don't know' was negligible: it was only 6 percent in September 2006 and remained almost unchanged until July 2009. So, we may assume that the issue of language policy was salient to the public and/or received wide public attention at the time of the surveys.

[79] The phrasing of the question was: 'There is a debate going on whether Nepali should be the only official language or if other national languages should be also adopted as official languages. What should be the language policy of Nepal?'.

Figure 7.1: Public Support for Monolingualism and Multilingualism



N for Sep 2006: 3000, for May 2007: 3010, for Jan 2008: 3010, for Aug 2008: 3025 and for Jul 2009: 3004

7.3 Support for a Monolingual or a Multilingual Language Policy across Groups

When we look at the support pattern across groups, the most important finding is that there is substantial support for both positions in each subgroup. Although there are differences across groups, the different preferences for a particular language policy never coincide with membership of a particular subgroup.

Ethnicity

In most surveys the proportion supporting monolingualism was higher than the proportion of the population with Nepali as their mother tongue as measured by the official census. So, even if all Nepali-speakers would have preferred monolingualism, some speakers of other languages must also have preferred Nepali as the only official language. The mother tongue of the respondents was not registered in the surveys, but ethnicity may very well serve as a proxy for language: the first language of the hill caste group and the hill Dalits is Nepali, while the majority of Newars, the hill indigenous group, and the Tarai based groups (Madhesi, Tarai indigenous group, Muslim) does not speak Nepali as their mother tongue (although many of them speak Nepali as a second language).

Table 7.1: Support for Nepali as the Only Official Language and for Multilingualism By Ethnicity

	Support for	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009
All groups	Monolingualism	55%	48%	41%	55%	55%
	Multilingualism	38%	43%	50%	38%	37%
	Foreign language	1%	4%	3%	3%	3%
	DK	6%	5%	6%	4%	5%
	N	3000	3010	3010	3025	3004
Hill caste group	Monolingualism	73%	58%	63%	75%	77%
	Multilingualism	22%	33%	29%	21%	16%
	Foreign language	1%	6%	3%	2%	3%
	DK	4%	3%	6%	2%	4%
	N	1008	941	931	934	929
Hill indigenous group	Monolingualism	51%	53%	46%	60%	56%
	Multilingualism	39%	39%	42%	34%	37%
	Foreign language	0%	2%	2%	2%	1%
	DK	10%	6%	11%	4%	6%
	N	533	624	648	661	651
Hill Dalit	Monolingualism	59%	62%	58%	75%	71%
	Multilingualism	34%	28%	21%	16%	20%
	Foreign language	1%	4%	4%	3%	1%
	DK	6%	7%	17%	6%	8%
	N	143	167	214	214	213
Newar	Monolingualism	64%	53%	57%	70%	66%
	Multilingualism	31%	40%	38%	27%	30%
	Foreign language	0%	5%	2%	1%	2%
	DK	5%	2%	3%	2%	2%
	N	222	173	166	165	165
Madhesi caste group	Monolingualism	40%	33%	7%	24%	20%
	Multilingualism	50%	56%	88%	69%	68%
	Foreign language	2%	7%	4%	5%	8%
	DK	8%	5%	1%	2%	4%
	N	465	459	498	482	526
Tarai indigenous group	Monolingualism	40%	39%	25%	40%	43%
	Multilingualism	56%	52%	68%	54%	46%
	Foreign language	0%	4%	0%	0%	5%
	DK	4%	5%	7%	6%	7%
	N	326	277	283	287	272
Madhesi Dalit	Monolingualism	45%	31%	6%	24%	20%
	Multilingualism	49%	61%	85%	63%	68%
	Foreign language	1%	4%	6%	7%	3%
	DK	5%	5%	3%	6%	9%

	N	139	228	144	152	120
Muslim	Monolingualism	31%	18%	12%	16%	31%
	Multilingualism	56%	66%	85%	61%	62%
	Foreign language	6%	6%	3%	12%	5%
	DK	7%	11%	0%	11%	2%
	N	132	122	130	129	128
χ^2		386.5	330.8	929.0	764.1	751.3
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

If we look at the support patterns by ethnic group in Table 7.1, a complicated set of patterns emerges. Among the hill communities, irrespective of group, a majority was in favour of retaining Nepali as the only official language. However, the level of support for a monolingual policy varied among these hill communities. As expected, the Nepali-speaking hill caste group and hill Dalits showed more support for Nepali as the only official language compared to the non-Nepali speaking hill indigenous groups, and the same is true for the Newars despite the fact that Nepali is not the mother tongue of most Newars.

Unlike the hill communities, a majority of all the Madhesi communities, irrespective of group, prefer a multilingual language policy in the country. This fits with the fact that these groups do not have Nepali as their first language. However, it is surprising that even Madhesi people were not in favour of recognizing a 'foreign language' as an official language, despite the fact that Hindi, which is widely used as a medium of communication in the Tarai, can be regarded as such a 'foreign language'. This apparent lack of enthusiasm for Hindi as an official language is also in spite of the demands made by Tarai based regional parties for such a recognition of Hindi.

Interestingly, the increase and later decrease of support for multilingualism is not visible among the hill groups. There we see fluctuation rather than any trend, while the curvilinear pattern is visible among all Tarai-based groups. This fits with my suggestion that the initial increase is likely caused by the mobilization of Madhesi and Janajati during the protests of 2007.

Religion

Across religious affiliation, Hindus and Buddhists were consistently more likely to support Nepali as the only official language (See Table 7.2). Among Kiratis a majority favoured monolingualism in some surveys and multilingualism in other surveys. In all surveys but one, Christians supported recognizing more languages as official languages. Only Muslims consistently preferred multilingualism over monolingualism.

Table 7.2: Support for Nepali as the Only Official Language and for Multilingualism By Religion

	Support for	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009
All groups	Monolingualism	55%	48%	41%	55%	55%
	Multilingualism	38%	43%	50%	38%	37%
	Foreign language	1%	4%	3%	3%	3%
	DK	6%	5%	6%	4%	5%
	N	3000	3010	3010	3025	3004
Hindu	Monolingualism	58%	48%	42%	57%	56%
	Multilingualism	36%	43%	49%	37%	35%
	Foreign language	1%	5%	3%	3%	4%
	DK	5%	4%	7%	3%	5%
	N	2566	2567	2532	2516	2572
Buddhist	Monolingualism	48%	53%	50%	50%	50%
	Multilingualism	37%	40%	41%	43%	46%
	Foreign language	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
	DK	14%	6%	7%	5%	4%
	N	213	198	219	267	222
Muslim	Monolingualism	31%	20%	12%	16%	29%
	Multilingualism	57%	64%	85%	60%	64%
	Foreign language	6%	5%	3%	13%	5%
	DK	7%	11%	0%	11%	3%
	N	132	122	130	129	122
Christian	Monolingualism	38%	65%	49%	62%	58%
	Multilingualism	56%	32%	46%	36%	39%
	Foreign language	0%	3%	3%	0%	4%
	DK	6%	0%	3%	2%	0%
	N	16	34	35	55	26
Kirati	Monolingualism	51%	51%	29%	75%	42%
	Multilingualism	45%	41%	62%	17%	50%
	Foreign language	0%	1%	1%	4%	0%
	DK	5%	7%	8%	4%	8%
	N	65	74	92	47	60
χ^2		136.2	84.1	87.5	200.8	80.5
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Region

As Table 7.3 shows, only one development region showed consistent majority or at least plurality support for either a monolingual or multilingual language policy in all surveys: the Western region was always in favour of a Nepali-only policy. But, with an exception for May 2007, the level of support for Nepali as the only official language was highest in the Far-Western region. This may

be because a majority of the people living in this region belong to the hill caste group and the hill Dalits, whose mother tongue is Nepali. In most years a plurality of residents in the Mid-Western region also wanted to retain Nepali as the only official language. Support for other national languages as official languages was higher in the Eastern, and especially in the Central development regions. In the latter region, the increase and subsequent decrease of support for multilingualism is most visible.

Table 7.3: Support for Nepali as the Only Official Language and for Multilingualism By Region

	Support for	**Sep 2006**	**May 2007**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2008**	**Jul 2009**
All groups	Monolingualism	55%	48%	41%	55%	55%
	Multilingualism	38%	43%	50%	38%	37%
	Foreign language	1%	4%	3%	3%	3%
	DK	6%	5%	6%	4%	5%
	N	3000	3010	3010	3025	3004
Eastern	Monolingualism	60%	56%	33%	62%	46%
	Multilingualism	36%	37%	60%	31%	49%
	Foreign language	1%	3%	1%	2%	2%
	DK	3%	4%	6%	4%	4%
	N	581	759	647	753	622
Central	Monolingualism	55%	41%	36%	49%	45%
	Multilingualism	37%	51%	59%	49%	47%
	Foreign language	1%	5%	3%	1%	3%
	DK	8%	3%	2%	2%	6%
	N	1239	978	1202	1094	1020
Western	Monolingualism	48%	57%	47%	61%	62%
	Multilingualism	42%	30%	44%	30%	29%
	Foreign language	2%	5%	2%	6%	7%
	DK	8%	8%	7%	3%	3%
	N	526	529	463	595	622
Mid-Western	Monolingualism	46%	49%	47%	41%	63%
	Multilingualism	48%	37%	28%	45%	25%
	Foreign language	1%	8%	5%	7%	3%
	DK	5%	6%	20%	7%	10%
	N	344	352	397	385	420
Far-Western	Monolingualism	71%	33%	59%	69%	77%
	Multilingualism	25%	60%	32%	21%	18%
	Foreign language	1%	3%	2%	0%	2%
	DK	3%	4%	7%	10%	4%
	N	310	392	301	198	322
χ^2		101.2	214.8	339.4	222.8	276.6
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Education

With regard to level of education, the general pattern is repeated in each group: support for multilingualism increased until it overtook support for a Nepali-only policy in January 2008, after which it dropped off again (See Table 7.4). The only exception is the group that completed a Bachelor or higher, in which support for multilingualism peaked one year earlier (May 2007).

Although the pattern varies from year to year (survey to survey), in general people with a higher educational level seem to be more likely to favour Nepali as the only official language in the country. This may be because better educated people have a better command of Nepali whichever ethnicity they belong to, even when they speak another language as their mother tongue; this, however, can due to a lack of relevant data to test this 'hypothesis' only be an educated guess.

Please note that on this issue as well, those with informal education only, and especially illiterates, show relatively high proportions answering 'Don't know'.

Table 7.4: Support for Nepali as the Only Official Language and for Multilingualism By Educational Status

	Support for	**Sep 2006**	**May 2007**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2008**	**Jul 2009**
All groups	Monolingualism	55%	48%	41%	55%	55%
	Multilingualism	38%	43%	50%	38%	37%
	Foreign language	1%	4%	3%	3%	3%
	DK	6%	5%	6%	4%	5%
	N	3000	3010	3010	3025	3004
Illiterate	Monolingualism	50%	44%	35%	48%	47%
	Multilingualism	39%	43%	50%	42%	40%
	Foreign language	1%	3%	1%	4%	2%
	DK	10%	10%	14%	7%	11%
	N	1146	1033	1208	946	848
Informal Education	Monolingualism	59%	48%	44%	53%	57%
	Multilingualism	31%	43%	51%	40%	35%
	Foreign language	1%	4%	2%	1%	3%
	DK	10%	5%	3%	6%	5%
	N	438	391	428	587	676
Primary/lower secondary	Monolingualism	55%	54%	47%	58%	51%
	Multilingualism	40%	40%	50%	38%	42%
	Foreign language	1%	4%	2%	3%	5%
	DK	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%
	N	628	695	673	656	786
Secondary	Monolingualism	58%	48%	43%	62%	63%

	Multilingualism	39%	46%	50%	33%	31%
	Foreign language	1%	6%	6%	4%	4%
	DK	2%	0%	1%	1%	2%
	N	466	501	483	600	453
Higher secondary	Monolingualism	69%	47%	44%	61%	66%
	Multilingualism	30%	45%	54%	34%	31%
	Foreign language	0%	8%	3%	4%	3%
	DK	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	N	242	277	153	186	177
Bachelor's and above	Monolingualism	63%	42%	48%	56%	71%
	Multilingualism	37%	48%	48%	43%	25%
	Foreign language	0%	10%	3%	2%	5%
	DK	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	N	80	113	62	54	65
χ^2		115.4	178.9	241.1	154.9	193.0
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Age Group

As Table 7.5 shows, the curvilinear development of support for both language policies can be observed in each age group. Only in January 2008 and for the youngest also in May 2007 was there more support for multilingualism than for monolingualism. Compared to the younger age groups, people from the two oldest age groups – i.e., over 56 years of age - were more likely to prefer Nepali as the only official language, and to answer 'Don't Know'. And in most survey years their younger counterparts were more likely to support other national languages as official languages. The differences between the age groups are relatively small, however.

Table 7.5: Support for Nepali as the Only Official Language and for Multilingualism By Age Group

	Support for	**Sep 2006**	**May 2007**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2008**	**Jul 2009**
All groups	Monolingualism	55%	48%	41%	55%	55%
	Multilingualism	38%	43%	50%	38%	37%
	Foreign language	1%	4%	3%	3%	3%
	DK	6%	5%	6%	4%	5%
	N	3000	3010	3010	3025	3004
25 and Below	Monolingualism	58%	42%	42%	53%	55%
	Multilingualism	37%	49%	51%	41%	38%
	Foreign language	1%	6%	4%	4%	4%
	DK	4%	3%	3%	2%	3%
	N	738	828	676	674	907
26-35	Monolingualism	55%	49%	40%	55%	51%

	Multilingualism	39%	43%	51%	38%	42%
	Foreign language	1%	5%	3%	3%	2%
	DK	5%	4%	6%	4%	5%
	N	802	833	846	839	765
36-45	Monolingualism	52%	48%	36%	54%	55%
	Multilingualism	41%	41%	53%	39%	35%
	Foreign language	1%	5%	3%	3%	6%
	DK	6%	6%	8%	4%	5%
	N	586	594	635	645	562
46-55	Monolingualism	53%	50%	41%	52%	55%
	Multilingualism	39%	41%	51%	41%	37%
	Foreign language	1%	3%	2%	3%	2%
	DK	7%	6%	6%	5%	6%
	N	460	399	428	431	389
56-65	Monolingualism	58%	52%	43%	61%	56%
	Multilingualism	33%	38%	42%	33%	32%
	Foreign language	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%
	DK	8%	7%	13%	5%	11%
	N	268	256	299	294	250
Above 65	Monolingualism	63%	51%	55%	64%	60%
	Multilingualism	23%	38%	38%	28%	26%
	Foreign language	1%	3%	0%	1%	2%
	DK	12%	8%	8%	7%	12%
	N	146	100	128	142	131
χ^2		63.0	49.3	67.3	41.1	98.4
P		.000	.003	.000	.004	.000

Political Party

Support for one of the two main positions on language policy is strongly related to political party preference, but not always in the direction one might expect. As Table 7.6 shows, supporters of the CPN (Maoist) constitute the only group that consistently favoured a monolingual over a multilingual language policy in all surveys.[80] This is rather surprising: the CPN (Maoist) leadership had been advocating the elimination of the monopoly of Nepali since the start of its armed insurgency in 1996! The most likely explanation is that the CPN (Maoist) had more influence in hills than in the Tarai, and therefore people of hill origin constituted a larger proportion of the CPN (Maoist)'s electorate. The caste/ ethnicity breakdown of the data showed that a majority of the hill caste group, the hill indigenous group, the hill Dalits and Newars were in favour of keeping Nepali as the only official language (see Table 7.1). It is also surprising that supporters of the small rightist parties preferred a multilingual over a Nepali-only policy in all surveys except the one in

[80] Please note that the question on party preference was not asked in the July 2009 survey.

September 2006. Remember that a majority in this group of voters opposed the reforms discussed in the two previous chapters. But it fits with the official position of the RPP, a rightist party, which is pro-monarchy and pro-Hinduism, and against federalism, but it is not against multilingualism.

Table 7.6: Support for Nepali as the Only Official Language and for Multilingualism by Political Party Preference

	Support for	**Sep 2006**	**May 2007**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2008**
All groups	Monolingualism	55%	48%	41%	55%
	Multilingualism	38%	43%	50%	38%
	Foreign language	1%	4%	3%	3%
	DK	6%	5%	6%	4%
	N	2963	2987	3010	2396
CPN (Maoist)	Monolingualism	51%	49%	50%	62%
	Multilingualism	44%	45%	45%	33%
	Foreign language	2%	4%	4%	1%
	DK	3%	2%	1%	4%
	N	492	265	247	880
Nepali Congress Party	Monolingualism	59%	53%	41%	52%
	Multilingualism	37%	40%	55%	42%
	Foreign language	1%	5%	2%	2%
	DK	3%	3%	2%	4%
	N	418	386	333	478
CPN (UML)	Monolingualism	53%	51%	36%	64%
	Multilingualism	44%	44%	58%	31%
	Foreign language	0%	4%	3%	3%
	DK	3%	2%	3%	2%
	N	356	272	379	403
Small rightist parties	Monolingualism	51%	41%	46%	44%
	Multilingualism	41%	48%	52%	53%
	Foreign language	3%	8%	0%	0%
	DK	6%	3%	2%	3%
	N	170	114	54	32
Small leftist parties	Monolingualism	43%	36%	48%	62%
	Multilingualism	57%	61%	40%	33%
	Foreign language	0%	0%	8%	3%
	DK	0%	3%	4%	1%
	N	28	31	25	69
Tarai based regional parties	Monolingualism	29%	13%	3%	17%
	Multilingualism	67%	84%	88%	66%
	Foreign language	4%	3%	8%	15%

	DK	0%	0%	1%	2%
	N	24	32	109	312
χ^2		159.9	111.8	283.7	450.5
P		.000	.000	.000	.000

On the other hand, it is less surprising that supporters of the Tarai based regional parties also showed more support for a multilingual as official language policy. In all surveys the percentage preferring a Nepali-only position was lowest in this group and the percentage favouring multilingualism highest. This is in line with the support pattern among Tarai-based ethnic groups (See Table 7.1). It is also in line with the campaign for recognition of other national languages as official languages by the Tarai-based regional parties, but these parties also demanded that Hindi be recognized as an official language. However, although the proportion preferring recognition of 'foreign languages' (including Hindi) was highest among voters for these parties in most surveys, it remained marginal.

The supporters of the other parties (Nepali Congress Party, CPN (UML), small leftist parties) took an intermediate position, mostly preferring a monolingual policy, but in some years supporting a multilingual policy.

7.4 A Comprehensive Analysis of Support for Monolingualism vs. Multilingualism

A binary logistic regression analysis was performed on public support for a multilingual policy rather than recognizing only Nepali as an official language. Given the curvilinear trend in the support patterns, the analysis was done on each separate survey (Annex 3), but for presentation purposes, I discuss the analysis on a pooled dataset, referring to differences between surveys whenever relevant (Table 7.7).

Answers that showed agreement with a monolingual policy were coded '1', while answers that showed support for a multilingual policy were coded '2'. Answers of 'foreign languages' and 'Don't Know' were treated as missing values and excluded from the regression analyses.

The results show that survey year and ethnicity are strongly related to opinions about language policy. Religion, region, age and party preference are somewhat influential, but - other than with the reforms discussed in the previous chapters - level of education seems to play no role as regards the support for mono- versus multilingualism.

The beta coefficients for the survey years confirm the curvilinear trend with growing support for multilingualism first, followed by a decline: using September 2006 as the reference, the beta coefficients for May 2007 and January 2008 are positive, followed by a negative coefficient for August 2008 (although that coefficient is not statistically significant). With regard to ethnicity, compared to the hill caste group (and the hill Dalit), all groups show more support for multilingualism, in particular the groups that are based in the Tarai. With few exceptions this pattern can also be observed in each individual survey.

Compared to Hindus, only Buddhists and Kiratis show positive and significant beta coefficients, but the finding is not robust: in some years the coefficients are not significant and negative. The pooled analysis shows positive and significant beta coefficients for all development regions with the Eastern region as the reference, but in the individual surveys not all coefficients are statistically significant and occasionally the direction of the influence is opposite. There is no clear pattern here, so the conclusion must be that the findings with regard to region are not robust. With the youngest age group as reference, all older age groups are less enamoured by multilingualism, although the coefficients for the 36-55 groups are not significant. However, although the direction of the coefficients is mostly similar in the individual surveys, only the May 2007 survey shows significant results.

Table 7.7: Beta Coefficients of Logistic Regression with Support for Multilingualism rather than Nepali as the Only Official Language (1= Nepali only, 2= Other languages as well); Pooled Analysis

		B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)
Survey	Sep 2006 (Reference)			.000	
	May 2007	.360***	.060	.000	1.433
	Jan 2008	.756***	.061	.000	2.131
	Aug 2008	-.030	.063	.634	.971
Ethnicity	Hill caste group (Reference)			.000	
	Hill indigenous group	.635***	.072	.000	1.887
	Hill Dalit	-.063	.099	.519	.938
	Newar	.398***	.094	.000	1.489
	Madhesi caste group	1.919***	.073	.000	6.814
	Tarai indigenous group	1.498***	.077	.000	4.471
	Madhesi Dalit	1.920***	.104	.000	6.820
Religion	Hindu (Reference)			.003	
	Buddhist	.209*	.090	.021	1.233
	Muslim	.019	.365	.959	1.019
	Christian	.106	.186	.570	1.112
	Kirati	.582***	.146	.000	1.789
Development Region	Eastern (Reference)			.000	
	Central	.401***	.060	.000	1.493
	Western	.211**	.070	.003	1.235
	Mid-Western	.751***	.079	.000	2.120
	Far-Western	.659***	.084	.000	1.934
Educational Status	Illiterate (Reference)			.737	
	Informal education	.008	.065	.906	1.008
	Primary/lower sec.	-.049	.059	.412	.952
	Secondary	.006	.067	.924	1.006

	Higher sec.	.028	.091	.755	1.029
	Bachelor's+	.151	.136	.266	1.163
Age	<=25 (Reference)			.010	
	26 – 35	-.109	.059	.062	.896
	36 – 45	-.037	.065	.573	.964
	46 – 55	-.057	.073	.432	.945
	56 – 65	-.206*	.086	.017	.814
	Above 65	-.376**	.118	.001	.686
Party Preference	CPN (Maoist) (Reference)			.000	
	Nepali Congress	-.170*	.077	.026	.843
	CPN (UML)	-.039	.079	.627	.962
	Small rightist parties	-.264*	.131	.044	.768
	Small leftist parties	.048	.184	.795	1.049
	Tarai based regional parties	.865***	.151	.000	2.375
	Constant	-1.382***	.107	.000	.251
	N	15049			
	Nagelkerke R square	.218			

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Interestingly, the impact of party preference is not strong on this language issue. In the pooled analysis being a supporter of the Nepali Congress Party or one of the small rightist parties dampens the enthusiasm for multilingualism significantly (with Maoist supporters as the reference), while support for a Tarai-based regional party enhances the preference for multilingualism. However, in the individual surveys the only significant effect is for supporting one of the Tarai-based regional parties.

Finally, the lack of a significant effect of level of education is something we shall return to when discussing the relationship between elite and mass views.

7.5 Concluding Remarks

Given Nepal's language diversity, and given the fact that Nepali is the mother tongue of less than half of the population, it is surprising that a majority of the citizens prefer to maintain Nepali as the only official language. Admittedly, there has been growing support for multilingualism culminating in a majority favouring that language policy in January 2008, but later surveys show a return to majority support for Nepali-only. The surveys also show that in all groups in society, a substantial proportion preferred a multilingual policy, but in most groups it remained a minority. Does this imply that the transformation to multilingualism went against public opinion or the wishes of a majority of the citizens, similar to what we observed in the previous chapter on the transformation to secularism? This may be too simple a conclusion. After all, the 2015 Constitution does retain a monolingual policy at the national level as it states "the Nepali language written in Devanagiri script shall be the language of official business in Nepal" (Article

7[1]). It is only at the provincial level that the Constitution allows other languages to be recognized as official languages (Article 7[2]). That compromise was hammered out long after the latest survey with questions about language policy was held (July 2009), and when these questions were asked, no distinction was made between the national and provincial levels.

What the data can tell us, apart from the overall distribution of preferences and the development over time, is that the profile of a typical supporter of a multilingual policy belongs to a Tarai-based ethnic group and supports a Tarai-based regional party, regardless of level of education. So, the basic divide on language policy is between the hills and the plains.

For our later discussion of the relationship between party actions and public opinion, it is also worthwhile to keep in mind that Maoist voters preferred a Nepali-only policy while the CPN (Maoist) officially supported multilingualism, and that supporters of the Tarai-based regional parties did not seem to favour recognizing a 'foreign' language as an official language, while the parties themselves demanded recognition of Hindi.

8

Unitary State or Federal State?

8.1 Transition from Unitary State to Federal State

Federalism, defined as a division of power between national and subnational governments that is specified and guaranteed by the constitution (Lijphart 1984: 169), was not a major concern at the outset of Nepal's process to transform its political system. Yet, '… federalism proved the most contentious question surrounding the adoption of a new constitution, despite the fact that all major political parties have been on the record supporting a federal model for Nepal' (Lecours 2014: 809). Although the CPN (Maoist) was committed early on to decentralization of powers to 'autonomous regions', the party did not formally support a federal state. The other major parties such as the Nepali Congress Party and the CPN (UML) were not in favour of federalism originally. As a consequence, federalism was *not* part of the conflict between the Maoists and the other parties and when that conflict was ended, the interim constitution of 2007 did not even mention federalism. Only after protests and demonstrations by Madhesi groups did the major parties agree that federalism should be added to the list of state reforms. However, compared to the abolition of the monarchy and the Hindu state, the abolition of the unitary state is an extreme complicated decision: the division of responsibilities between the central state and the subnational units, the number of subnational units, their names, and above all, the demarcation of these units proved to be complex and divisive. This is why the Constituent Assembly was eventually dissolved without finding a solution, leading to elections for a new Constituent Assembly (see Chapter 2). And when the newly elected Constituent Assembly did find a compromise, the 2015 Constitution was not supported by Madhesi members of the Constituent Assembly. After violent protests and blockades in the Tarai, the Constitution was amended in 2016, but that amendment has not ended the controversy.

The main point of contention has been the underlying principle that should guide the demarcation of the subnational units. The CPN (Maoist) and regional and ethnicity-based political parties were in favour of an ethnicity- or language-based federal system (also known as identity-based federalism). They claimed that various indigenous and language groups of the country have an historical attachment to certain regions, and only an ethnicity- or language-based federal system can ensure autonomy to local indigenous groups in the decision-making process, preserve their identity, language, culture etc., and bring them into the mainstream. These parties were demanding 'priority rights' for the indigenous peoples with respect to natural resources such as land, forests and water in the respective provinces. On the other side, the Nepali Congress Party,

the CPN (UML) and other political parties argued that federalism should be based on economic viability and geography. They rejected the view that federalism should be based on ethnic identity, because it is not practical with every district and region of Nepal being ethnically and culturally heterogeneous, and with more than a hundred ethnic and linguistic groups in the country. These parties were opposed to single-ethnicity federalism with 'priority rights'. Instead, they proposed that the federation should be formed on the basis of multi-ethnic units by taking the financial capacity of federal provinces into account.

In a sense, this conflict echoes the scholarly debate on the advantages and disadvantages of federalism in plural societies (e.g., Erk 2018; Strasheim 2019). While some argue that federalism will defuse ethnic conflict and help hold the country together, others contend that it will merely fuel secessionist aspirations of ethnic groups and exacerbate conflict. Seeking to define the administrative units on the basis of language or ethnic identity will give recognition to these groups, but may also put the unity of the country at risk. Demarcating administrative units that are ethnically or linguistically heterogeneous has the opposite effect: it minimizes the risk to national unity, but it also contributes less to the autonomy of ethnic groups.

This is already a difficult choice in countries with a limited number of ethnic groups, but Nepal is basically a country of minorities with more than 125 ethnic groups (see Chapter 1). Not a single ethnic group is in a majority nationwide. The numerically largest ethnic group, the Chhetri, constitutes only 16 percent of the country's total population, followed by the Bahun with only a 12 percent share – and these two groups are the only ones with double-digit proportions in the national population. Most of the ethnic groups individually make up less than 5 percent of the population. Moreover, even though indigenous groups historically have been concentrated in particular regions of the country, they are only numerically significant pluralities in those regions, not majorities. So, no ethnic group in Nepal is in a majority at the national level or even in one of the regions. In other words, Nepali society is culturally and ethnically so mixed and 'divided' that the creation of ethnically and culturally completely homogenous geographical units is not possible, whichever method is adopted or criterion is applied to draw the boundaries. To create homogeneous units, non-territorial federalism would be the only option (Lijphart 1984: 179-183), but that has not been considered. Eventually, the controversy has been resolved by a form of territorial federalism with seven provinces that have different ethnic compositions, but that are not ethnically homogeneous. The Constitution of 2015 has, however, also made a provision for the creation of special, protected and autonomous regions for socio-cultural protection or economic development of marginalized and disadvantaged groups (Article 56.5).

8.2 Unitary State vs. Federal State: Development of Public Opinion over Time

Federalism was the most contentious of the four constitutional reforms for Nepal's political parties, but the issue of federalism was not deeply rooted in the mind-set of the Nepali public. In September 2006,[81] when the first survey that asked respondents about federalism was held, an overwhelming majority (75 percent) of the respondents had not heard about the issue while

[81] This survey was conducted a few months subsequent to the *Jan Andolan II* of April 2006.

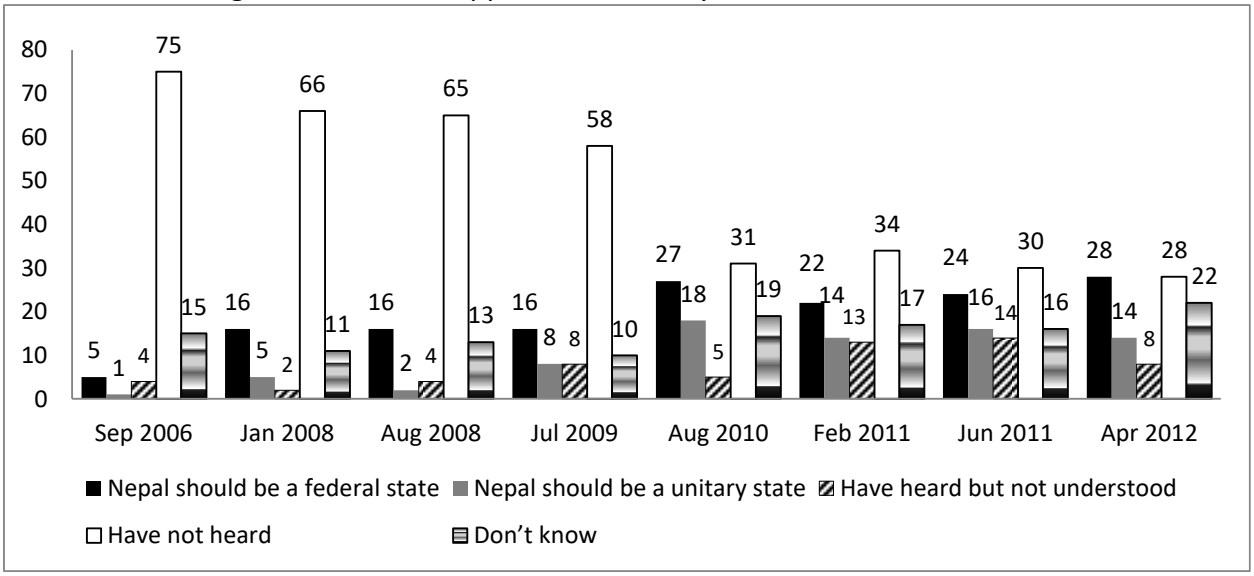
another 15 percent said that they did not know what to think of the question (see Figure 8.1).[82] Note that at this time the main political parties were not yet committed to a federalization of the state. The proportion of people answering 'Have not heard' was significantly reduced to 66 percent in January 2008 (χ^2 = 1343.889, significant at p<.001), i.e. after the Madhes and Janajati protests of 2007 and just a few months prior to the May 2008 declaration of the Constituent Assembly, which included the federalisation of Nepal. It stagnated at this level (65 percent) in August 2008 (χ^2 = 37.857, significant at p<.001). By July 2009, 58 percent still claimed that they had not heard of the issue (χ^2 = 500.524, significant at p<.001). This reveals that even after the Jan Andolan II of 2006, the protests of 2007, and the May 2008 declaration of the Constituent Assembly, public awareness of this question was still very low.

However, after July 2009 the proportion of respondents who had not heard of the issue steadily declined. As of August 2010, only 31 percent said that they had not heard of it (χ^2 = 843.459, significant at p<.001). In February 2011, this proportion increased to 34 percent (χ^2 = 104.287, significant at p<.001), but it subsequently decreased further to 30 percent in June 2011 (χ^2 = 17.258, significant at p<.001) and 28 percent in our final survey in April 2012 (χ^2 = 27.611 and significant at p<.001). However, the proportions indicating that they had heard of the issue but did not understand it or did not know what to think of it did not decrease. Even in April 2012 more than half of the respondents reported that they had either not heard of or did not understand the issue of federalism or did not know what to think of the question - four years after the Constituent Assembly proclaimed Nepal a federal state. This indicates that, at least until 2012, the question of federalism had definitely not fully penetrated Nepali society.

The literature on public opinion suggests that even in an established democratic country such as the USA most citizens are not well informed about their political system and about complex political issues (Paul and Brown 2001: 871-872; Mondak et al 2007: 34). Compared to daily concerns such as career, employment, schooling, child rearing etc., the general public is relatively little interested in politics when it has no direct connection to their (personal) lives (Paul and Brown 2001: 871-872; Parker et al 2008: 412-413). Page and Shapiro (1983: 176) argue that the proportion of respondents answering 'Don't know' or 'No opinion' is relatively lower when there is more public interest in and attention to an issue. So, it seems that the question of federalism (unitary state vs. federal state) is not very salient to Nepali citizens, as indicated by the high proportions 'Don't know' and 'Have not heard'. However, it might also be that the concept of 'federalism' was unknown to ordinary citizens, but that the notion of self-rule for particular regions or of ethnic/ regional autonomy was understood, and supported or opposed. So, there are at least two potential explanations: a) people did neither hear about nor understand the question of 'federalism', or b) people understood the substance of federalism, but did not know the abstract, general concept. Unfortunately, the surveys did not pay attention to this distinction, and did not inquire into the content of federalism without using the term itself.

[82] The exact phrasing of the question was: 'What should be the type of governing system of Nepal, a unitary system or a federal system?'. The question did not describe or explain the concept 'federalism'.

Figure 8.1: Public Support for a Unitary State and a Federal State



N for Sep 2006: 3000, Jan 2008: 3010, Aug 2008: 3025, Jul 2009: 3004, Aug 2010: 3000, Feb 2011: 3000, Jun 2011: 3000 and Apr 2012: 3010

In September 2006, only 5 percent indicated that the country should become a federal state (see Figure 8.1). The proportion of people who preferred a federal system gradually increased over the period covered by our surveys. In January 2008, August 2008, and July 2009 16 percent favoured a federal state and from August 2010 to April 2012 it fluctuated between 22 and 28 percent. In each survey, the proportion preferring a unitary state was smaller than the proportion supporting federalism, but it should be noted that support for a unitary state also increased (from 1 percent in September 2006 to 14 percent in April 2012) as the number of people without knowledge or without an opinion on the issue declined.

Meanwhile, the discussion at the political level was no longer about the choice between a unitary state and a federal state, but about the choice between various types of federalism. From August 2008 onwards, the surveys also asked proponents of federalism which type of federalism they preferred. Table 8.1 shows the breakdown in terms of percentages of all respondents. As mentioned above, in August 2008 16 percent of the respondents replied that Nepal should be a federal state. This 16 percent is the sum of 7 percent preferring geography-based federalism, 4 percent opting for ethnicity-based federalism, 2 percent language-based federalism, 2 percent district-based federalism, and 1 percent favouring federalism based on other factors such as economic transactions, river basins, etc. So, most people who liked to see the country become a federal state wanted to create federal provinces based on geography, not based on identity components such as ethnicity or language. Public support for federalism based on geography increased in subsequent years. In April 2012, the by then 28 percent that favoured a federal state is the sum of 18 percent preferring geography-based federalism, 4 percent ethnicity-based, 1 percent language-based, 4 percent district-based, and 1 percent based on other factors. In terms of the proportion of proponents of federalism, support for geography-based federalism increased from 44 percent in 2008 to 64 percent in 2012. That may sound impressive, but the actual numbers within the population at large are low because of the high proportion of 'Not

heard' and 'Don't Know'. Unfortunately this also means that we cannot use the differentiation by type of federalism in subsequent analyses.

Table 8.1: Public Support for Types of Federalism by Year

Year	Federal System	Based on				
		Geography	Ethnicity	Language	Districts	Others
Aug 2008	16%	7%	4%	2%	2%	1%
Jul 2009	16%	7%	4%	2%	2%	1%
Aug 2010	27%	12%	7%	3%	4%	1%
Feb 2011	22%	12%	4%	1%	3%	2%
Jun 2011	24%	13%	4%	2%	4%	1%
Apr 2012	28%	18%	4%	1%	4%	1%

8.3 Support for a Unitary State and a Federal State across Groups

Ethnicity

Even though there were Madhes and Janajati movements demanding a federal state structure in January and February 2007, a majority, or in some years a plurality, of these particular groups (i.e. Madhesi caste group, Madhesi Dalit, and Tarai and hill indigenous groups), too, professed ignorance about federalism (see Table 8.2). In some years the proportion professing ignorance was actually higher among the Tarai-based groups than among the hill caste group and Newars. Given the fact that Madhesi people in the Tarai were mobilized in large numbers on this issue by Madhes-based political parties (see Section 2.9 of Chapter 2), it seems likely that 'explanation b' - i.e. people understood the substance of federalism, but did not know the concept – may have played a major role.

With only two exceptions (the hill caste group in June 2011 and Muslims in August 2010), all ethnic groups showed more support for federalism than for a unitary state. And in all ethnic groups, support for federalism has grown gradually between September 2006 and April 2012. Given the 2007 protest movements, we might expect the Tarai-based groups to be more enthusiastic about federalism, but the pattern is not consistent. In June 2011, for example, the proportions supporting a federal system were higher among *Madhesi* caste group, *Madhesi* Dalit and Muslims. But, in April 2012, the hill caste group and *Newars* were more likely to support a federal system.

Table 8.2: Public Support for a Unitary State and a Federal State by Ethnicity

	Support for	Sep 2006	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Federal system	5%	16%	16%	16%	27%	22%	24%	28%
	Unitary system	1%	5%	2%	8%	18%	14%	16%	14%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	79%	82%	76%	55%	64%	60%	58%
	N	3000	3010	3025	3004	3000	3000	3000	3010
Hill caste group	Federal system	7%	19%	18%	20%	27%	26%	23%	33%
	Unitary system	2%	9%	4%	10%	21%	17%	27%	18%
	NH/NU/DK	91%	72%	78%	70%	52%	57%	50%	49%
	N	1008	930	935	928	926	969	926	930
Hill indigenous group	Federal system	2%	11%	15%	13%	27%	16%	17%	26%
	Unitary system	1%	2%	2%	7%	12%	12%	16%	12%
	NH/NU/DK	97%	87%	83%	80%	61%	72%	67%	62%
	N	533	648	660	652	632	655	635	646
Hill Dalit	Federal system	4%	6%	7%	6%	15%	21%	15%	24%
	Unitary system	0%	2%	2%	7%	13%	11%	11%	10%
	NH/NU/DK	96%	92%	91%	87%	72%	68%	74%	66%
	N	143	213	214	213	244	253	242	242
Newar	Federal system	5%	12%	13%	15%	18%	17%	17%	35%
	Unitary system	3%	7%	4%	9%	13%	10%	20%	15%
	NH/NU/DK	92%	81%	83%	76%	69%	73%	63%	50%
	N	222	165	166	165	164	198	165	165
Madhesi caste group	Federal system	4%	26%	20%	18%	36%	30%	37%	27%
	Unitary system	1%	2%	0%	8%	24%	11%	5%	12%
	NH/NU/DK	95%	72%	80%	74%	40%	59%	58%	61%
	N	465	497	482	528	529	478	532	438
Tarai indigenous group	Federal system	4%	9%	16%	15%	27%	20%	22%	24%
	Unitary system	1%	3%	1%	5%	16%	17%	7%	19%
	NH/NU/DK	95%	88%	83%	80%	57%	63%	71%	57%
	N	326	284	288	271	247	226	247	303
Madhesi Dalit	Federal system	2%	13%	14%	17%	26%	20%	32%	23%
	Unitary system	0%	1%	0%	10%	17%	9%	2%	4%
	NH/NU/DK	98%	86%	86%	73%	57%	71%	66%	73%
	N	139	145	153	121	129	93	124	160
Muslim	Federal system	5%	23%	15%	10%	19%	13%	38%	27%
	Unitary system	0%	4%	0%	7%	34%	17%	10%	9%
	NH/NU/DK	95%	73%	85%	83%	47%	70%	52%	64%
	N	132	128	129	129	128	128	128	129
χ^2		38.4	158.2	61.4	56.3	134.4	73.4	260.5	79.1
P		.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Religion

Across religious affiliations, people from any religion were more likely to support a federal system than a unitary system since September 2006 when the survey series started (see Table 8.3). The only exceptions were Muslims in August 2010 and Christians from August 2010 to June 2011. In most years, Kirati people showed the highest level of support for federalism and also above average awareness of this issue. There is no ready explanation for this pattern. In general, however, religion does not seem to be an important factor with low and in some years insignificant values for χ^2.

Table 8.3: Public Support for a Unitary State and a Federal State by Religion

	Support for	**Sep 2006**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2008**	**Jul 2009**	**Aug 2010**	**Feb 2011**	**Jun 2011**	**Apr 2012**
All groups	Federal System	5%	16%	16%	16%	27%	22%	24%	28%
	Unitary System	1%	5%	2%	8%	18%	14%	16%	14%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	79%	82%	76%	55%	64%	60%	58%
	N	3000	3010	3025	3004	3000	3000	3000	3010
Hindu	Federal System	5%	15%	16%	16%	27%	23%	25%	28%
	Unitary System	1%	5%	2%	9%	19%	14%	16%	15%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	80%	82%	75%	54%	63%	59%	57%
	N	2566	2532	2516	2572	2504	2530	2482	2513
Buddhist	Federal System	1%	16%	14%	19%	32%	16%	11%	27%
	Unitary System	2%	2%	3%	9%	13%	10%	16%	13%
	NH/NU/DK	97%	82%	83%	72%	55%	74%	73%	60%
	N	213	219	267	221	248	244	241	247
Muslim	Federal System	4%	22%	15%	12%	19%	14%	38%	26%
	Unitary System	1%	4%	0%	6%	34%	18%	10%	9%
	NH/NU/DK	95%	74%	85%	82%	47%	68%	52%	65%
	N	136	131	134	122	124	137	125	129
Christian	Federal System	13%	15%	18%	12%	8%	23%	20%	25%
	Unitary System	0%	6%	2%	0%	19%	29%	22%	13%
	NH/NU/DK	87%	79%	80%	88%	73%	48%	58%	62%
	N	16	34	56	26	48	31	55	48
Kirati	Federal System	5%	32%	13%	20%	43%	33%	34%	37%
	Unitary System	2%	3%	0%	2%	4%	6%	9%	12%
	NH/NU/DK	93%	65%	87%	78%	53%	61%	57%	51%
	N	65	92	47	59	70	51	86	67
χ^2		9.2	34.0	6.4	13.6	52.3	30.6	50.8	10.5
P		.517	.000	.786	.194	.000	.001	.000	.400

Region

In all development regions the same pattern can be observed: very low but increasing awareness of the issue of federalism versus unitarism, growing support for both a federal and a unitary system, but with more people preferring a federal state in all surveys (with very few exceptions).

Table 8.4: Public Support for a Unitary State and a Federal State by Development Region

	Support for	Sep 2006	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Federal system	5%	16%	16%	16%	27%	22%	24%	28%
	Unitary system	1%	5%	2%	8%	18%	14%	16%	14%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	79%	82%	76%	55%	64%	60%	58%
	N	3000	3010	3025	3004	3000	3000	3000	3010
Eastern	Federal system	4%	26%	15%	22%	36%	19%	25%	38%
	Unitary system	1%	8%	1%	9%	14%	11%	11%	15%
	NH/NU/DK	95%	66%	84%	69%	50%	70%	64%	47%
	N	581	648	753	621	646	694	633	711
Central	Federal system	5%	15%	19%	14%	23%	23%	29%	25%
	Unitary system	1%	4%	3%	7%	18%	13%	13%	15%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	81%	78%	79%	59%	64%	58%	60%
	N	1239	1202	1094	1019	1157	1039	1018	1078
Western	Federal system	4%	9%	12%	11%	15%	15%	20%	25%
	Unitary system	2%	2%	3%	17%	36%	11%	16%	11%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	89%	85%	72%	49%	74%	64%	64%
	N	526	463	593	621	552	592	625	551
Mid-Western	Federal system	3%	10%	20%	10%	31%	24%	22%	25%
	Unitary system	1%	4%	2%	2%	8%	16%	22%	22%
	NH/NU/DK	96%	86%	78%	88%	61%	60%	56%	53%
	N	344	397	385	420	369	389	396	369
Far-Western	Federal system	5%	17%	11%	24%	37%	38%	20%	26%
	Unitary system	4%	5%	3%	3%	9%	26%	24%	7%
	NH/NU/DK	91%	78%	86%	73%	54%	36%	56%	67%
	N	310	300	198	323	276	286	328	302
χ^2		23.7	105.2	31.3	146.1	220.6	139.5	63.4	83.7
P		.003	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Within this general pattern, two regions stand out. In most years, the Eastern development region showed above average support for federalism although even in this region less than half of the people (38 percent) favoured a federal form of government in April 2012 (see Table 8.4). In other regions, only around a quarter of people preferred federalism. The Western development region, on the other hand, consistently showed below average support for federalism. Still, support for federalism was generally higher than that for unitarism in this region

as well, but in two of the surveys (July 2009 and August 2010) more people in the Western region preferred a unitary state than a federal state.

Education

The level of education has a considerable impact on people's position with regard to federalism. The by now familiar pattern can be observed at all levels of education: low but increasing awareness of the issue, growing support for both positions, but with more support for federalism than for a unitary state in all but a few surveys. Table 8.5 also shows that both the level of awareness about this issue and the level of support for federalism vary considerably with the level of education.

It is not surprising that the proportion of respondents professing to have never heard of the question, to not understand it, or not to know what to think of it was highest among illiterates and lowest among those with an academic degree. In the first survey (September 2006) 99 percent of illiterates registered such a missing value compared to 57 percent of citizens with a Bachelor's degree or higher; in the final survey in our series (April 2012) the respective figures were 88 percent and 14 percent. The previous chapters on the other reform questions also showed more 'Don't know' responses among lower educated citizens than among higher educated citizens, but here the difference is even more substantial and remarkably greater. This strong correlation supports the idea that federalism is a very abstract (or vague?) notion to many citizens, even when it receives considerable public attention. After the question of federalism became politically contested, i.e. after the protests of 2007, we see an increase in awareness in January 2008 among those with secondary education or higher, while the increase in awareness occurred at a slower pace among those with lower levels of education.

People with little or no education were not different from people with more education in that those among them who had an opinion on the choice between federalism and unitarism tended to prefer a federal state over a unitary state. But the gap in support between the two choices differed considerably. For example, in April 2012 there was 1.2 federalist for every unitarist among those with only informal education. Among people with secondary education the ratio was 2.4 federalists for each unitarist. And among those with at least a Bachelor's degree there were 4.4 federalists for each unitarist.

Table 8.5: Public Support for a Unitary State and a Federal State by Educational Status

	Support for	Sep 2006	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Federal system	5%	16%	16%	16%	27%	22%	24%	28%
	Unitary system	1%	5%	2%	8%	18%	14%	16%	14%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	79%	82%	76%	55%	64%	60%	58%
	N	3000	3010	3025	3004	3000	3000	3000	3010
Illiterate	Federal system	1%	4%	5%	3%	9%	8%	10%	8%
	Unitary system	0%	1%	0%	3%	11%	4%	4%	4%
	NH/NU/DK	99%	95%	95%	94%	80%	88%	86%	88%
	N	1146	1209	944	848	881	850	849	901
Informal education	Federal system	2%	8%	9%	12%	22%	14%	17%	21%
	Unitary system	1%	3%	2%	9%	11%	10%	13%	17%
	NH/NU/DK	97%	89%	89%	79%	67%	76%	70%	62%
	N	438	429	586	676	506	506	453	563
Primary/lower secondary	Federal system	3%	14%	14%	14%	22%	21%	24%	28%
	Unitary system	1%	5%	2%	8%	24%	14%	14%	16%
	NH/NU/DK	96%	81%	84%	78%	54%	65%	62%	56%
	N	628	672	655	785	578	663	688	567
Secondary	Federal system	9%	38%	30%	33%	42%	35%	35%	45%
	Unitary system	2%	11%	4%	11%	25%	22%	26%	19%
	NH/NU/DK	89%	51%	66%	56%	33%	43%	39%	36%
	N	466	483	598	453	691	638	637	598
Higher secondary	Federal system	17%	52%	46%	37%	55%	45%	44%	56%
	Unitary system	5%	12%	6%	23%	24%	31%	30%	26%
	NH/NU/DK	78%	36%	48%	40%	21%	24%	26%	18%
	N	242	153	185	178	278	261	270	290
Bachelor's & above	Federal system	33%	73%	57%	62%	71%	63%	49%	70%
	Unitary system	10%	16%	17%	23%	22%	21%	31%	16%
	NH/NU/DK	57%	11%	26%	15%	7%	16%	20%	14%
	N	80	62	54	66	68	82	102	90
χ^2		394.4	811.4	522.8	540.5	636.4	651.2	581.9	734.3
P		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Age Group

All age cohorts started with very low levels of awareness of the question, but among younger citizens the proportion indicating that they had not heard or did not know of the issue declined quicker than among older citizens (see Table 8.6). The surveys also show that people from younger age cohorts were more likely to support federalism than their older compatriots. At the end of the survey series, in April 2012, 33 percent of the people below 25 favoured a federal system; in August 2010 support for a federal state was even 38 percent among the youngest

citizens: the two highest figures of any age group. Meanwhile, only 14 percent of the people above 65 preferred federalism in April 2012, and the highest level of support for a federal state in this age group was 18 percent in February 2011. In three of the eight surveys the over 65 preferred a unitary state over federalism.

Table 8.6: Public Support for a Unitary State and a Federal State by Age Group

	Support for	**Sep 2006**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2008**	**Jul 2009**	**Aug 2010**	**Feb 2011**	**Jun 2011**	**Apr 2012**
All groups	Federal system	5%	16%	16%	16%	27%	22%	24%	28%
	Unitary system	1%	5%	2%	8%	18%	14%	16%	14%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	79%	82%	76%	55%	64%	60%	58%
	N	3000	3010	3025	3004	3000	3000	3000	3010
25 and below	Federal system	6%	18%	20%	19%	38%	31%	29%	33%
	Unitary system	1%	4%	3%	9%	19%	15%	18%	16%
	NH/NU/DK	93%	78%	77%	72%	43%	54%	53%	51%
	N	738	676	675	907	780	691	759	775
26 – 35	Federal system	6%	17%	15%	16%	28%	22%	26%	29%
	Unitary system	2%	7%	2%	8%	20%	17%	18%	16%
	NH/NU/DK	92%	76%	83%	76%	52%	61%	56%	55%
	N	802	846	839	765	794	783	811	742
36 – 45	Federal system	3%	17%	17%	16%	23%	21%	23%	27%
	Unitary system	1%	4%	2%	9%	19%	14%	16%	11%
	NH/NU/DK	96%	79%	81%	75%	58%	65%	61%	62%
	N	586	634	645	563	609	646	627	656
46 – 55	Federal system	6%	16%	13%	15%	23%	17%	23%	29%
	Unitary system	1%	4%	2%	7%	15%	12%	11%	13%
	NH/NU/DK	93%	80%	85%	78%	62%	71%	66%	58%
	N	460	428	431	388	392	458	377	396
56 – 65	Federal system	3%	9%	14%	8%	16%	13%	17%	22%
	Unitary system	1%	2%	2%	9%	17%	10%	11%	13%
	NH/NU/DK	96%	89%	84%	83%	67%	77%	72%	65%
	N	268	299	295	250	289	270	266	258
Above 65	Federal system	0%	12%	11%	8%	5%	18%	13%	14%
	Unitary system	1%	2%	1%	12%	12%	5%	9%	15%
	NH/NU/DK	99%	86%	88%	80%	83%	77%	78%	71%
	N	146	129	141	130	136	152	161	182
χ^2		19.9	37.1	17.6	26.6	142.9	84.0	66.8	48.1
P		.030	.000	.061	.003	.000	.000	.000	.000

Political Party

The general pattern can be observed among all parties' supporters, but the likelihood of support for federalism correlates with an individual's party preference. In most years, supporters of the CPN (Maoist), the CPN (UML) and the Tarai-based regional parties were more in favour of federalism than other parties' supporters. For the Maoists and Tarai-based parties, the voters' preferences are in line with the parties' positions: one of the oldest Tarai-based regional parties, Nepal Sadbhawana Party, was the first political party in Nepal to propose federalism, even before the *Jan Andolan II* of April 2006 (Baral 2009: 2). And the CPN (Maoist) was the first political party which explicitly proposed creating autonomous regions based on ethnicity and language during the insurgency period. Later, this party became a strong advocate of a federalist state.

Table 8.7: Public Support for a Unitary State and a Federal State by Political Party Preference

	Support for	**Sep 2006**	**Jan 2008**	**Aug 2008**	**Aug 2010**	**Feb 2011**	**Jun 2011**	**Apr 2012**
All groups	Federal system	5%	16%	16%	27%	22%	24%	28%
	Unitary system	1%	5%	2%	18%	14%	16%	14%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	79%	82%	55%	64%	60%	58%
	N	3000	3010	3025	3000	3000	3000	3010
CPN (Maoist)	Federal system	7%	23%	16%	29%	27%	28%	43%
	Unitary system	1%	8%	2%	11%	11%	17%	12%
	NH/NU/DK	92%	69%	82%	60%	62%	55%	45%
	N	492	247	879	819	568	636	369
Nepali Congress Party	Federal system	5%	27%	17%	29%	21%	22%	28%
	Unitary system	2%	8%	4%	23%	21%	24%	17%
	NH/NU/DK	93%	65%	79%	48%	58%	54%	55%
	N	418	334	477	488	619	495	418
CPN (UML)	Federal system	7%	19%	23%	31%	26%	35%	34%
	Unitary system	3%	5%	3%	17%	15%	20%	20%
	NH/NU/DK	90%	76%	74%	52%	59%	45%	46%
	N	356	379	404	387	505	342	264
Small rightist parties	Federal system	5%	9%	10%	23%	13%	39%	22%
	Unitary system	1%	8%	3%	21%	22%	24%	27%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	83%	87%	56%	65%	37%	51%
	N	170	53	31	43	76	41	37
Small leftist parties	Federal system	18%	19%	14%	18%	24%	48%	26%
	Unitary system	4%	12%	9%	23%	21%	8%	31%
	NH/NU/DK	78%	69%	77%	59%	55%	44%	43%
	N	28	26	69	57	33	25	42
Tarai based regional parties	Federal system	8%	37%	12%	38%	33%	56%	39%
	Unitary system	0%	3%	0%	34%	13%	3%	12%
	NH/NU/DK	92%	60%	88%	28%	54%	41%	49%

	N	24	110	311	175	146	119	77
χ^2 value		50.7	155.6	51.3	179.6	119.8	304.9	170.4
P-value		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Note: the political party preference of the respondents was not asked in the July 2009 survey.

There is also congruence of opinion for the small rightist parties (including Rastriya Prajatantra Party, Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal, Rastriya Jansakti Party, and Nepal Janta Party) that always opposed a federal system, and their voters who show above-average support for a unitary state in each survey. However, even among these voters, there was more support for federalism than for unitarism, except in two surveys (Feb 2011 and Apr 2012). Similarly, voters for the small leftist parties (including Janmorcha Nepal, NMKP, CPN [ML] and Sanyukta Janmorcha) also showed more support for federalism than for unitarism, except in two of the surveys (Aug 2010 and Apr 2012).

8.4 A Comprehensive Analysis of Non-Awareness of the Issue of Federalism

The lack of awareness of the issue of federalism (i.e. the high percentages replying 'not heard', 'not understood' or 'don't know') is one of the most striking findings in this chapter and deserves further investigation in the form of a multivariate analysis. Responses that agreed with either a unitary state or a federal state were coded 1 (definitive responses), while responses that showed ignorance or the absence of a preference were coded 2 (non-definitive responses). This variable is treated as the dependent variable in the regression analysis. The independent variables included in the regression analysis are the same variables as used in the bivariate analyses: ethnicity, religion, region, education, age and party preference. I use the analysis based on the pooled dataset of all surveys for presentation purposes, although there has been considerable change over time in the level of awareness. For that reason, I have also performed the analysis on the individual surveys (see Annex 4) and will refer to those findings whenever relevant.

Unsurprisingly, the level of education appears to be the strongest predictor of having heard about, understanding, and having a position on the question of federalism versus unitarism. With being illiterate as the reference, each higher level of education shows higher coefficient, always statistically significant, and invariably negative; a negative coefficients indicates a reduced probability of a 'not heard/not understood/don't know response.

Table 8.8 also reaffirms the finding that the awareness of the issue has increased over time. With the September 2006 survey as reference, all subsequent surveys show strong, significant and consistently negative coefficients.

In the bivariate analysis with age, younger age groups were more likely to show awareness of the issue than older age groups, but this is probably due to higher levels of education among younger age groups. In an analysis in which education is included, the level of education is in effect controlled for, with the result that there is still an effect of age, but in the opposite direction: with the 18 to 25 years old as the reference, being older generally leads to more awareness. The coefficients are not as high as for education.

Table 8.8: Beta Coefficients of Binary Logistic Regression with Definitive Response and Non-Definitive Response to the Issue of Federalism as the Dependent Variable (1 = Definitive responses 2 = No definitive responses); Pooled Analysis

		B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Survey	Sep 2006 (Reference)			
	Jan 2008	-1.910***	.099	.148
	Aug 2008	-1.386***	.099	.250
	Aug 2010	-2.896***	.096	.055
	Feb 2011	-2.401***	.096	.091
	Jun 2011	-2.633***	.096	.072
	Apr 2012	-2.972***	.096	.051
Ethnicity	Hill caste group (Reference)			
	Hill indigenous group	.203**	.064	1.225
	Hill Dalit	.161*	.078	1.175
	Newar	.628***	.086	1.874
	Madhesi caste group	-.259***	.061	.772
	Tarai indigenous group	.166*	.071	1.181
	Madhesi Dalit	-.344**	.101	.709
	Muslim	-.052	.331	.949
Religion	Hindu (Reference)			
	Buddhist	-.089	.083	.915
	Muslim	-.460	.327	.631
	Christian	-.122	.154	.885
	Kirati	-.502***	.133	.606
Development Region	Eastern (Reference)			
	Central	-.043	.052	.958
	Western	.165**	.059	1.179
	Mid-Western	-.305***	.067	.737
	Far-Western	-.314***	.073	.730
Educational Status	Illiterate (Reference)			
	Informal education	-1.025***	.063	.359
	Primary/lower sec.	-1.610***	.061	.200
	Secondary	-2.724***	.064	.066
	Higher sec.	-3.491***	.082	.030
	Bachelor's+	-4.208***	.134	.015
Age	18 - 25 years (Reference)			
	26 - 35 years	-.221***	.051	.802
	36 - 45 years	-.416***	.057	.660
	46 - 55 years	-.598***	.067	.550
	56 - 65 years	-.635***	.080	.530

	Above 65 years	-.490***	.106	.613
Party preference	CPN (Maoist) (Reference)			
	Nepali Congress	.046	.061	1.047
	CPN (UML)	-.091	.064	.913
	Small rightist parties	.097	.142	1.102
	Small leftist parties	-.116	.152	.890
	Tarai based regional parties	-.131	.098	.878
	Constant	4.850***	.127	127.694
	N	21,045		
	Nagelkerke R square	.396		

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05; Party support not asked in the July 2009 survey

The pattern is already less clear with regard to ethnicity. With the hill caste group as the reference only the Madhesi caste group shows more awareness, all other ethnic groups (except Madhes dalit) show less awareness. However, the unpooled analyses suggest that these findings are not robust. Being Newar still results in lower awareness in most surveys. A similar effect can be observed for the hill indigenous group and the hill Dalit, but with fewer coefficients reaching statistical significance. For the Tarai-based Madhesi caste group and Dalit, we see the opposite effect.

Development region produces many significant coefficients, but in each region we see both positive and negative significant effects in the individual surveys. For the various religions the effects are rarely significant. The same holds for party preference.

8.5 A Comprehensive Analysis of Support for a Unitary State vs. a Federal State

In addition to having or not having a definitive (substantive) response to the question of federalism or unitarism, I have performed a binary logistic regression analysis on public support for a federal state rather than a unitary state, to account for any interrelations between the independent variables used for the bivariate analyses. Here too, the analysis was done on each separate survey (Annex 5), but for presentation purposes I discuss the analysis on a pooled dataset, referring to differences between surveys whenever relevant (Table 8.9).

Answers that showed support for a unitary state were coded ‘1’, while answers that showed support for a federal state were coded ‘2’. As in the previous chapters, answers of ‘Not heard’, ‘Not understood’ and ‘Don’t Know’ were treated as missing values and were excluded from the regression analyses. Obviously given the proportion of respondents giving such answers, this exclusion results in a very substantial reduction of the number of observations, and an analysis that only refers to a small subset of the overall sample(s).

Table 8.9: Beta Coefficients of Binary Logistic Regression with Support for a Federal State rather than a Unitary State (1 = Unitary state, 2 = Federal state); Pooled Analysis

		B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Survey	Sep 2006 (Reference)			
	Jan 2008	-.183	.214	.833
	Aug 2008	.602*	.231	1.826
	Aug 2010	-1.072***	.200	.342
	Feb 2011	-.918***	.201	.399
	Jun 2011	-.966***	.200	.380
	Apr 2012	-.613**	.200	.542
Ethnicity	Hill caste group (Reference)			
	Hill indigenous group	.217*	.103	1.243
	Hill Dalit	.274*	.128	1.315
	Newar	.081	.133	1.084
	Madhesi caste group	1.003***	.097	2.727
	Tarai indigenous group	.237*	.110	1.268
	Madhesi Dalit	1.240***	.192	3.457
	Muslim	.886	.571	2.425
Religion	Hindu (Reference)			
	Buddhist	.136	.137	1.145
	Muslim	-.362	.566	.696
	Christian	-.613**	.231	.542
	Kirati	.802**	.240	2.229
Development Region	Eastern (Reference)			
	Central	-.318***	.082	.728
	Western	-.616***	.093	.540
	Mid-Western	-.189	.103	.828
	Far-Western	.026	.110	1.026
Educational Status	Illiterate (Reference)			
	Informal education	-.030	.120	.971
	Primary/lower sec.	-.039	.112	1.040
	Secondary	.256*	.110	1.292
	Higher sec.	.347**	.122	1.414
	Bachelor's+	.679***	.155	1.973
Age	18 - 25 years (Reference)			
	26 - 35 years	-.250**	.078	.778
	36 - 45 years	-.186*	.087	.830
	46 - 55 years	-.066	.106	1.068
	56 - 65 years	-.212	.130	.809
	Above 65 years	-.141	.179	.869
Party preference	CPN (Maoist) (Reference)			

	Nepali Congress	-.826***	.093	.438
	CPN (UML)	-.401***	.100	.670
	Small rightist parties	-1.143***	.210	.319
	Small leftist parties	-.956***	.220	.384
	Tarai based regional parties	-.498**	.153	.608
	Constant	1.754***	.246	5.776
	N	6,299		
	Nagelkerke R square	0.134		

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05; Party support not asked in the July 2009 survey

The bivariate analyses showed that, with growing awareness of federalism both support for a federal state and for a unitary state increased. However, with only advocates and opponents of federalism left in the analysis, support for federalism increased in August 2008, but the subsequent surveys show negative and significant coefficients, indicating an increase of support for a unitary state (with September 2006 as the reference category).

With the hill caste group as the reference, all other ethnic groups except Newars were significantly more likely to support federalism. However, in the individual surveys only the Madhesi caste group and the Madhesi Dalit show this pattern with some consistency. The coefficients for all other groups rarely attain statistical significance.

In the pooled analysis, Christians were less likely to support a federal state (with Hindus as the reference) and Kiratis were more likely to support a federal state, but the individual surveys show that even this effect of religion is not robust.

The same is true for the effect of living in a particular development region, with the Eastern region as the reference. In the individual surveys not all effects are significant, and if they are they do not always point in the same direction.

In the pooled analysis only the two highest levels of education are significantly more likely to prefer a federal state (illiterates being the reference), but zooming in on the individual surveys shows that even this effect is not always visible.

Age does not have a significant effect on the opinions with regard to federalism in most of the survey years. To the extent that it has an effect it is that older age groups tend to support a unitary state compared to the 18-25 years old reference group.

The pooled regression analysis shows that people who supported political parties other than the CPN (Maoist) were less likely to prefer a federal state. This is confirmed in the analyses of the individual surveys, although not all coefficients were always significant. Only supporters of Tarai based regional parties were not significantly different from voters for the CPN (Maoist) except in August 2010.

8.6 Concluding Remarks

The most striking finding with regard to public opinion on the choice between a unitary state and a federal state is that so few Nepali citizens actually had an opinion or even awareness of this issue. Awareness was low even among Tarai-based groups despite their widespread mobilization on this issue in 2007. Over time, the proportion having an opinion on the issue increased and the proportion who answered 'Not heard', 'Not understood' and 'Don't know' decreased. However, even in the latest survey of April 2012 only a minority - 42 percent - had an opinion on the question. Having a higher level of education increased the chances of having awareness of the issue (also see Sen 2018).

As awareness increased, so did both the proportions favouring a unitary state and a federal state. At all times, there was more support for federalism than for unitarism, but the multivariate analysis indicates that over the 2006-2012 period, support for unitarism grew more than that for federalism did. And among those preferring a federal state, the support for a territorial-based federalism grew 'at the expense' of support for an identity-based federalism. Most of the independent variables used in the surveys show minor effects on the likelihood to prefer a federal state, especially if we do not pool the data but look at the individual surveys. Supporting the CPN (Maoist) or one of the Tarai-based parties increases the chances of favouring federalism, as does belonging to a Tarai-based ethnic group and being more highly educated.

9

Public Opinion on the Four Reforms: Underlying Relationships

9.1 Underlying Relationships between Opinions on the Four Reforms

Each of the four preceding chapters focused on public opinion with regard to one of the four reforms of Nepal's political system: from monarchy to republic, from a Hindu state to a secular state, from a mono-lingual to a multi-lingual state, and from a unitary state to a federal state. The analyses showed some significant differences between public opinion on these four questions, for example when it comes to the evolution of public opinion over time: a more or less linear increase in support for republicanism, hardly any change in the support for a Hindu state over a secular state, a curvilinear pattern of growing support for multilingualism followed by a decline, and a growing awareness of the issue of federalism. The pattern of support across various groups in society also differed from one reform to another.

The four reforms together are combined in a single new constitution, but the question arises to what extent that transformation also elicited a single pattern of public opinion, or whether the patterns of public opinion for each of the reforms are so different that they cannot be combined. In this chapter, the underlying or latent relationships between the opinions on the four reforms are analysed through principal components analysis (PCA), which is an appropriate technique for such a purpose (O'Muircheartaigh and Francis 1981: 107; Field 2009: 628). PCA reduces the number of variables to a smaller number of underlying factors, or dimensions (Leeuw 2006: 108). If most respondents who favour republicanism also prefer the other three reforms, we deal with only one underlying factor structuring public opinion. However, if respondents who support one reform are not more likely to also support any other reform, we cannot reduce our four variables to a smaller number of factors. In between these extremes are situations in which the opinions on the four reforms cluster into more than one factor, for example if support for federalism and multilingualism tend to go together, but not with a preference for republicanism and for multilingualism.

For each of the individual reforms, I could analyse public opinion at several points in time in the preceding chapters - from five surveys on the question of multilingualism to nine surveys on the question of republicanism - but unfortunately these points in time hardly coincide. Two surveys (one conducted in September 2006 and another in January 2008) are the only ones in which

questions related to *all* reforms (republicanism, secularism, multilingualism and federalism) were put to respondents in the same survey. Therefore, the underlying relationships are analysed using data from these two surveys.

In Chapters 5, 6 and 7, it became clear that most respondents were able to indicate whether they favoured reform or the status quo. The proportions who could not do so ranged from 6 percent on multilingualism and 10 percent on secularism to 13 percent on republicanism in January 2008 and 20 percent in September 2006. However, the most striking finding in Chapter 8 was the high proportion who did not give an opinion (i.e., had not heard about the issue, did not understand it, or did not know what to think of it) on the question of federalism, especially in the early years: 75 percent in September 2006 and 66 percent in January 2008. This considerably lowers the number of respondents who presented an opinion on all four reforms. There is no ready solution to this problem, and below I offer three different ways to deal with it.

9.2 Models

9.2.1 Model-1: Excluding Respondents without an Opinion on One or More of the Reforms

A first option is to exclude respondents without an opinion and simply accept the consequence of a very low N. Responses showing agreement with the old structure of the Nepali state (monarchy, Hindu state, Nepali-only and a unitary state) were coded '1', while those that showed agreement with the new structure (republicanism, secularism, multilingualism and federalism) were coded 2. The 'Other' responses such as 'Not understood', 'Not heard' and 'Do not know/ cannot say' were treated as missing values and excluded from the analyses. As said, the result is a substantial decrease in the number of respondents in the analysis, but this is a deliberate choice in applying this first option.

I used principal component analysis with rotation (varimax). For the September 2006 survey data, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure suggests the sampling adequacy for the analysis (KMO = 0.6, which is mediocre (Field 2009: 647). Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (6) = 36.2, p<.001, indicates that the correlations between the variables are sufficiently large for a principal component analysis. The analysis shows that only one underlying factor (component) structures public opinion on the four reform questions: only one factor has an eigenvalue higher than 1 with roughly similar values of factor loadings. This factor explains 39.9 percent of the variance (see Table 9.1). Note that this analysis is based on only 176 respondents who indicated a preference for each of the four issues.

This finding of a single factor underlying public opinion on these issues is supported or at least not contradicted if we look at the different combinations of preferences for the reforms among the 176 respondents (see Table 9.2). For example, over 30 percent either supported all four reforms or none of them. Another 30 percent supported three of the four reforms. Only small percentages supported only one or two of the reforms, with an exception for the combination of republicanism and federalism (10.8%).

Table 9.1: Summary of Exploratory Factor Analysis of Opinions on the Four Reforms, Model 1 September 2006

Variable	Factor Loadings (Component 1)
Opinion on 'Hindu State vs. Secular State'	0.72
Opinion on 'Mono-lingualism vs. Multilingualism'	0.63
Opinion on 'Unitary State vs. Federal State'	0.59
Opinion on 'Monarchism vs. Republicanism'	0.57
Eigenvalue (>1)	1.6
% of Variance Explained	39.9
N	176

Table 9.2: Support for the Four Reforms: 16 Possible Combinations, September 2006

Combinations	Percent
Support for all four reforms	25.0
Support for Republicanism, Secularism, and Federalism only	16.5
Support for Republicanism, Secularism, and Multilingualism only	2.8
Support for Republicanism, Federalism, and Multilingualism only	5.7
Support for Secularism, Federalism, and Multilingualism only	5.1
Support for Republicanism and Secularism only	2.8
Support for Republicanism and Multilingualism only	1.7
Support for Federalism and Multilingualism only	4.0
Support for Secularism and Federalism only	4.5
Support for Secularism and Multilingualism only	0.0
Support for Republicanism and Federalism only	10.8
Support for Multilingualism only	1.1
Support for Federalism only	7.4
Support for Secularism only	2.3
Support for Republicanism only	5.1
Support for none of the four reforms	5.1
Total	100.0
N	176

A similar factor analysis was conducted for the January 2008 survey data, now with a higher, but still modest, N of 598. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure suggests that the sample size is adequate for the analysis (KMO = 0.5, which is mediocre [Field 2009: 647]). Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (6) = 69.7, p<.001, indicates that correlations between the variables are sufficiently large for a principal component analysis. In this case, the analysis shows that there are two factors underlying public opinion with regard to the four reforms; both have eigenvalues above 1. One factor seems to underlie opinions on republicanism and secularism, the other opinions on multilingualism and federalism. The two factors together explain 61.7 percent of the variance in the opinions on the four reforms (see Table 9.3). It is worthwhile to mention here that this two

factors solution has much more explanatory power than the previous one factor solution (presented in Table 9.1) as that explains only 39.9 percent of the variance.

Table 9.3: Summary of Exploratory Factor Analysis of Opinions on the Four Reforms (Model 1), January 2008

Variable	Factor Loadings (Component 1)	Factor Loadings (Component 2)
Opinion on 'Monarchism vs. Republicanism'	0.79	
Opinion on 'Hindu State vs. Secular State'	0.77	
Opinion on 'Mono-lingualism vs. Multilingualism'		0.77
Opinion on 'Unitary State vs. Federal State'		0.73
Eigenvalue (>1)	1.25	1.22
% of Variance Explained	61.67	
N	598	

In other words, people who supported republicanism tended to also support secularism (and vice versa), but not necessarily also multilingualism and federalism. And people who supported federalism tended to also prefer multilingualism, but not necessarily republicanism and secularism.

Table 9.4: Support for the Four Reforms: 16 Possible Combinations, January 2008

Combinations	Percent
Support for all four reforms	20.6
Support for Republicanism, Secularism, and Federalism only	13.0
Support for Republicanism, Secularism, and Multilingualism only	4.8
Support for Republicanism, Federalism, and Multilingualism only	12.4
Support for Secularism, Federalism, and Multilingualism only	6.4
Support for Republicanism and Secularism only	2.8
Support for Republicanism and Multilingualism only	2.3
Support for Federalism and Multilingualism only	12.0
Support for Secularism and Federalism only	1.8
Support for Secularism and Multilingualism only	1.3
Support for Republicanism and Federalism only	7.5
Support for Multilingualism only	1.7
Support for Federalism only	3.9
Support for Secularism only	.8
Support for Republicanism only	5.8
Support for none of the four reforms	2.8
Total	100.0
N	598

Although it is easy to understand why opinions on federalism and multilingualism tend to go together (both reforms seek to address the cultural diversity of Nepali society), it is less clear why opinions on republicanism and secularism form one cluster, other than that the Nepali monarchy used the Hindu religion to legitimize its position.

The support pattern for various combinations of reforms does not always give the same picture as the factor analysis (see Table 9.4). True, the percentage supporting all four reforms, or opposing all four, is 23.4 - considerably lower than in September 2006. Also, 12 percent supported both federalism and multilingualism, but not republicanism and secularism, compared to only 4 percent in September 2006. But the combination of the first factor - republicanism and secularism, was supported by a mere 2.8 percent, exactly the same percentage as in September 2006.

9.2.2 Model-2: Including Responses without an Opinion as a Separate Category

In a second take, responses such as 'Not heard', 'Not understood' and 'Don't know' are not excluded, but kept as a separate answering category (coded '99') along with agreement with the features of the old political system ('1') and agreement with the reforms ('2'). This has the advantage of substantially increasing the number of observations (from 176 to 3000 in September 2006 and from 598 to 3010 in January 2008).

Standard PCA (as conducted for Model-1 above) assumes linear relationships between numeric variables. Categorical principal components analysis (CATPCA) or nonlinear PCA allows variables to be scaled at different levels, and relationships between variables can be modelled. This technique can be used if we do not have actual numerical data but each variable merely ranks the objects (Leeuw 2006: 111). CATPCA offers many advantages over standard PCA because it incorporates mixed measurement levels of data with ordinal, nominal and numerical variables (Leeuw 2006: 132). Since the variables in Model-2 are categorical variables, CATPCA has been applied.

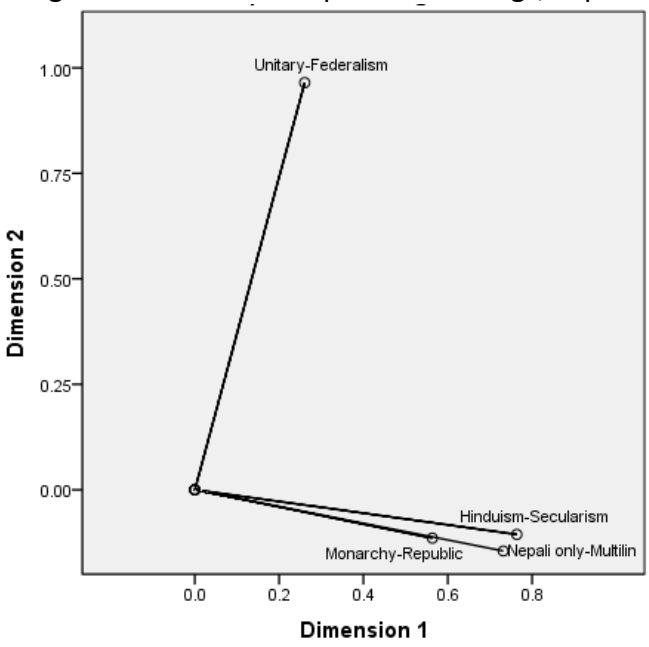
In the September 2006 survey data, about 62 percent of the total variance is explained by the two-dimensional model: 38 percent by the first dimension and 24 percent by the second. So, almost two-thirds of the variability on the individual objects level is explained by the model, which is quite good (see Table 9.5).

Table 9.5: Summary of CATPCA on Opinions on the Four Reforms (Model 2), Sep 2006

Variable	Component Loading (Dimension 1)	Component Loading (Dimension 2)
Opinion on 'Hindu state vs. Secular state'	0.764	-0.106
Opinion on 'Nepali only vs. Multilingualism'	0.732	-0.145
Opinion on 'Monarchism vs. Republicanism'	0.564	-0.115
Opinion on 'Unitary state vs. Federal state'	0.261	0.965
Eigenvalue	1.504	0.976
% of Variance Explained	37.606	24.412
N	3000	

All four variables have a positive component loading on the first dimension, which means that there is a common factor that correlates positively with all of the variables. The second dimension separates the variables. The variables 'Hindu state vs. Secular state', 'Nepali only vs. Multilingualism' and 'Monarchism vs. Republicanism' are located at the bottom of the plot forming a cluster having small negative loadings on the second dimension while the variable 'Unitary state vs. Federal state' is located at the top of the plot and far from the other three variables with large positive loading on the second dimension. The vectors of the cluster of the former three variables are perpendicular to the vectors of the latter variable, which means that the set of the former variables is uncorrelated with the later variable. In other words, public opinion on 'Hindu state vs. Secular state', 'Nepali only vs. Multilingualism' and 'Monarchism vs. Republicanism' is strongly related, meaning that if someone supports a secular state, there is a high likelihood that this person supports multilingualism and republicanism as well. However, public opinion on 'Unitary state vs. Federal state' has no direct connection to public opinion on the other three reforms (see Figure 9.1).

Figure 9.1: Plot of Component Loadings, Sep 2006



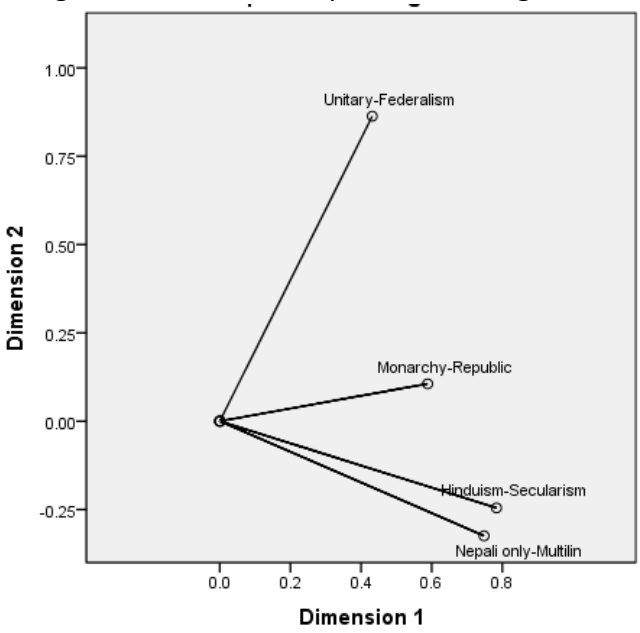
A similar CATPCA was performed on the January 2008 survey data. About 66 percent of the total variance is explained by the two-dimensional model: 43 percent by the first dimension and 23 percent by the second. So, two-thirds of the variability on the individual objects level is explained by the model (see Table 9.6).

Table 9.6: Summary of CATPCA on Opinions on the Four Reforms (Model 2), Jan 2008

Variable	Component Loading (Dimension 1)	Component Loading (Dimension 2)
Opinion on 'Hindu state vs. Secular state'	0.783	-0.245
Opinion on 'Nepali only vs. Multilingualism'	0.748	-0.324
Opinion on 'Monarchism vs. Republicanism'	0.588	0.106
Opinion on 'Unitary state vs. Federal state'	0.432	0.863
Eigenvalue	1.706	0.922
% of Variance Explained	42.660	23.046
N	3010	

All four variables have a positive component loading on the first dimension, which means that there is a common factor that correlates positively with all of the variables. The second dimension separates the variables, but in a different way than in the 2006 survey. The variables 'Hindu state vs. Secular state' and 'Nepali only vs. Multilingualism' are located at the bottom of the plot forming a cluster having small negative loadings on the second dimension. The variable 'Monarchism vs. Republicanism' is located at the middle of the plot with small positive loading in the second dimension. The variable 'Unitary state vs. Federal state' is located at the top of the plot and far from other three variables with large positive loading in the second dimension. The vectors of the cluster of the variables Monarchy-Republic and Hinduism-Secularism are perpendicular to the vector of the variable Unitary-Federalism, which means that the set of the former variables is uncorrelated with the latter variable. In other words, public opinion on 'Hindu state vs. Secular state' and 'Nepali only vs. Multilingualism' is strongly related meaning that if a person supports a secular state, there is a high likelihood that this person also supports multilingualism. However, public opinion on 'Unitary state vs. Federal state' has no direct connection with public opinion on the former two reforms. Public opinion on 'Monarchy vs. Republic' is relatively closer to the former two reforms than on 'Unitary state vs. Federal state' (see Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2: Plot of Component Loadings, Jan 2008



9.2.3 Model-3: Treating Responses without an Opinion as Support for the Status Quo

In a third and final model of the factor analysis of the same survey data, responses such as 'Heard but not understood', 'Not heard' and 'Do not know/ Cannot say' were treated as support for the old political system and combined with those who explicitly supported the status quo ante. The reasoning is, in a nutshell, that people who did not give definitive substantive responses did not explicitly support the reforms. So, both opinions that show agreement with the old structures of the Nepali state (i.e. explicitly opposed the reforms) and 'item non-response' were coded '1', while only answers that explicitly agree with a reform were coded '2'. The advantage is that a dichotomous variable fits better with factor analysis' assumption of interval data. The disadvantage is that combining responses without an opinion with support for the political system as it was before the transformation is to some extent arbitrary, and is heavily based on the assumption that no opinion means no support for the reform.

The type of factor analysis remains unchanged: principal component analysis with varimax rotation. For the September 2006 survey data, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure seems to verify that sample size is adequate for the analysis (KMO = 0.58, which is mediocre [Field 2009: 647]). Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (6) = 360.67, p<.001, indicates that correlations between the variables are sufficiently large for a principal component analysis. As shown in Table 9, the analysis identified opinions on republicanism, secularism, federalism and multilingualism as one underlying factor (i.e. one cluster of the variables); only one component had an eigenvalue of more than 1, which explained 35.4 percent of the variance. Table 9.3 shows the factor loadings of the variables, eigenvalues and the percentage of variance explained by that factor. Here too, some hesitation results from the factor loading of one variable being considerably lower; this time it is not the opinion on federalism, but the opinion on multilingualism that is rather low.

Table 9.7: Summary of Exploratory Factor Analysis of Opinions on the Four Reforms (Model 3), September 2006

Variable	Factor Loadings (Component 1)
Opinion on 'Hindu State vs. Secular State'	0.72
Opinion on 'Mono-lingualism vs. Multilingualism'	0.35
Opinion on 'Monarchism vs. Republicanism'	0.68
Opinion on 'Unitary State vs. Federal State'	0.56
Eigenvalue	1.41
% of Variance	35.35
N	3000

The same analysis was performed on the January 2008 survey data. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure 'verifies' that the sample size is adequate for the analysis (KMO = 0.59, which is mediocre [Field 2009: 647]). Bartlett's test of sphericity χ^2 (6) = 463.6, p<.001, indicates that correlations between the variables are sufficiently large for a principal component analysis. As for the data from September 2006, the factor analysis shows that the opinions on all issues are related to one underlying, latent factor (i.e. one cluster of the variables); only one component has an eigenvalue of more than 1 (see Table 9.8). This component explains 36.9 percent of the variance. Again, the factor loading of the opinion on multilingualism is much lower.

Table 9.8: Summary of Exploratory Factor Analysis of Opinions on the Four Reforms (Model 3), January 2008

Variable	Factor Loadings (Component 1)
Opinion on 'Hindu State vs. Secular State'	0.65
Opinion on 'Mono-lingualism vs. Multilingualism'	0.30
Opinion on 'Monarchism vs. Republicanism'	0.66
Opinion on 'Unitary State vs. Federal State'	0.73
Eigenvalue	1.47
% of Variance	36.86
N	3010

9.3 Discussion

This chapter presented PCA and CATPCA on public opinions with respect to the four reforms. The aim was to determine or at least explore to what extent opinions on the four reforms are clustered, and if so, in how many and in which clusters. This analytical ambition is seriously hampered by the fact that one variable in particular (i.e., opinions on federalism) is affected by a very high proportion of respondents who were unable to make a substantive choice between a unitary state and a federal state. This considerably reduces the number of observations, in particular for the September 2006 survey. In an attempt to deal with this problem, three models were used for the factor analysis: one excluding responses without such a substantive opinion, one including such responses as a third answering category, and one combining such responses with support for the status quo ante. Each of these models was applied to both the September

2006 and the January 2008 survey data, i.e., the two surveys that included all relevant variables on state reform.

Only a single factor underlies public opinion on the four separate reforms when Model-1 was applied to the September 2006 data. When Model-1 was applied to the January 2008 data, the PCA shows two factors that crossed the eigenvalue threshold of 1: opinions on republicanism and secularism loaded on one factor, and opinions on federalism and multilingualism on the other factor. In Model-2, CATPCA show two clusters in the September 2006 data: one with 'Unitary vs. Federalism' and another with 'Hindu state vs. Secular state', 'Nepali only vs. Multilingual' and 'Monarchy vs. Republic'. In the January 2008 data, Model-2 shows three clusters: one with 'Unitary vs. Federalism', one with 'Monarchy vs. Republic' and another with 'Hindu state vs. Secular state' and 'Nepali only vs. Multilingual'. Only a single cluster underlies the opinions on the four separate reforms in Model-3 for both the September 2006 and the January 2008 data.

In models that included responses without an opinion (i.e. Model-2 and Model-3), at least one variable showed much lower factor loadings (federalism in Model-2 and multilingualism in Model-3). All in all, however, the conclusion seems rather robust that opinions on all four reforms form one cluster: someone who prefers one state reform is also likely to support the other reforms, and someone who opposes one reform is likely to also oppose the other reforms. Note the word 'likely': the preceding chapters showed variation among the four reforms with regard to development over time and support patterns. Overall, however, this chapter shows that despite such variation, the four reforms have much in common.

10

Comparing Public Opinion and Elite Opinion

10.1 The Views of the Political Elites

Having completed the analysis of public opinion with regard to the four reforms that make up the transformation of Nepal's political system, we now turn to the views of the political elites about these reforms and to the relationship between these views and those of the general public. As the account of the history of the political transformation in Chapter 2 makes clear, the citizens of Nepal were not directly involved in the transformation through e.g. a citizens' assembly, a referendum or by other means, and the decisions were taken exclusively by the political elites. However, with an eye to the democratic legitimacy of the reforms and the stability and sustainability of the new political system or order, it is important to ascertain to what extent the decisions by the elites were in line with the concerns and preferences of the citizens. In this respect, the literature review (Chapter 3) discerned several potential relationships: that the political elites took their decisions purely based on their own judgment, perhaps with public preferences moving closer to these decisions over time; or that public opinion and elite decisions have influenced each other reciprocally, resulting in a convergence of citizen and elite preferences over time. A number of factors, the literature tells us, affect which one of these two scenario's is more likely, with the saliency of the issue for the general public being of paramount importance: on reforms that are not salient to the public, the emphasis is likely on the views of the political elites, and as reforms are more salient, the relationship is expected to be more reciprocal.

For the comparison with public opinion, we have the actual decisions that were taken by the political elites with regard to the interim constitution, the declaration by the first Constituent Assembly, and the new constitution as agreed by the second Constituent Assembly, and we have the formal positions taken by the various political parties. Fortunately, we can also, at least to some extent, compare public opinion with the opinions of individual members of the political elite. In July 2007, the Elites Opinion Poll was conducted (see Section 4.3 of Chapter 4) as part of the *Nepal Democracy Survey* undertaken by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) (see International IDEA 2008). The respondents were members of the Interim Parliament, and the survey contained questions about various political issues including republicanism, secularism, multilingualism and federalism. Even without having access to the data itself, the published results allow breakdowns of elite opinion by political party and ethnicity.

It would have been ideal if such surveys of elite opinion had taken place at several points in time during the period under investigation, but at least the timing of the Elites Opinion Poll 2007, is fortunate: a few months after the endorsement of the interim constitution and about a year prior to the election of the (first) Constituent Assembly. At that time, the political parties had taken a position from which they would not move later. Only on the issue of federalism have there been subsequent developments: an explicit mention of federalism was included in the interim constitution a few months after the survey was taken, and the exact form of federalism would take years, and a second Constituent Assembly, to reach agreement on.

In this chapter I will first analyse and present the opinions of the political elites on each of the four reforms before comparing them with the views of the general public.

10.1.1 Political Elites' Support for Monarchy and Republic

In the Elites Opinion Poll 2007, the members of the interim parliament were asked whether the monarchy should be retained or abolished. The exact phrasing of the question was 'What do you think about the monarchy, should it be retained or abolished?'. Although the only substantive answering categories were 'retain' and 'abolish', some respondents insisted on answering that the people or the Constituent Assembly should take the decision (Hachhetu *et al* 2008: 114). The poll shows that 84 percent of the political elites favoured abolishing the monarchy while only 7 percent wanted to retain it. It was clear that in July 2007 there was majority support for the abolition of monarchism and the transformation of Nepal into a republic.

As Table 10.1 shows, political elites with a communist background (such as CPN [UML], CPN [Maoist], Jan Morcha and the Nepal Majdur Kisan Party [NMKP]; see Section 1.7 in Chapter 1) were more likely to favour abolishing the monarchy than those from other political backgrounds. Radical leftist parties had been in favour of a republic since the early 1990s (see Chapter 2). Although support for a republic was also high among the representatives of the Madhes-based Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP), and among the temporary split-off from the Nepali Congress Party, the NCD, these parties contained sizeable minorities for retaining the monarchy. Support for a republic is considerably lower – barely a majority – among political elites of the Nepali Congress Party, but this is primarily because it was from this party that a large number of respondents suggested or insisted that this choice should be left to the people or the Constituent Assembly. There was most support for retaining the monarchy in the right-wing Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), but note that only three respondents represented this party in the interim parliament.

Table 10.1: Elite Support for the Monarchy by Political Party, July 2007

	All Groups	Nepali Congress	CPN (UML)	CPN (Maoist)	RPP	NSP	NCD	Jan Morcha	NMKP
Should be retained	7%	11%	3%	0%	33%	17%	18%	0%	0%
Should be abolished	84%	54%	97%	100%	33%	83%	77%	100%	100%
The people/CA should decide	9%	34%	0%	0%	33%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	293	70	79	79	3	6	39	6	4

Source: International IDEA 2007

Note: Percentages in this table are adjusted by excluding those who had 'No opinion' or said 'Do not know' (2 percent).

The opinions on the abolition or retention of the monarchy varied only marginally across political elites from different ethnic groups (Table 10.2). Leaving aside the small number of Muslim members of the interim parliament, the range of support for abolition of the monarchy was from 80 to 100 percent and from 0 to 11 percent for keeping the monarchy. Although their numbers are small, elites from the hill Dalit and Madhesi Dalit groups were found to be most republican.

Table 10.2: Elite Support for the Monarchy by Ethnicity, July 2007

	All Groups	Hill caste group	Hill indigenous group	Hill Dalit	Madhesi caste group	Tarai indigenous group	Madhesi Dalit	Muslim
Should be retained	7%	7%	5%	0%	5%	11%	0%	0%
Should be abolished	84%	82%	90%	100%	80%	84%	100%	50%
The people/CA should decide	9%	11%	5%	0%	15%	5%	0%	50%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	293	133	76	13	41	19	6	4

Source: International IDEA 2007

Note: Percentages in this table are adjusted by excluding those who had 'No opinion' or said 'Do not know' (2 percent).

10.1.2 Political Elites' Support for Hindu State and Secular State

The Elites Opinion Poll 2007 shows that about 94 percent of the political elites opined that the country should be a secular state (Table 10.3)[83]. Only 6 percent wanted Nepal to remain a Hindu state. Among representatives of the leftist parties, there was no support for a continuation of the Hindu state whatsoever. If we disregard the rightist RPP because of its extremely small number of respondents, there were small but substantive minorities favouring a Hindu state within the Nepali Congress Party and its split-off NCD, and within the Madhes-based NSP, but with percentages between 83 and 89 preferring transformation into a secular state, even within these parties there was overwhelming support for the abolition of the Hindu state.

[83] The wording of the question was 'What is your opinion about the religious or secular identity of the state?'.

Table 10.3: Elite Support for a Hindu State and a Secular State by Political Party, July 2007

	All Groups	Nepali Congress	CPN (UML)	CPN (Maoist)	RPP	NSP	NCD	Jan Morcha	NMKP
Should be a Hindu state	6%	12%	1%	0%	50%	17%	11%	0%	0%
Should be a secular state	94%	88%	99%	100%	50%	83%	89%	100%	100%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	287	67	79	79	2	6	37	6	4

Source: International IDEA 2007

Note: Percentages in this table are adjusted by excluding those who had 'No opinion' or said 'Do not know' (4 percent).

Across the various ethnic groups there was very little variation in elite opinion on this issue (Table 10.4). Non-Hindu hill indigenous groups and Muslims had already demonstrated demanding the country to become a secular state when the 1990 Constitution was being written (see Chapter 2), but at the elite level this demand now met universal support. Only among political elites belonging to the Tarai indigenous group was support for a transformation of Nepal into a secular state less than 90 percent, but the 16 percent of this group preferring to retain the Hindu identity of the state forms the exception that 'proves' the rule.

Table 10.4: Elite Support for a Hindu State and a Secular State by Ethnicity, July 2007

	All Groups	Hill caste group	Hill indigenous group	Hill Dalit	Madhesi caste group	Tarai indigenous group	Madhesi Dalit	Muslim
Should be a Hindu state	6%	8%	3%	0%	2%	16%	0%	0%
Should be a secular state	94%	92%	97%	100%	98%	84%	100%	100%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	287	128	75	13	42	19	6	4

Source: International IDEA 2007

Note: Percentages in this table are adjusted by excluding those who had 'No opinion' or said 'Do not know' (4 percent).

10.1.3 Political Elites' Support for Nepali-only and Multilingualism

The survey also asked the political elites what the official language of Nepal should be.[84] As Table 10.5 shows, about 44 percent of the political elites were in favour of recognizing local languages at the local level while 38 percent indicated that other major languages should also become an official language at the national level; only 18 percent wanted to retain Nepali as the only official language in the country. This implies that about 82 percent (i.e. a combination of the 44 percent and 38 percent of the first two opinions) of the political elites preferred some form of multilingualism instead of uni-lingualism.

[84] The wording of the question was 'In your opinion, what should be the official language of Nepal?'.

In spite of the fact that a majority of the political elites - whichever party they belonged to - were in favour of introducing a multilingual policy in the country (either at national level or at local level), substantive minorities of representatives of all parties except the CPN (Maoist) and Jan Morcha wanted to retain the Nepali language as the only official language in the country. Within the Nepali Congress Party, over a third of the representatives took this position. It is interesting to note that even among elites representing the Madhes-based NSP, which has been advocating recognizing Hindi as a second official language[85], still 17 percent was in favour of retaining the Nepali language as the only official language in the country.

Table 10.5: Elite Support for Nepali-only and Multilingualism by Political Party, July 2007

	All Groups	Nepali Congress	CPN (UML)	CPN (Maoist)	RPP	NSP	NCD	Jan Morcha	NMKP
Nepali only	18%	34%	16%	1%	25%	17%	30%	0%	25%
Other major languages also	38%	46%	35%	39%	25%	83%	32%	17%	25%
Local languages at local level	44%	20%	49%	60%	50%	0%	38%	83%	50%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	294	74	76	78	4	6	40	6	4

Source: International IDEA 2007

Note: Percentages in this table are adjusted by excluding those who had 'No opinion' or said 'Do not know' (2 percent).

A majority of the elites (irrespective of their ethnicity) wanted to end the monopoly of Nepali by introducing a multilingual policy in the country (see Table 10.6). Most of them wanted either other major languages as official languages at the national level or local languages as official languages at local level. However, a sizeable proportion of the elites from the hill the caste group wanted to continue with the Nepali language as the only official language throughout the country. Other than that, there was more variation in opinion about the preferred form of multilingualism: local languages at the local level or also for the major languages at the national level. Among political elites belonging to one of the Tarai-based groups (Madhesi caste, Tarai indigenous, Madhesi Dalit and Muslim), there was more support for multilingualism at the national level, while elites belonging to the hill- based groups were more in favour of multilingualism at the local level.

[85] Tarai-Madhes based regional parties have been demanding recognition of Hindi as the official language in the Tarai-Madhes region. The demand was first voiced in 1951 by the Nepal Tarai Congress party in the "Save Hindi Movement" (Gaige 1975: 109-111).

Table 10.6: Elite Support for Nepali-only and Multilingualism by Ethnicity, July 2007

	All Groups	Hill caste group	Hill indigenous group	Hill Dalit	Madhesi caste group	Tarai indigenous group	Madhesi Dalit	Muslim
Nepali only	18%	26%	10%	15%	14%	11%	0%	0%
Other major languages also	38%	32%	35%	23%	60%	47%	50%	75%
Local languages at local level	44%	42%	55%	62%	26%	42%	50%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	294	133	75	13	43	19	6	4

Source: International IDEA 2007

Note: Percentages in this table are adjusted by excluding those who had 'No opinion' or said 'Do not know' (2 percent).

10.1.4 Political Elites' Support for a Unitary State and a Federal State

The political elites were asked which form of government they liked most: unitary or federal.[86] The poll revealed that an overwhelming majority of 93 percent of the political elites replied that they preferred federalism. Note that this was in July 2007, i.e. a few months after these members of the interim parliament had approved an interim constitution in which federalism was not mentioned explicitly, and a few months before they amended the interim constitution in response to the Madhes and Janajati movement, to include a reference to federalism. Only 7 percent said that they liked a unitary form of government most. These figures show that the absence of federalism (and republicanism) in the original interim constitution does not imply that the political elites were committed to continue the unitary form of government. This is certainly true for the political leaders and parties, who had been opposing the unitary state since the drafting of the 1990 Constitution. Already back then they argued that Nepal must be a federal state because of the country's diversity in terms of language, ethnicity and geography (see Chapter 2). So, the demand for federalism was not new in the context of Nepal. It only came to the surface during and after the April 2006 Jan Andolan II. Other political parties shifted to a preference for federalism more recently.

Table 10.7: Elite Support for a Unitary State and a Federal State by Political Party, July 2007

	All Groups	Nepali Congress	CPN (UML)	CPN (Maoist)	RPP	NSP	NCD	Jan Morcha	NMKP
Unitary	7%	18%	1%	0%	0%	0%	7%	33%	0%
Federal	93%	82%	99%	100%	100%	100%	93%	67%	100%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	300	74	79	79	4	6	41	6	4

Source: International IDEA 2007

[86] The wording of the question was 'Which form of government do you like most: unitary or federal?'.

This is reflected in Table 10.7. There was no support for a unitary form of government among the leftist CPN (Maoist), the NMKP, and (almost) the CPN (UML), and among the Tarai-based NSP. The NSP was the first political party in Nepal to advocate the idea of federalism in the 1990s. Although the CPN (Maoist) did not explicitly advocate federalism during the insurgency period, it did put forward the idea of giving autonomy to indigenous groups. (That the rightist RPP also shows no support for unitarism may be due to the small number of respondents.) On the left, Jan Morcha is an exception: a third still preferred unitarism (but note the small number of respondents here too). Jan Morcha preferred decentralization within a unitary state. Small minorities favouring unitarism within the Nepali Congress Party and its break-away NCD were a reminder that this party had quickly accepted unitarism in 1990. These small differences, however, should not detract from the conclusion that there was widespread elite support for a federal form of government across the political spectrum. What is intriguing and important to note is that subsequently, the most desirable form of federalism became a contentious issue, delaying the drafting of a new constitution. The 2007 elite poll did not yet inquire into the preferences in that regard.

Disaggregated by ethnicity, representatives belonging to the Tarai indigenous group, Madhesi Dalits, Muslims and Madhesi caste group were more likely to support the federal form of governance than their hill counterparts. This reflects the origins of the demand for federalism in the 1990s and the protests against not mentioning federalism in the interim constitution. However, the differences with political elites of hill origin are marginal. Among these groups, support for federalism was still above 90 percent.

Table 10.8: Elite Support for a Unitary State and a Federal State by Ethnicity, July 2007

	All Groups	Hill caste group	Hill indigenous group	Hill Dalit	Madhesi caste group	Tarai indigenous group	Madhesi Dalit	Muslim
Unitary	7%	9%	8%	8%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Federal	93%	91%	92%	92%	98%	100%	100%	100%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	300	138	76	13	43	19	6	4

Source: International IDEA 2007

10.1.5 Structure of Elite Opinion on the State Reforms

Although the structure of the elite opinion on the four state reforms cannot be analysed due to inaccessibility of the raw data of the survey,[87] I can still venture the conclusion that only one factor underlies these opinions. Obviously, the proportion of the political elites supporting all four reforms must be high since the proportions of those who supported the federal system (93 percent), abolishing the monarchy (84 percent), introducing a secular state (94 percent) and a form of multilingualism (82 percent) were so high that there is little room left for supporting a subset of only two or three of the reforms.

[87] This researcher could not have access to the raw data of this survey.

10.2 Elite-Mass Comparison of Opinions on the Four Reforms

We are now in a position to compare the preferences of the general public or mass public opinion with regard to the four reforms as discussed in Chapters 5 to 8 with the preferences and decisions of the political elites as discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter. The main reason that inspired this exploration of the relationship between the recent political events, the major parties' decisions and public opinion is scholarly curiosity: there is an on-going debate on the nature and direction of the relationship between the political elites and public opinion, and the prime question here is what the case of Nepal can contribute to this debate: how this general relationship works out in this specific case, and what this means for the scholarly debate. As discussed in Chapter 3, until now most studies of the relationship between public opinion and elite decisions have dealt with policy issues that are salient to the general public such as civil rights, social welfare, defence spending, and economic issues. This study adds to this literature by comparing the views of the general public and the major political parties' decisions on the design and essential reform of the political system itself.

The Elites Opinion Poll of July 2007 already indicated what the elected Constitutional Assembly would declare in May 2008, and it illustrates that the preferences of the political elites were different in more ways than one from those of the general public. For a direct comparison between the Elites Opinion Poll and the various surveys of public opinion, the relevant questions should have been similarly worded.

Table 10.9 Survey Questions Used for the General Public and the Political Elites

Issue	Public Opinion Survey	Elite Opinion Survey
Monarchy vs. Republic	'If you could vote for a monarchy or a republic, which would you vote for?' [Monarchy or Republic]	'What do you think about the monarchy, should it be retained or abolished?' [Should be abolished; Should be retained; The people/CA should decide]
Hindu state vs. Secularism	'Do you think Nepal should be a Hindu state or a secular state?' [Nepal should be a Hindu state/ Nepal should be a secular state]	'What is your opinion about the religious or secular identity of the state?' [Should be a Hindu state; Should be a secular state]
Unilingualism vs. Multilingualism	'There is a debate going on whether Nepali should be the only official language or if other national languages should be also adopted as official languages. What should be the language policy of Nepal?' [Nepali should be the only official language/ Other national languages should also be adopted as an official	'In your opinion, what should be the official language of Nepal?' [Nepali only; Other major languages also; Local language at local level]

	language/ Other foreign languages should also be adopted as a foreign language]	
Unitary State vs. Federal State	'What should be the type of governing system of Nepal, a unitary system or a federal system?'	'Which form of government do you like most: unitary or federal?' [Unitary state; Federal state]

As Table 10.9 makes clear, the question wording has not been identical in the elite and mass surveys. Most importantly, the answering categories have been different for the question on language policy, and in practice also for the question on monarchy versus republic. Fortunately, the status quo ante has been an answering category in each of the questions, which at least allows comparison of the strength of support for this position among both political elites and citizens. The tables in the following subsections will therefore focus on support for the monarchy, the Hindu state, Nepali as the only official language, and the unitary state.

10.2.1 Support for the Monarchy

As we have already seen in Chapter 5, an overwhelming majority of Nepali citizens still supported the monarchy in December 2004 and January 2006, with only a marginal decline. This seems to contradict the plausible diagnosis that the royal palace massacre of 2001 had already decreased support for the monarchy, but the massacre may have had an indirect effect, deteriorating public faith in the divine aura of the monarchy and weakening the monarchy's emotional relationship with the general public, thus 'preparing' public opinion for real change later.

That real change became visible in the September 2006 survey (see Table 10.10): public support for the monarchy dropped from 74 to 53 percent in only a few months. During these months the *Jan Andolan II* took place. It seems likely that, once the mobilization of the mass movement succeeded and its anticipated outcomes had been achieved, this began to affect ordinary citizens' positions toward the monarchy. The successful cooperation between the Seven Party Alliance and the Maoists in the *Jan Andolan II* contrasted with the failure of King Gyanendra's attempt to bring an end to the ten-year long conflict by usurping absolute power the year before.

Near the time of the Elite Opinion Poll, in May 2007, public support for the monarchy had further declined to a minority (46 percent), but there was still quite a gap with the mere six percent of the political elites that continued to support the monarchy. Nearly a year later, shortly before the Constituent Assembly would formally end the monarchy, public support for the monarchy was still just below a majority, but after the Constituent Assembly's declaration the gap with the political elite eventually narrowed further. The formal abolition of the monarchy may have accelerated the erosion of support for the monarchy in public opinion. However, four years after the Constituent Assembly's declaration, a substantial minority of more than a third of the citizens still preferred a monarchy over a republic.

In this case, the political elites did not heed the preferences of the citizens when they decided to abolish the monarchy. Also, there has been no convergence of elite and mass over time: the political elites did not compromise on their decision to radically end all form of monarchy. Over time we observe that public opinion gradually, but far from completely, moving to the position taken almost unanimously by the political elites early on. This is a pattern that the literature would expect us to observe with issues that are not salient to the general public (position 2 in Chapter 3: Political parties take decisions based on their own judgement). However, the low percentages of the respondents in the mass surveys that were unable to give a clear answer to the question of monarchy versus republic belie any notion that this issue was not a salient one.

Table 10.10 also shows support for the monarchy among the most highly educated stratum of the general public. Assuming this level of education to be the most prevalent among the political elites, the comparison between general public, highly educated public, and political elites allow us to estimate the extent to which the gap between elite opinion and public opinion is caused by or at least in line with a composition effect. Support for the monarchy was initially even higher among the highly educated, but after Jan Andolan II it dropped to a lower level than among the general public further declining to 20 percent in 2012. However, if we compare the May 2007 figures with the July 2007 Elite Opinion Poll, support for the monarchy was higher among the highly educated citizens than among the political elites. It would seem that the gap between public opinion and elite opinion with regard to the monarchy is at best only partially explained by a composition effect.

Table 10.10: Comparison of Support for the Monarchy (%) among the General Public, the Higher Educated Public and Political Elites

	Dec 2004	Feb 2005	Jan 2006	Apr 2006	May 2006	Sep 2006	Jan 2007	May 2007	Jul 2007	Jan 2008	May 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
Public Opinion: General	81		74			53		46		49		27	48	39	39
Public Opinion: Higher Educated	88		80			33		22		40		16	29	26	20
Political Elites Opinion		King usurps absolute power		7-Party Alliance and Maoists called *Jan Andolan II*	Parliament reinstated		Interim constitution		6		CA declares republic				

Note: Higher educated public are Bachelor and higher (See Table 5.4)

10.2.2 Support for the Hindu State

It was the House of Representatives, reinstated after the successful Jan Andolan II, that not only stripped the King of his executive powers, but also proclaimed Nepal to be a secular state rather than a Hindu state in May 2006. The series of surveys that I use contain no earlier data on public opinion with regard to the religious identity of the state. Hachhetu *et al* (2008) cite data from 2004 showing 66 percent public support for a Hindu state at that time. A few months after the declaration by the House of Representatives, the September 2006 survey shows 59 percent supporting a Hindu state, not much lower (see Table 10.11). The later confirmation of the transition to a secular state in the interim constitution and in the declaration by the first Constitutional Assembly, also do not seem to have affected public opinion in this respect. There was remarkable continuity in public opinion with regard to the relationship between the state and Hinduism. At the mass level, a clear majority favoured Nepal being a Hindu state. This proportion was stable throughout the survey series at the national level: in the latest survey (April 2012) the proportion favouring a Hindu state was only marginally lower than it had been in 2006.

This robust and stable public opinion stands in stark contrast to the early and near unanimous decision by the political elites to abolish the Hindu state. In the Elite Opinion Poll of July 2007 only 5 percent continued to support a Hindu state. And other than with the abolition of the monarchy, there has been no narrowing of the gap between elites and citizens, at least not at this abstract level. However, it might be argued that the political elites have moved to take the concerns of the citizens into account. As discussed in Chapter 6, the 2015 Constitution not only reconfirms that Nepal is now a secular state, but it adds an 'explanation' of the crucial term secular: religious freedom, but also protection of religion as practised since ancient times. In Chapter 6, I argued that this rather ambiguous 'explanation' can be interpreted as a compromise, and in that sense, the political elites seem to have listened to some of the concerns of the majority of the citizens. It is not the same as the reciprocal relationship that the literature leads us to expect, but it may have resulted in a narrowing of the gap between elite and public opinion in this respect.

Table 10.11 also shows that there was less support for a Hindu state amongst citizens with the highest level of education. With one exception, the level of support among the highly educated was just below 50 percent. These citizens were closer to the elite position on this issue than public opinion as such, but here too a gap remains between elite opinion and highly educated citizens: the difference between elite and public opinion is only partially explained by a composition effect.

Table 10.11: Comparison of Support for a Hindu State (%) among the General Public, the Higher Educated Public and Political Elites

	May 2006	Sep 2006	Jan 2007	May 2007	Jul 2007	Jan 2008	May 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012	Sept 2015
Public Opinion: General		59		59		59		55	57	56	55	
Public Opinion: Higher Educated		42		43		48		56	48	47	49	
Political Elites Opinion	Reinstated parliament: Nepal is a secular state		Interim constitution: Nepal is a secular state		5		CA: Nepal is a secular state					Constitution adds 'explanation' to secularism

Note: Higher educated public are Bachelor and higher (see Table 6.4)

10.2.3 Support for Nepali-only

As regards the language issue, public support for retaining a unilingual policy decreased until January 2008, but bounced back in August of that same year (see Chapter 7). However, with the exception of January 2008, a majority (in May 2007 a plurality) of citizens preferred keeping Nepali as the only official language over one of the various forms of multilingualism that were discussed. However, a majority of all the Madhesi communities, irrespective of sub-groups, favoured multilingualism (see Chapter 7; also see Sen 2013). Meanwhile, most of the political elites also preferred to end the unilingual policy, as is evidenced by their declarations and decisions, and by the fact that the Elite Opinion Poll of July 2007 shows only 18 percent of the members of the interim parliament preferring unilingualism (see Table 10.12).

Table 10.12: Comparison of Support for Nepali as the Only Official Language (%) among the General Public, the Higher Educated Public and Political Elites

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jul 2007	Dec 2007	Jan 2008	May 2008	Aug 2008	July 2009	Sept 2015
Public Opinion: General	55	48			41		55	55	
Public Opinion: Higher Educated	63	42			48		56	71	
Political Elites Opinion			18	Fourth amendment to interim constitution: official status to other languages		CA declaration to adopt multilingualism			Constitution: Nepali at national level ; provinces may add other languages at that level

Note: Higher educated public are Bachelor and higher (see Table 7.4)

In other words, the apparent gap between elite opinion and majority public opinion narrowed until January 2008 and widened again in the later surveys. The final text of the Constitution, keeping Nepali as the only administrative language at the national level, but allowing multilingual policies at the subnational level, can perhaps be read as a compromise, with political elites taking some of the concerns of majority public opinion into account. If so, this would make the case of the debate over the official language of Nepal an example of a reciprocal relationship between elites and citizens (Position 3 as discussed in Chapter 3).

With regard to the monarchy and the Hindu state, the highly educated took a position in between general public opinion and elite opinion. This is not the case here. If anything, the gap between the political elites and the highly educated citizens was wider than between general public opinion and elite opinion. This means that the differences between political elites and citizens on language policy cannot be explained by a composition effect.

10.2.4 Support for the Unitary State

Table 10.13 shows the development of support for the unitary state among the general public, the highly educated public, and the political elites with the relevant decisions. At first sight it would appear as if the opinions of citizens and elites were quite congruent initially, but diverged somewhat in later years when support for the unitary state increased among the general public. However, any comparison between public opinion and elite opinion is hampered by the fact that so few citizens knew about the issue or had an opinion. In Chapter 8, I discussed that it is difficult to ascertain whether public ignorance about the issue is real or largely due to unfamiliarity with the abstract concepts of 'unitary state' and 'federalism'. In the Tarai, the issue was sufficiently salient to mobilize a protest movement when the interim constitution of January 2007 failed to mention federalism, but the saliency of this question in other parts of the country is doubtful. So, it would seem that the political elites' decision to abolish the unitary state was largely made at their own discretion, without much guidance from the general public. The elite consensus about a transition to a federal state did not prevent fierce disagreement about the form of federalism (geographical or ethnicity-based) later, but apart from the fact that the surveys could only record views on this question among the few who were able to express a preference for federalism, there is no data on the distribution of opinions at the level of the political elites.

The problem of low awareness of the issue among the general public makes it also difficult to gauge the extent to which any gap between elite and mass is associated with or caused by the elite being more highly educated. Table 10.13 shows more support for the unitary state among the highly educated than among the public in general, but – not mentioned in Table 10.13 – the highly educated also had more support for federalism: it is simply that the proportion 'not heard/not understood/don't know' is much lower among citizens with a high level of education. Still, the percentage of the higher educated citizens expressing support for the unitary state (ranging from 10 to 31 percent) seems higher than among the political elites, indicating that any gap between elites and general public on this issue is at least not entirely due to a composition effect.

Table 10.13: Comparison of Support for a Unitary State (%) among the General Public, the Higher Educated Public and Political Elites

	Sep 2006	Jan 2007	Jul 2007	Dec 2007	Jan 2008	May 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
Public Opinion: General	1				5		2	8	18	14	16	14
Public Opinion: Higher Educated	10				16		17	23	22	21	31	16
Political Elites Opinion		Interim constitution does not mention federalism	7	Interim constitution amended to include federalism		CA: Nepal is federal state						

Note: Higher educated public are Bachelor and higher (See Table 8.5)

10.3 Concluding Remarks

The gap between the findings of the public opinion polls on the one hand, and the political elite's opinion poll and the elite's decisions on the other hand leads to the conclusion that there were considerable differences between public opinion and the elites' opinions on the four reforms of Nepal's political system: the latest survey before the May 2008 declaration of the Constitutional Assembly shows a plurality of the citizens still supporting the monarchy, a majority preferring the Hindu state, and a majority being unaware of the issue of federalism. Only on the question of the official language was a majority of the citizens in favour of multilingualism, but this majority proved short-lived.

However, on the issue of monarchy versus republic there has been a remarkable development from monarchism to republicanism in public opinion, considerably reducing the gap with the political elites. On the question of the Hindu state versus a secular state, public opinion remained more or less stable with majority support for retaining the Hindu state. The political elites, however, did not waver in their support for a secular state, but by qualifying the term secularism in the 2015 constitution, it can be argued that the gap with the general public was narrowed somewhat. With regard to the question of unilingualism versus multilingualism, public opinion first seemed to move towards the position of the political elites, but when this trend reversed after the May 2008 declaration of the Constitutional Assembly, the eventual article in the 2015 Constitution, which kept unilingualism for the national level, can be interpreted as a concession to majority public opinion. In that sense both public opinion has reacted to elite decisions (initially) and the elites have reacted to public opinion (eventually): a reciprocal relationship albeit not simultaneously. On the issue of federalism, although a gradual reduction of item non-response can be observed, the issue remained a big unknown at the mass level even years after the proposal to federalize the Nepali state had been introduced. This shows that the decisions by the political elites on this question had not reached to the common masses.

However, even with these developments in public opinion on the monarchy, and - more speculatively - with the concessions by the elites on the Hindu state and unilingualism, no complete congruence between elite and mass has been achieved. Moreover, this gap between public opinion and political elite appears to be real rather than a composition effect: comparing the elites, the general public and the highly educated citizens, the views of the highly educated were somewhere between those of the general public and those of the elites on the monarchy, on the Hindu state, and probably also on the unitary state. This means that the elite-mass gap can at best be explained only partially by a composition effect. On the issue of the official language, the highly educated citizens' preferences were even further removed from the political elites than general public opinion, which indicates that on this issue the elite-mass gap has nothing to do with a composition effect.

Another important finding is that there was a broad consensus among the Nepali political elites from various ethnic and political backgrounds on the transformation of the political system that Nepal was to undertake. Only a small proportion of the elite was in support of the old structures of the state. By July 2007, they had agreed, at least in terms of their individual opinions or

preferences as stated in the survey, to rebuild the Nepali state as proposed by the CPN (Maoist). The scale of the majority that was in favour of the new structures of the state indicated that Nepal's political parties and elites were very unlikely to retain the old structures of the state. Therefore, it is not surprising that a year later the elected Constitutional Assembly formally abolished the monarchy, the unitary form of governance, the Hindu state identity and unilingualism. Only the exact form that federalism should take was not part of this consensus, but the consensus on the other issues – or better: the absence of elite competition on these issues - may help explain why the elites did not move more to narrow the gap with public opinion. Ultimately, the recent political reforms formalized in the new Constitution were guided by the elite or political parties' decisions, not by the general public's opinions.

11

Conclusions

The promulgation of the 2015 Constitution of Nepal formally concluded one of the most radical transformations of a political system in recent history: from a monarchy to a republic, from a Hindu state to a secular state, from a unitary state to a federation, and from one official language to a multilingual state. This also marked a dramatic change in the country's political development. Nepal has always been characterized by great cultural diversity, but from the foundation of the Gorkha Empire in 1768, Nepal's history can be summarized as a long attempt at political and cultural unification modelled after the culture of the dominant Hindu hill high caste group. The new constitution abandons that project and seeks to embrace and formally acknowledges the country's diversity.

The citizens of Nepal have not been involved directly or intensively in this major transformation. Some of them may have participated in large scale demonstrations such as *Jan Andolan II*, in the Madhesi protests and blockades, or even in the armed uprising of the Maoists that initiated the transformation. But there has not been, for instance, a referendum[88] on any of the political reforms. The formal decisions may have been taken by popularly elected bodies such as the reinstated House of Representatives in 2006, the Interim Parliament in 2007, or the two Constituent Assemblies (elected in 2008 and in 2013). But the actual decisions had been taken earlier, in negotiations between the main political parties such as the 2005 12-point agreement between the CPN (Maoist) and the Seven-Party Alliance, or the amendment, in 2016, of the new Constitution after negotiations between the government and Madhes-based political parties.

The strong emphasis on and dominant role of political elites in the transformation need not surprise, but the new political system's legitimacy and consolidation ultimately depends not only on the support of the elites, but also on that of ordinary citizens. If a significant part of the general public would remain vehemently opposed to one or several of the reforms, there will always be a risk that this dissatisfaction will grow and may easily be mobilised by an anti-system party or political entrepreneur, threatening the stability of the new system. This makes the question of public opinion on the main reform issues one of high social relevance.

There is a body of scholarly literature on the relationship between public opinion and elite decisions, but most of that literature focuses on economic or social policies, much less so on systemic or constitutional choices. This study aims to contribute to both the question about the

[88] Small rightist parties such as RPP and RPP Nepal had demanded a referendum to decide on the abolition of the monarchy and the Hindu state, but the major parties ruled out their demand.

sustainability of Nepal's new political system and the more general question about elite-citizens relations in political science.

For that purpose, I have provided an historical overview of Nepal's political development in general and of the recent transformation of the political system in particular, as well as an overview of the main positions in the scholarly literature about the relations between elite decisions and public opinion. Against those backgrounds, I analysed data from 11 public opinion surveys conducted in Nepal throughout the transformation period to study both the development over time and the structure of public opinion on each of the four reforms, both individually and in combination, and to compare the preferences of the citizens with the decisions by the elites as well as the published results of a survey of elite opinions.

11.1 Summary of the Key Findings

For the detailed findings of the analyses, I refer to the individual chapters of this study and their concluding paragraphs. Here I bring together some of the more general patterns and their implications.

Four Reforms, One Transformation?

The four reforms together made up the transformation that was eventually codified into the new Constitution, but in public opinion they did *not* form a coherent package in every respect. Moreover, even when the new Constitution was promulgated public opinion had not rallied behind all four reforms. On only one of the reforms, i.e., from monarchy to republic, the latest survey measuring public opinion (April 2012) shows majority support (that is: 50 percent) for a republic, with a substantial minority of 39 percent still supporting the monarchy. There are no signs of growing dissatisfaction with the abolition of the monarchy since then. However, it is less likely that there is more public support than opposition for the abolition of the Hindu state in favour of a secular state, and for the shift from Nepali as the only official language to multilingualism. On multilingualism the latest survey in which the question was asked (July 2009) measured 40 percent support for recognition of other national or foreign languages as official languages, against a majority of 55 percent preferring a Nepali-only language policy. With regard to the choice between a Hindu state or a secular state, the latest information (April 2012) shows that 55 percent would have preferred to maintain the identification of the state with Hinduism, while 37 percent agreed with the adoption of a secular state. In both cases, the proportions of the population that agreed with the reforms are substantial, but remain minorities nevertheless. The situation with regard to the reform of the unitary state into a federal state is much more difficult to assess. In the latest survey (April 2012) there was more public support for federalism (28 percent) than for the unitary state (14 percent), but more importantly, a majority could not express any choice: they had not heard about the issue, did not understand it, or didn't know what to think of it. Moreover, the 28 percent that did express a preference for federalism was divided over the type of federalism: geographically based (most of them) or based on some form of identity.

I explored the possibility that this gap between elite decisions and public opinion can be explained by a composition effect, particularly because of different levels of education of elites and ordinary citizens. Although no exact figures are available, it is safe to assume that the higher levels of education are over-represented among the political elites. If the decisions and preferences of the elites would accurately reflect the opinions of the higher educated ordinary citizens of Nepal, we may conclude that a composition effect explains the gap between elites and public opinion. On the choices between monarchy and republic, and between Hindu state and secular state, the preferences of higher educated citizens were somewhere in between those of the elites and those of the general public. However, on the issue of the official language(s) the gap between the elites and the higher educated citizens is actually wider than between the elites and the general public in later years. The same is true for opinions on the choice between federalism and a unitary state: the higher educated show more support for the unitary state than both the general public and the political elites, although the limited awareness of this issue complicates the assessment. In conclusion: a composition effect can explain the gap on two reforms only partially, and on the other two reforms not at all.

If we zoom in on the individual political parties and their supporters, the gap comes in different sizes. Already in 1996, the CPN (Maoist) formulated demands that were very similar to the reforms that were eventually implemented. With regard to federalism, the Maoist position was not explicit, but worded in terms of regional devolution and autonomy for ethnic groups. In the series of surveys we see that Maoist supporters generally agree with these positions, with the exception of multilingualism. The other major parties, in particular the Nepali Congress Party and the CPN (UML), however, came to adopt the positions of the CPN (Maoist) much later, after the King's coup d'etat in 2005. The voters of these parties gradually came to accept their party's new position on the monarchy, but not the new positions on the Hindu state and on the official language. Here we find the core of the gap between the elites and the citizens.

Looking at the pattern of support for the reforms across regions, ethnic groups, religious groups etc., the survey data do show support for obvious expectations: that supporters of the Maoist party who first demanded these reforms tended to agree with them, that groups in Nepali society that had been negatively affected by the centuries of domination by the Hindu high caste hill group and the attempts to homogenise Nepali society were mostly in favour of reforms that introduced a secular state, multilingualism and federalism. What is interesting, however, is that these relationships between groups and preferences for reforms were far from deterministic: for example, in all surveys over 60 percent of Hindus preferred maintaining the Hindu state, but between a quarter and a third of this religious group actually preferred a secular state. Meanwhile Buddhists, the largest non-Hindu religious group, showed clear majority support for a secular state in most surveys, but also sizeable minorities (of up to 35 percent) wanting to keep Nepal as a Hindu state. In addition, there are interesting exceptions to what one would expect. Given the long association of the Kings of Nepal with efforts to assimilate other groups into the culture of the Hindu high caste hill group, it would not be surprising if support for retaining the monarchy was strongest and declined least and latest among members of that group compared to support among more marginal groups, such as Dalit, people living in the Tarai, and indigenous

groups. But the data show that, if anything, support for the monarchy declined earlier and more among members of the hill high caste group.

Federalism became controversial only late in the transformation, largely because of political action in the Tarai. Yet, both awareness of and support for federalism fluctuated among groups living in that part of the country.

Given the differences between the reforms in terms of public support it would be reasonable to expect the existence of underlying dimensions or factors that could be uncovered by factor analysis. Two surveys (September 2006 and January 2008) contained questions on all four of the reforms, but the high number of missing data on the question of federalism necessitated a combination of analytical strategies. For each survey, I used three models and used of the resulting six analyses, three led to the conclusion that despite the differences between the reforms mentioned above, they do form a single cluster or underlying dimension: an individual citizen supporting (or opposing) one reform is also likely to support (or oppose) the other reforms, but such a dimension of overall reform-mindedness accounts for but a rather limited amount of the variation (35 to 40 percent). One analysis showed two factors (monarchism/ republicanism and Hindu state/ secular state loading on one factor and monolingualism/ multilingualism and unitarism/ federalism loading on the other), together explaining 62 percent. The two remaining factor analyses also came up with a two-factor solution (explaining between 62 and 66 percent), but the dimensions are different, with the opinions on monarchism/ republicanism, Hindu state/ secular state and monolingualism/ multilingualism being relatively closely or strongly correlated, with opinions on unitarism/federalism standing apart. Given these differences it is not possible to conclude that in general there is more than one clear underlying dimension structuring public opinion on the four reforms.

Elites and Citizens

Looking at the relationship between the decisions of the political elites and public opinion, it is possible to distinguish three main positions or perspectives: 1) the decisions by the political elites reflect public opinion; 2) the decisions by the political elites reflect their own judgement; and 3) the decisions by the political elites and public opinion are in a reciprocal relationship, adapting to each other. The literature shows support for each of these three positions. Which of the three positions actually applies seems to depend on various sources of variation. For this study of Nepal's political transformation, issue salience seems particularly relevant. If reforms are not or less salient to the general public, the probability increases that the decisions taken reflect the agenda of the political elites. In this case over time public preferences are likely to move closer to the decisions already taken. If reforms are more salient, public opinion and elite decisions reciprocally influence each other, and over time public preferences and elite decisions converge. At first sight, however, this study does not empirically support these expectations.

Three of the four reforms can be regarded as relatively salient, if we use the proportion that could and did express a clear preference and did not give a non-substantive answer (such as 'Don't know', or other forms of item non-response) to the survey question as an indicator: for

the choice between monarchy and republic between 80 and 92 percent provided a substantive answer, for the choice between a Hindu state and a secular state between 90 and 94 percent and for the choice between Nepali-only and multilingualism this was even between 94 and 96 percent. Note that these reforms, the political parties had reached a consensus to transform the country from a Hindu unilingual monarchy into a secular and multi-lingual republic much earlier than the promulgation of the new Constitution by the second Constituent Assembly in September 2015. That consensus was reflected at least as early as in the declaration of the first Constituent Assembly in May 2008. At that time, a majority of ordinary citizens opposed these reforms. There is also no convergence of elite preferences and public opinion over time, although there has been a noticeable change in public opinion with regard to the preference for a monarchy to a republic. Support for the monarchy had been decreasing at least since 2004, but in 2008 still more citizens preferred the monarchy than a republic. However, the development continued and in most subsequent surveys we see majority support for a republic. This development or pattern of citizens adapting to elite decisions is what the literature would lead us to expect on issues of low salience. However, the two others, salient issues public opinion remained more or less unchanged – and opposed to the reforms towards a secular state and multilingualism.

The choice between a unitary state and federalism is likely to be of low salience; it is a relatively technical and abstract issue that may be less relevant for citizens' everyday life. In the first survey in which questions were asked about this issue (September 2006) 94 percent could not give a substantive answer. This percentage declined over the years, but in the latest survey (April 2012) a majority of 58 percent still could not express a preference. We cannot completely exclude the possibility that these percentages reflect unawareness with the abstract concept of federalism while the substantive issue at state was well understood, but this interpretation seems less likely as the most common answer in all surveys was that they had not even heard of the issue. On issues of low saliency the expectation is that elites follow their own judgement and that at least some ordinary citizens later adapt to the elite position. However, as awareness of this issue increased, support for *both* federalism and a unitary state went up in absolute terms, and in relative terms support for unitarism increased while support for federalism even decreased.

Perhaps the gap between elite and public opinion that emerges from the surveys is too stark. If we look more closely at the elite decisions, it might be argued that on some of the issues the parties also moderated their positions to some extent. This is clearest on the abolition of the Hindu state. The elites maintained their decision to move to a secular state, but added to the constitution a definition of 'secularism' that included protection for traditional religious practices. In addition, a law against proselytization was adopted in 2017. Article 158 of the National Panel Code (2017) prohibited proselytization to allay the fears of the Hindu majority. With regard to language policy, the eventual implementation of multilingualism in which Nepali remains the administrative language at the national level and other languages can be recognized as administrative languages in each province, can also be interpreted as a concession to public opinion. However, even such a more nuanced assessment does not deny the gap between elites and public opinion, and there is no evidence that such concessions have led to more public support.

11.2 Implications for Society

If we disregard the reform of the unitary state into a federal state for the moment because of the low (although growing) public awareness, the transformation of the Nepali political system contains one reform on which there was largely congruence between elites and public opinion in the end, and two reforms on which elite and public preferences remained largely opposed. From a normative point of view, the situation of congruence seems preferable both with regard to the legitimacy and the stability of the political system (also see Doorenspleet & Shrestha 2013). However, Nepal is a very diverse country, sharply divided along ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural lines. In such a society, congruence between the political elites and a popular majority (or even only plurality) may allow the preferences of this majority to overwhelm the rights of minorities. That would likely erode the allegiance of minorities to the state with long-term risks for political stability. The issue of monarchy versus republic was not strongly related to the diversity of Nepali: the gradual public acceptance of the transition to a republic can be seen in all but a few groups or demographic categories. With regard to this issue the risk of a 'tyranny of the majority' seems remote. But the religious identity of the state, the official language, and the choice between unitarism and federalism are of immediate relevance to the cultural diversity. That the major political parties opted for a secular state and multilingualism protects the interests of religious and linguistic minorities despite opposition from the majority of the general public on both issues (also see Sen 2020; Sen 2021; Sen 2022; Sen 2023). This may in a most positive interpretation be seen as support for the position in the literature that the elites are the benevolent guardians of political tolerance and minority rights.

However, this is not an easy or comfortable position for the elites. This study shows how the elites must struggle to reconcile both the majority and the minorities. For example, a 2021 public opinion survey shows that 52 percent of the population feel that Nepal should be a Hindu state (Nepali Times 26 Mar 2021), hardly less than in the latest survey (2012) used in this study, despite the concessions made by the elites in the text of the 2015 Constitution and in anti-conversion laws in 2017. On the other hand, immediately after the promulgation of the new Constitution, Madhes-based political parties criticized the provision of citizenship (as discriminating against many Madhesi), the access to employment in the public sector, and the delimitation of electoral constituencies. In February 2016 the new Constitution was amended to meet some of their demands, but disagreements, including over the provision of citizenship, remain to this day.

It may be too early to reach a conclusion about the legitimacy and consolidation of the new political system of Nepal. There has been considerable political instability in recent years, but so far this does not seem to be directly related to the four reforms. There are occasional calls for a return to a Hindu state or even for a restoration of the monarchy, but so far they do not seem to mobilise significant movements. The right-wing Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), for example, has been organizing mass demonstrations demanding the restoration of both the monarchy and the Hindu state. They argue that these two things are necessary for protecting democracy and bringing political stability in the country.

11.3 Implications for Political Science

For this study, I derived expectations from the literature on the relationship between elite preferences and decisions on the one hand, and public opinion on the other hand. Note that this literature tends to focus on economic and social issues, and not on the 'high politics' of a drastic overhaul of the political system.

Table 11.1: Overview of (Support for) Expectations on Relationship between Elite and Public Opinion

1	Public opinion does not unilaterally direct the reform decision (Position 1).	Support
2	On reforms that are not salient to the general public, political parties take decisions based on their own judgement (Position 2); Over time public preferences move closer to party decisions.	Support; No support
3	On reforms that are salient to the general public, public opinion and elite decisions reciprocally affect each other (Position 3); Over time public preferences and party decisions converge.	No support; Other than elite concessions on secular state and multilingualism
4a	Political elites are more likely to support the reforms than the general public.	Support
4b	The higher the educational status of the general public, the higher the support for the reforms.	Only with regard to abolition of monarchy, Hindu state and unitary state, but not with regard to abolition of Nepali-only policy
4c	The political elites and the higher educated public are more likely to support the reforms than the lower educated public	Only with regard to abolition of monarchy, Hindu state and unitary state, but not with regard to abolition of Nepali-only policy

Expectations 4a-c were mainly intended to detect a composition effect. We already mentioned that on the abolition of the monarchy, Hindu state and the unitary state the preferences of the higher educated were closer to those of the elites but not identical, and that a composition effect offers only a partial explanation. Moreover, the issues of the multilingualism an exception is that the higher educated were actually less supportive of the reforms. The preference for a Nepali-only policy of the higher educated may be caused by the fact that they have less difficulty communicating in that language, even if it is not their first language and by the circumstance that they are likely to find themselves in positions in which they experience the advantages of a unilingual policy in a society of such linguistic diversity.

The expectations with regard to issue saliency receive less support from this study. Obviously, when only few citizens have a clear preference on an issue, the elites cannot take public opinion as their guide, even if they would want or try to. But the evidence is not convincing that public preferences move closer to the decision taken, in this case to adopt a federal state structure. When issues are salient, the literature suggests a reciprocal dynamic between elites and public opinion, but there is very little evidence of this kind of reciprocity. On the abolition of the monarchy, the general public gradually moved closer to the position of the parties, but this is a pattern that is expected more when the issue is of low salience. It might be argued that the choice between monarchy and republic was a special case in Nepal because of the royal massacre and the coup d'etat by the King. On the other two reforms (abolition of the Hindu state and introduction of multilingualism) there was also no reciprocity. Even if we accept that the parties did make concessions to the majority public opinion, it is striking that this had no effect on public opinion. Here no ad hoc explanation is readily available. Removing the religious identity of the state may be regarded as a threat to the personal religious identity of the 81 percent of the people who are Hindu. On the other hand, the part of the population that speaks Nepali is much smaller (45 percent) which makes it difficult to understand why the opposition to multilingualism has been so strong. Obviously, issue salience alone is not a good predictor of the dynamics between political elites and public opinion.

11.4 Implications for Data and Methods

Without the availability of longitudinal public opinion polls it would have been very hard to study the ruptures and continuities in public opinion toward the transformation of the political system. The political elites would not have accurate information about the preferences of the citizens, and there would have been no basis for the academic study of the relationship between elites and public opinion. The public opinion polls show that it is feasible to collect data on public opinion in circumstances that are challenging in a country such as Nepal compared to those in established Western democracies: not only in terms of accessibility of sampled sites, but also in terms of conducting interviews in circumstances of societal and political unrest or even violence – at the beginning of the survey series because of the violent struggle between Maoist armed groups and the army, later because of the activities of Madhes based armed groups in the Tarai. In hindsight, one always wishes that more and perhaps alternatively worded questions would have been included in the surveys, but that is par for the course of public opinion research, in particular if this research is based on secondary data not collected for the scientific study at hand. For starters, for future research it would be particularly important to try to include all questions in all surveys. The fact that only two surveys included questions on all four reforms considerably limited the analysis of the underlying structure of people's preferences.

This study was fortunate to be able to take into account the published results of one survey of the preferences of members of the political elite. This complemented the study of the decisions made by the political elite. However, the study of the dynamics between political elites and public opinion would profit significantly if there is an elite survey held at the same time of each public opinion survey, and if the question wording would be coordinated.

11.5 The Future

The transformation of Nepal's political system has not been a smooth or easy process. Hopefully, this study has helped the reader to better understand that process and to appreciate its significance as a reversal of centuries of top-down efforts to turn a highly diverse society into a centralized and homogeneous country modelled after the culture of the dominant group in society. The new constitution is an important step towards embracing the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural character of Nepali society. An inclusive democracy needs to accommodate the views of the minorities and marginalized too, not just the views of the majority and the dominant groups or political elites.

A comprehensive consensus that protects Nepal's minorities is still to be fully realised. A number of Hindu groups and leaders are demanding that the country again be declared a Hindu state and a monarchy. Prominent Hindu groups have been organising rallies in various cities around the country demanding the restitution of the Hindu state in the new constitution. A rightist and ultra-nationalist party, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), has also been demonstrating in numerous cities demanding a Hindu state and a monarchy. The party organized a protest rally on 9 April 2024 in the capital city Kathmandu demanding the restoration of a Hindu state and a monarchy. Needless to say, these protest rallies are not strong enough to alter the basic characteristics of the country's new constitution. Some mid-level figures in the Nepali Congress are also opposed to a secular state identity and demanding for an amendment of the constitution to make the country again a Hindu state. Naming of provinces are also in debate. As per Article 295 (2) of the new constitution, provincial assemblies have been given a right to endorse names of their respective provinces. There was not a big conflict while naming other provinces, but naming of Province-1 (as it was called before) led to a big conflict between indigenous community and high cast hill group (Khas-Arya as they are called now). The province was finally named Koshi[89] on 1 March 2023 through a majority decision of the Province Assembly despite the demonstrations were held in front of the secretariat of the Province Assembly demanding that the province's name should reflect identity of indigenous people of the region. The proposal of the ruling CPN (UML) was approved by more than two-thirds majority of the Province Assembly with the support from the Nepali Congress, CPN (Maoist Centre) and Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP). In spite of protests from some political parties that were advocating for an ethnicity-based name, consensus among Province Assembly members representing these four political parties made it possible to endorse the name through a two-thirds majority. Another name proposed by some identity-based parties was 'Kirat-Limbuwan-Sagarmatha', which was rejected by the Province Assembly. With this endorsement, the desire of indigenous communities and their organizations to have a name of the province based on ethnic identity remained unfulfilled. A series of public protests erupted immediately after the naming of the province. Various ethnic organisations began

[89] Koshi is a trans-boundary river that originates from Tibetan Plateau, crosses the Himalaya ranges of eastern Nepal, flows through Mahabharat and Siwalik hills, and reaches the plains of Tarai from where it finally meets Ganga river in India.

protesting with demands that the province must be renamed reflecting the identity of the major indigenous communities of the region. Various ethnic organizations under the leadership of the Joint Struggle Committee (formed by identitarian parties and organisations) called a mass protest demanding that the province's new name must reflect the region's ethnic identity. The Koshi provincial government too formed a committee on 7 June 2023 to hold talks with the agitating organizations who were dissatisfied with the name Koshi. Several rounds of talks have taken place in the meantime. However, a concrete solution has not been achieved yet.

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Annex 1: Beta Coefficients Given by Binary Logistic Regression with Support for the Republic rather than the Monarchy as the Dependent Variable (1 = Monarchy, 2 = Republic); Unpooled Analysis

	Dec 2004	Jan 2006	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Hindu (Reference)									
Buddhist	.280	.263	-.178	-.503*	-.120	.067	-.066	-.237	-.026
Muslim	-.397	-4.814*	-.213	-.612	.612	-1.586	.673	-.678	-.404
Christian	.816	.452	-.852	-.623	.196	.500	.673	.838*	.498
Kirati	-18.123	-18.649	.989**	.200	.416	1.583**	1.475***	.280	.375
Hill Caste (Reference)									
Hill Indigenous Group	-.276	.172	-.043	.255	-.091	.476**	-.120	.338*	.164
Hill Dalit	-1.550	-.286	-.104	-.153	-.339	.146	-.157	-.056	.232
Newar	-.403	1.381**	-.249	-.563**	-.288	-.222	-.604**	-.791***	-.735***
Madhesi Caste	-.121	-.988**	-.559***	-.744***	-.396**	-1.008***	-.686***	-.527***	-.767***
Tarai Indigenous Group	-.002	.250	-.173	-.748***	-.100	-.312	-.566**	-.311	-.400*
Madhesi Dalit	-.162	-.121	-.575*	-.424*	-.297	-1.248***	-.105	-.514*	-.864***
Muslim	-.478	4.162*	-.282	.735	-1.006	.543	-1.084	-.006	-.017
EDR (Reference)									
CDR	-.215	.570*	-.737***	-.017	-.902***	.137	.165	.018	.504***
WDR	.688**	-.800*	.207	.862***	-.029	-.042	.666***	.181	.412**
MWDR	-1.127	-1.601*	.001	1.251***	.343*	1.622***	.497**	.652***	2.070***
FWDR	.662	.578	.169	1.145***	.420*	1.763***	1.230***	1.425***	1.058***
Illiterate (Reference)									
Informal education	-.070	-.165	.393**	.605***	.683***	.433**	.713***	.060	.591***
Primary/lower sec.	.137	-.231	.417**	.896***	1.103***	.659***	.727***	.201	1.084***
Secondary	.311	.626	1.092***	1.505***	1.655***	1.195***	1.385***	.618***	1.475***
Higher sec.	.672	.928*	.978***	1.749***	1.787***	1.455***	1.624***	.978***	1.718***
Bachelor's+	1.017*	1.626***	1.588***	2.317***	1.614***	2.133***	1.912***	1.112***	2.185***
18-25 (Reference)									

26-35	-.371	.006	.256*	.006	.126	.116	-.102	-.017	.116
36-45	-.223	-.256	.320*	.311*	.312*	-.146	-.097	.154	.222
46-55	-.089	-.720*	.206	.155	.213	-.197	.119	.030	.491**
56-65	-.415	-.452	.345*	-.187	.201	-.358	-.315	.066	.451*
Above 65	-1.262	-1.359	-.014	-.358	.111	-.499	-.748**	-.671**	.033
CPN (Maoist) (Reference)									
Nepali Congress			-1.842***	-1.611***	-.932***	-1.891***	-.876***	-1.765***	-1.289***
CPN (UML)			-1.109***	-.734**	-.565**	-1.662***	-.539**	-.887**	-.869***
Small rightist parties			-3.103***	-3.483***	-2.062***	-3.959***	-3.091***	-3.174***	-4.312***
Small leftist parties			-1.364**	-.404	.383	-1.928**	-1.602**	-2.547**	.085
Tarai based regional parties			-2.924***	-1.268**	.033	-2.232***	-1.301***	-1.082**	-.610*
Constant	-2.873***	-3.169***	.830***	.122	.145	1.905***	-.026	1.355***	-.062
N	2614	2385	2740	2653	2624	2642	2715	2686	2691
Nagelkerke R^2	0.067	0.145	0.265	0.311	0.263	0.316	0.243	0.200	0.280

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05; Party support not asked in the Dec 2004 and Jan 2006 surveys

Annex 2: Beta Coefficients of Binary Logistic Regression with Support for the Secular State rather than the Hindu State as the Dependent Variable (1 = Hindu state, 2 = Secular state); Unpooled Analysis

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Hindu (Reference)							
Buddhist	0.917***	1.763***	2.666***	.942***	.444*	1.905***	1.555***
Muslim	2.155	3.020***	4.896**	3.923***	3.069***	2.666**	2.635*
Christian	1.053	3.754***	2.312***	2.069***	3.345***	1.667***	4.938***
Kirati	2.572***	3.123***	1.622***	1.796***	1.891***	1.224***	3.493***
Hill Caste (Reference)							
Hill Indigenous Group	0.275	0.229	0.619***	.946***	.862***	.942***	0.804***
Hill Dalit	-0.098	-0.394	0.349	.288	.279	.215	0.041
Newar	-0.209	0.348	0.399	-.057	.095	.265	0.350
Madhesi Caste	-0.824***	-0.325*	-0.764***	-.075	-.315*	-.107	-0.461**
Tarai Indigenous Group	-1.125***	-0.820***	-0.306	-.144	-.032	1.152***	0.206
Madhesi Dalit	-1.134***	-0.104	-1.331**	-.603*	-.158	-.023	0.063
Muslim	0.386	1.212	-1.230	-.888	-.472	.548	0.530
Eastern DR (Reference)							
Central DR	-0.662***	-0.039	-0.949***	-.295*	.500***	-.883***	0.707***
Western DR	0.216	0.274	-0.820***	-.522***	.661***	-.323*	1.808***
Mid-western DR	0.916***	0.075	-0.779***	-.513**	.090	.294	2.232***
Far-western DR	-0.853***	0.608***	-0.614**	-1.124***	-.742***	-.229	-0.619**
Illiterate (Reference)							
Informal education	0.351*	0.336*	0.750***	.021	.466**	.210	0.336*
Primary/lower secondary	0.481***	0.240	0.692***	.028	.219	.359*	0.687***
Secondary	0.584***	0.609***	1.370***	.390**	.764***	.791***	0.930***
Higher secondary	0.913***	1.087***	1.422***	.647***	1.020***	.834***	1.419***
Bachelor's and above	1.227***	1.369***	1.892***	.664*	1.453***	1.348***	1.241***
18-25 (Reference)							
26-35	-0.063	-0.018	-0.303*	-.433***	-.253*	-.059	0.105
36-45	0.044	-0.257	-0.216	-.340*	-.212	-.117	0.133
46-55	0.114	-0.144	-0.259	-.588***	-.148	-.131	-0.158
56-65	0.037	-0.229	-0.472*	-.766***	-.339	.075	0.195
Above 65	-0.320	-0.431	-0.893**	-.566*	-.675**	-.391	-0.071
CPN (Maoist) (Reference)							

Nepali Congress	-1.042***	-0.779***	-0.345	-1.448***	-.947***	-.681**	-0.744***
CPN (UML)	-0.291	-0.302	-0.314	-.568**	-.790***	-.752**	-0.460*
Small rightist parties	-1.134***	-1.351***	-0.898*	-2.065**	-1.507***	-.826	-1.475**
Small leftist parties	0.135	-0.396	-0.044	-1.410**	-.591	-1.893	0.329
Tarai based regional parties	-1.721*	-1.627**	-0.616	-1.392***	-1.519***	-.948*	-1.171**
Constant	-0.186	-0.655**	-0.628*	.725**	-.647**	-.497*	-1.813***
N	2676	2724	2730	2817	2730	2766	2764
Nagelkerke R^2	0.318	0.317	0.398	0.276	0.239	0.299	0.383

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Annex 3: Beta Coefficients of Logistic Regression with Support for the Multilingualism rather than Nepali as the Only Official Language (1= Nepali only, 2= Other languages as well); Unpooled Analysis

	Sep 2006	May 2007	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Hindu (Reference)					
Buddhist	.316	-.235	-.015	.606**	.558**
Muslim	.274	.118	.073	1.043	1.112*
Christian	1.008	-.318	.130	-.159	.380
Kirati	.852**	.455	.744**	-.516	.647*
Hill Caste (Reference)					
Hill Indigenous Group	.752***	.744***	.573***	.664***	.718***
Hill Dalit	.443*	.028	-.198	-.202	.219
Newar	.489**	.537**	.431*	.200	.561**
Madhesi Caste	1.396***	1.538***	3.242***	2.154***	2.553***
Tarai Indigenous Group	1.733***	1.208***	1.794***	1.644***	1.503***
Madhesi Dalit	1.337***	1.787***	3.306***	2.279***	2.504***
Muslim	1.404	2.307***	2.531*	1.362	1.049
EDR (Reference)					
CDR	.434**	.681***	-.258	.578***	-.074
WDR	.790***	.027	-.155	.017	-.491**
MWDR	1.108***	.864***	-.459**	1.346***	-.413*
FWDR	.184	1.863***	-.293	.292	-.598**
Illiterate (Reference)					
Informal education	-.160	.023	.215	-.003	-.016
Primary/lower sec.	.028	-.346**	.032	-.219	-.021
Secondary	.142	.033	-.039	-.133	-.359*
Higher sec.	-.174	.026	.227	.091	-.147
Bachelor's+	-.066	.319	-.525	.497	-.837*
18-25 (Reference)					
26-35	.056	-.253*	-.070	-.062	-.036
36-45	.203	-.288*	.006	-.076	-.238
46-55	.090	-.299*	-.076	.064	-.018
56-65	-.032	-.513**	-.230	.101	-.163
Above 65	-.357	-.064	-.428	-.432	-.251
CPN (Maoist) (Reference)					
Nepali Congress	-.239	-.345	-.112	.093	
CPN (UML)	.046	-.279	.087	-.229	
Small rightist parties	-.325	-.275	.051	.456	

Small leftist parties	.622	.671	-.525	-.407	
Tarai based regional parties	.385	1.285*	1.342*	.726***	
Constant	-1.518***	-.947***	-.427	-1.639***	-1.047***
N	2753	2710	2757	2258	2742
Nagelkerke R^2	0.163	0.196	0.367	0.304	0.293

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05; Party support not asked in the Jul 2009 survey

Annex 4: Beta Coefficients of Binary Logistic Regression with Definitive Response and No Definitive Response to the Issue of Federalism as the Dependent Variable (1 = Definitive response, 2 = No definitive response); Unpooled Analysis

	Sep 2006	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Hindu (Reference)								
Buddhist	.473	-1.104***	.095	-.572**	-.410*	.105	.231	-.120
Muslim	1.180	-.749	-1.255	.175	-.291	-.533	-1.837*	2.057
Christian	-1.330	-.659	.133	.430	.572	-.711	-.576	.405
Kirati	-1.104	-1.434***	.588	.077	-.337	-.770*	-.733*	-.005
Hill Caste (Reference)								
Hill Indigenous Group	.614	1.239***	-.270	.582**	.104	-.034	.378*	.324*
Hill Dalit	.121	.680*	.437	.335	.297	-.187	.482*	.115
Newar	.491	.791**	.713**	.584*	.788***	.591**	.547*	.302
Madhesi Caste	.243	-.115	-.706***	.019	-.795***	-.369*	-.051	.366*
Tarai Indigenous Group	-.309	.325	-.452*	.463*	.035	.144	.645***	.207
Madhesi Dalit	.476	-.351	-.995**	-.329	-.651**	-.642*	-.213	.147
Muslim	-1.245	.284	.364	.081	-.577	-.027	1.223	-2.011
EDR (Reference)								
CDR	-.185	.771***	-.410*	.536***	.222	-.476***	-.501***	.283*
WDR	-.040	1.181***	.114	.527***	-.575***	.350*	-.249	.446**
MWDR	-.353	.535*	-.589**	1.309***	-.065	-.726***	-.765***	-.349*
FWDR	-.582	.189	-.003	.682***	-.403*	-1.721***	-.335	.864***
Illiterate (Reference)								
Informal education	-1.767**	-1.018***	-1.105***	-1.521***	-.793***	-.904***	-.855***	-1.467***
Primary/lower sec.	-2.011***	-1.761***	-1.735***	-1.847***	-1.377***	-1.730***	-1.393***	-1.988***
Secondary	-3.428***	-3.219***	-2.929***	-2.872***	-2.330***	-2.907***	-2.578***	-2.874***
Higher sec.	-4.404***	-3.847***	-3.786***	-3.536***	-2.981***	-3.765***	-3.155***	-3.833***
Bachelor's+	-5.385***	-5.384***	-4.727***	-4.760***	-3.938***	-4.257***	-3.458***	-3.988***
18-25 (Reference)								
26-35	-.691**	-.489**	.024	-.114	-.137	-.123	-.118	-.320*
36-45	-.638*	-.555***	-.404*	-.485**	-.218	-.316*	-.317*	-.494***
46-55	-1.304***	-.970***	-.463*	-.617***	-.288	-.399*	-.324	-.887***
56-65	-1.043**	-.693**	-.991***	-.630**	-.297	-.403	-.374	-.929***
Above 65	.340	-1.025**	-.775*	-.879**	.364	-.550*	-.319	-.931***
CPN (Maoist) (Reference)								
Nepali Congress	.551*	-.169	.111		-.103	-.133	.154	.623***
CPN (UML)	.185	.262	-.116		-.149	-.167	-.208	.128
Small rightist parties	.187	.743	.833		-.070	.167	-.795*	.377

Small leftist parties	-.053	.120	.002		-.149	-.364	-.414	-.262
Tarai based regional parties	.146	-.599	1.110***		-.461*	-.126	-.651**	.278
Constant	5.589***	2.687***	3.857***	2.596***	1.790***	2.879***	1.977***	1.722***
N	3000	3010	3025	3004	3000	3000	3000	3010
Nagelkerke R^2	.308	.425	.289	.277	.317	.374	.355	.353

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05; the party preference of respondents was not asked in the July 2009 survey

Annex 5: Beta Coefficients of Binary Logistic Regression with Support for the Federal State rather than the Unitary State (1 = Unitary state, 2 = Federal state); Unpooled Analysis

	Sep 2006	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
Hindu (Reference)								
Buddhist	-1.710	1.307	-.396	.853*	.513	.130	-.305	.070
Muslim	-.219	1.397*	.009	21.828	-.292	-1.231	.444	-19.903
Christian	18.990	-.012	-.556	20.713	-1.800**	-.789	-.260	-.271
Kirati	-.973	1.570	17.965	1.993	.985	1.517*	.833	-.007
Hill Caste (Reference)								
Hill Indigenous Group	-.399	.232	.851	-.285	.839**	-.204	.133	.366
Hill Dalit	20.058	-.045	-.279	-.554	.024	.192	.387	.377
Newar	-.702	.005	-.175	.120	.873*	.102	.114	.478
Madhesi Caste	-.074	1.938***	2.915**	.376	.845***	.714**	2.304***	.314
Tarai Indigenous Group	-1.464	.704	1.464*	.346	.004	-.258	1.382***	-.233
Madhesi Dalit	18.472	1.924*	19.991	-.100	.938**	.270	2.998***	1.455**
Muslim	-.219	1.397*	19.932	-21.251	-.136	.776	1.203	20.907
EDR (Reference)								
CDR	1.045	-.011	-.716	-.195	-.618**	.046	-.656**	-.435*
WDR	-.809	.696	-1.382**	-1.212***	-1.495***	.000	-.402	-.124
MWDR	-.551	.361	.235	1.024*	1.030***	.272	-.572*	-.789***
FWDR	-.995	.967*	-1.048	1.290**	.883**	.138	-.637*	.458
Illiterate (Reference)								
Informal education	-18.682	-.286	-.583	.453	.626*	-.215	-.248	-.450
Primary/lower sec.	-17.626	.146	-.373	.598	.099	-.133	-.009	-.062
Secondary	-17.789	.298	.064	1.310**	.548*	-.134	-.042	.305
Higher sec.	-17.770	.653	.543	.367	.922***	-.366	.156	.227
Bachelor's+	-18.013	.635	-.690	1.368**	1.284**	.645	.353	.912*
18-25 (Reference)								
26-35	-.130	-.504	-.201	.097	-.229	-.594***	-.106	-.100
36-45	-1.208	-.145	-.042	-.106	-.512**	-.456*	-.136	.351
46-55	.019	-.056	-.131	.548	-.020	-.330	.291	.304
56-65	-.076	.274	.094	-.355	-.356	-.603	-.221	.032
Above 65	-20.818	1.081	.422	-.604	-.916	.552	-.148	-.751*
CPN(Maoist) (Reference)								
Nepali Congress	-1.866*	-.202	-.870*		-.963**	-1.497***	-.935**	-.863***
CPN (UML)	-1.786*	.039	.111		-.897**	-1.164***	.062	-.962***
Small rightist parties	-.981	-1.206	-1.428		-2.172**	-1.940***	-.407	-1.923***

Small leftist parties	-.694	-.680	-1.793*		-2.921***	-.972	-.679	-1.497**
Tarai based regional parties	16.353	.171	16.787		-1.001*	-.888	.548	-.300
Constant	21.158	.496	2.529*	-.061	1.215**	1.755***	.828*	1.258**
N	174	648	485	741	1338	1078	1196	1286
Nagelkerke R^2	0.334	0.175	0.276	0.227	0.305	0.130	0.255	0.131

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05; Party support not asked in the July 2009 survey

English Summary for the PhD Thesis by Pawan K. Sen: *Transforming Nepal's Political System: Party Positions and Public Opinion (2004-2012)*

The study analyses the structure and dynamics of opinions of the general public of Nepal with the radical transformation of the country's political system in the recent past, with a particular focus on the four major state restructuring issues (i.e. four major political reforms: republicanism, secularism, multilingualism and federalism), and compares them with the positions taken by Nepal's major political parties on these reforms. The four reforms together made up the transformation that was eventually codified into the new Constitution of the country in September 2015. However, even when the new Constitution was promulgated, the public opinion had not preferred to all four reforms.

This researcher's access to raw data of public opinion polls conducted during the period of transformation, have enabled him to study the structure and development of Nepal's public opinion on issues of transformation, and to compare this to the positions taken by the main political parties. The researcher has also been able study a considerable body of literature concerning quantitative and comparative research on political transformations in Nepal and other countries, particularly empirical research on the relationship between political parties and public opinion. This research reveals that there is a dominant role of political elites from the major political parties in the transformation of country's political system. However, the research has also shown that a new political system's legitimacy and sustainability depend not only on the strong (and non-violent) support of the main political parties, but also – despite findings supporting the theory of 'democratic elitism' – primarily on that of the general public or citizenry – even if the latter has not been directly involved in shaping this transformation through for example a referendum on a new constitution (such a referendum did not occur in Nepal, though the people did elect the Constituent Assembly).

Amongst the four reforms discussed in this study, on only one reform i.e., from monarchy to republic, the latest public opinion (April 2012) showed majority support (i.e., 50 percent) for a republic, with a substantial minority of 39 percent still supporting the monarchy. On the issue of Hindu state vs. secular state, there was more public support than opposition for retaining of the Hindu state instead of a secular state. The latest finding (April 2012) showed that 55 percent would had preferred to maintain the identification of the state with Hinduism while only 37 percent agreed with the adoption of a secular state. On multilingualism, the latest survey in which the question was asked (July 2009) revealed only 40 percent support for recognition of other national or foreign languages as official languages against a majority of 55 percent preferring a Nepali-only language policy. In both cases, the proportions of the population that agreed with the reforms are substantial, but remain minorities nevertheless. With regard to the reform of the unitary state into a federal state, there was more public support for federalism (28 percent) than for the unitary state (14 percent) in the latest survey (April 2012), but more importantly, a majority (58 percent) could not express any choice definitively (i.e. either they had not heard about the issue, or did not understand it, or didn't know what to think of it).

Looking at the pattern of support for the reforms across regions, ethnic groups, religious groups, political affiliation, educational status etc., the survey data revealed the supports for obvious expectations: the supporters of the Maoist party who first demanded these reforms tended to agree with them; the groups in Nepali society that had been negatively affected by the centuries of domination by the Hindu high caste hill group and the attempts to homogenise Nepali society were mostly in favour of reforms that introduced a republic, secular state, multilingualism and federalism. What is interesting, however, is that these relationships between groups and preferences for reforms are far from deterministic: for example, in all surveys over 60 percent of Hindus preferred maintaining the Hindu state, but between a quarter and a third of this religious group actually preferred a secular state. Meanwhile Buddhists, the largest non-Hindu religious group, showed clear majority support for a secular state in most surveys, but also sizeable minorities (of up to 35 percent) wanting to keep Nepal as a Hindu state. In addition, there are interesting exceptions to what one would expect. Given the long association of the Nepali state with efforts to assimilate other groups into the culture of the Hindu high caste hill group, it would not be surprising if support for retaining the monarchy was strongest and declined least and latest among members of that group compared to support among more marginal groups, such as Dalit, people living in the Tarai, and indigenous groups. But the data showed that, if anything, support for the monarchy declined earlier and more among members of the hill high caste group. Federalism became controversial only late in the transformation, largely because of political action in the Tarai. Yet, both awareness of and support for federalism fluctuated among groups living in that part of the country. A composition effect offers only a partial explanation on the abolition of the monarchy, Hindu state and unitary state because though the preferences of the higher educated were closer to those of the elites but not identical. On the issue of multilingualism, the higher educated were less supportive of the reforms. Majority of them supported the Nepali-only policy.

By examining the relationship between the decisions of the political elites and public opinions, it is possible to distinguish three main positions or perspectives: 1) the decisions by the political elites reflect public opinion; 2) the decisions by the political elites reflect their own judgement; and 3) the decisions by the political elites and public opinion are in a reciprocal relationship, adapting to each other. The literature shows support for each of these three positions. Which of the three positions actually applies seems to depend on various sources of variation. For this study of Nepal's political transformation, issue salience seems particularly relevant. If reforms are not or less salient to the general public, the probability increases that the decisions taken reflect the agenda of the political elites. In this case over time public preferences are likely to move closer to the decisions already taken. If reforms are more salient, public opinion and elite decisions reciprocally influence each other, and over time public preferences and elite decisions converge. At first sight, however, this study does not empirically support these expectations.

It might be argued that on some of the issues the parties also moderated their positions to some extent. This is clearest on the abolition of the Hindu state. The elites maintained their decision to move to a secular state, but added to the constitution a definition of 'secularism' that included protection for traditional religious practices. In addition, a law against proselytization was adopted in 2017. Article 158 of the National Panel Code (2017) prohibited proselytization to allay

the fears of the Hindu majority. With regard to language policy, the eventual implementation of multilingualism in which Nepali remains the administrative language at the national level and other languages can be recognized as administrative languages in each province, can also be interpreted as a concession to public opinion. However, even such a more nuanced assessment does not deny the gap between elites and public opinion, and there is no evidence that such concessions have led to more public support. However, it may be too early to reach a conclusion about the legitimacy and consolidation of the new political system of Nepal. There are occasional calls for a return to a Hindu state or even for a restoration of the monarchy, but so far they do not seem to mobilise significant movements. The right-wing Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), for example, has been organizing mass demonstrations demanding the restoration of both the monarchy and the Hindu state. They argue that these two things are necessary for protecting democracy and bringing political stability in the country.

Finally, the promulgation of the 2015 Constitution formally concluded one of the most radical transformations of a political system in the recent history: from a monarchy to a republic, from a Hindu state to a secular state, from a unitary state to a federation, and from one official language to a multilingual state. The political elites of Nepal proved themselves to be the benevolent guardians of political tolerance and minority rights. Nepal has always been characterized by great cultural diversity, but from the foundation of the Gorkha Empire in 1768, Nepal's history can be summarized as a long attempt at political and cultural unification modelled after the culture of the dominant Hindu high caste hill group. The new constitution abandons that project and seeks to embrace and formally acknowledges the country's diversity.

Nederlandstalige samenvatting proefschrift Pawan K. Sen: Transforming Nepal's Political System: Party Positions and Public Opinion (2004-2012) [*De hervorming van het politieke bestel van Nepal: partijposities en publieke opinie (2004-2012)*]

Deze studie behelst een beschrijving en analyse van de structuur en dynamiek van de publieke opinie (op massaniveau) van Nepal in het licht van de radicale transformatie van het politieke systeem van het land in het recente verleden. De aandacht gaat in het bijzonder uit naar vier grote herstructureringskwesties of hervormingen, te weten de overgang naar republicanisme, secularisme, meertaligheid en federalisme. De publieke opinie ten aanzien van deze hervormingen wordt bestudeerd in relatie met standpunten die de belangrijkste politieke partijen van Nepal innamen met betrekking tot deze hervormingen. De vier hervormingen samen vormden de transformatie of staatshervorming die uiteindelijk in september 2015 werd vastgelegd of gecodificeerd in de nieuwe grondwet van Nepal. Na afkondiging van de nieuwe grondwet had de publieke opinie overigens niet in meerderheid een voorkeur voor alle vier daarin opgenomen hervormingen.

De toegang tot originele longitudinale data van opiniepeilingen die werden uitgevoerd tijdens de periode van transformatie, heeft het voor deze studie mogelijk gemaakt om de structuur en ontwikkeling van de publieke opinie van Nepal over de betreffende transformatie(s) te bestuderen en deze te vergelijken met de standpunten van de belangrijkste politieke partijen. Een en ander is gepositioneerd in de literatuur over majeure politieke transformaties in Nepal en andere landen, met name empirisch onderzoek naar de relatie of interactie tussen politieke partijen en de publieke opinie. Dit onderzoek toont de overwegend dominante rol is van politieke elites van de grote politieke partijen in de transformatie van het politieke systeem. Het onderzoek heeft echter ook aangetoond dat de legitimiteit en duurzaamheid van een nieuw politiek systeem niet slechts afhangen van de sterke (en geweldloze) steun van de belangrijkste politieke partijen, maar ook - ondanks bevindingen die opvattingen van 'democratisch elitisme' ondersteunen – en misschien zelfs voornamelijk van de steun van het algemene publiek of de 'gewone' burgers, zelfs als deze niet direct betrokken zijn geweest bij het vormgeven van deze transformatie via bijvoorbeeld een referendum over een nieuwe grondwet. (Een dergelijk referendum vond niet plaats in Nepal, hoewel de mensen wel de grondwetgevende vergadering kozen.)

Van de vier hervormingen die in deze studie worden besproken, toonde de laatste of althans meest recente meting van de publieke opinie (van april 2012) bij slechts één hervorming, namelijk van monarchie naar republiek, meerderheidssteun (althans: 50 procent) voor een republiek, met een substantiële minderheid van bijna 39 procent die de monarchie steunt. Ten aanzien van de kwestie van de hindoestaat versus de seculiere staat was er meer publieke steun voor het behoud van de hindoestaat dan voor de hervorming tot een seculiere staat. In april 2012 gaf 55 procent de voorkeur aan het behoud van de identificatie van de staat met het hindoeïsme, terwijl slechts 37 procent het eens was met de invoering van een seculiere staat. Ten aanzien van meertaligheid liet de laatste enquête waarin de vraag werd gesteld (van juli 2009) zien dat slechts 40 procent steun uitsprak voor de erkenning van andere nationale of vreemde talen als officiële

talen, terwijl een meerderheid van 55 procent de voorkeur gaf aan een taalbeleid dat alleen het Nepalees als officiële taal erkende. In beide gevallen zijn de percentages van de bevolking die het eens waren met de hervormingen substantieel, maar desalniettemin minderheden. Met betrekking tot de hervorming van de eenheidsstaat tot een federale staat was er meer publieke steun voor federalisme (28 procent) dan voor de eenheidsstaat (14 procent) in het onderzoek van april 2012, maar - belangrijker nog - een meerderheid (58 procent) kon geen definitieve keuze maken of voorkeur uitspreken (d.w.z. ze hadden er niet van gehoord, begrepen het niet dan wel wisten niet wat ze ervan moesten denken).

Als we kijken naar het patroon van steun voor de hervormingen in verschillende regio's, onder diverse etnische en religieuze groepen, naar politieke voorkeur, naar onderwijsstatus, enz., dan leveren de bevindingen steun voor enigszins voor de hand liggende verwachtingen: de aanhangers van de maoïstische partij, die als eerste deze hervormingen eiste, waren het er over het algemeen mee eens; de groepen in de Nepalese samenleving die negatieve ervaringen hadden vanwege de eeuwenlange overheersing door de hindoeïstische hoge kaste-heuvelgroep (*high caste hill group*) en hun pogingen om de Nepalese samenleving te homogeniseren, waren overwegend voorstander van hervormingen die een republiek, een seculiere staat, meertaligheid en federalisme introduceerden. Wat echter interessant is, is dat deze relaties tussen groepen en voorkeuren voor hervormingen verre van deterministisch zijn; in alle onderzoeken gaf, bijvoorbeeld, meer dan 60 procent van de hindoes de voorkeur aan het behoud van de hindoestaat, maar even zo goed gaf tussen een kwart en een derde deel van deze religieuze groep de voorkeur aan een seculiere staat. Tegelijkertijd toonden boeddhisten, de grootste niet-hindoeïstische religieuze groep, in de meeste onderzoeken duidelijke meerderheidssteun voor een seculiere staat, maar waren er ook aanzienlijke minderheden (tot 35 procent) die Nepal als hindoestaat wilden behouden. Het onderzoek laat ook andere, niet direct verwachte bevindingen zien. Gezien de lange associatie van de Nepalese staat met pogingen om andere groepen te assimileren in de cultuur van de hindoeïstische hoge kaste heuvelgroep, zou het niet verrassend zijn als de steun voor het behoud van de monarchie het sterkst was en het minst en laatst afnam onder leden van die groep in vergelijking met de steun onder meer marginale groepen, zoals Dalit, mensen die in de Tarai wonen en inheemse groepen. Maar de data laten zien dat de steun voor de monarchie juist eerder en meer afnam onder de leden van de hoge kaste-heuvelgroep. Federalisme werd pas laat in de transformatie controversieel, grotendeels vanwege politieke actie in de Tarai. Toch fluctueerde zowel het besef van als de steun voor federalisme onder groepen die in dat deel van het land woonden. Een compositie-effect biedt overigens slechts een gedeeltelijke verklaring voor de houding ten aanzien van de afschaffing van de monarchie, de hindoestaat en de eenheidsstaat: hoewel de voorkeuren van de hoger opgeleiden dichter bij die van de elites lagen, waren ze er zeker niet identiek mee. Wat betreft meertaligheid waren de hoger opgeleiden zelfs minder voorstander van de hervormingen; de meerderheid van hen steunde het beleid dat Nepalees als enige officiële taal voorstond.

Door de relatie tussen de beslissingen van de politieke elites en de publieke opinie te onderzoeken, is het mogelijk om drie hoofdposities of perspectieven te onderscheiden: 1) de beslissingen van de politieke elites weerspiegelen de publieke opinie; 2) de beslissingen van de politieke elites weerspiegelen hun eigen oordeel; en 3) de beslissingen van de politieke elites en

de publieke opinie staan in een wederkerige relatie tot elkaar en passen zich aan elkaar aan. De literatuur toont steun voor elk van deze drie standpunten. Welke van de drie standpunten daadwerkelijk in een bepaalde situatie van toepassing is, lijkt af te hangen van verschillende bronnen van variatie. Voor deze studie van de politieke transformatie in Nepal lijkt de relevantie (*saliency*) van de betreffende kwestie met name relevant. Als hervormingen niet of minder relevant zijn in de ogen van het grote publiek, neemt de kans toe dat de genomen beslissingen de agenda van de politieke elites weerspiegelen. In dit geval zullen de publieke voorkeuren in de loop van de tijd waarschijnlijk dichter bij de reeds genomen beslissingen komen. Als hervormingen op massaniveau relevanter zijn, beïnvloeden de publieke opinie en de beslissingen van de elite elkaar wederzijds, en convergeren de publieke voorkeuren en de beslissingen van de elite in de loop der tijd. Op het eerste gezicht ondersteunt deze studie deze verwachtingen echter niet eenduidig empirisch.

Er zou kunnen worden betoogd dat de partijen op sommige kwesties hun standpunten ook enigszins hebben gematigd. Dit is het duidelijkst bij de afschaffing van de hindoestaat. De elites hielden vast aan hun besluit om over te gaan naar een seculiere staat, maar voegden aan de grondwet een definitie van 'secularisme' toe die bescherming voor traditionele religieuze praktijken omvatte. Daarnaast werd in 2017 een wet tegen proselitisme aangenomen. Artikel 158 van de National Panel Code (2017) verbood dergelijke bekeringsijver om de angsten van de hindoeïstische meerderheid weg te nemen. Met betrekking tot taalbeleid kan de uiteindelijke implementatie van meertaligheid, waarbij Nepalees de bestuurstaal blijft op nationaal niveau en andere talen in elke provincie als bestuurstaal kunnen worden erkend, ook worden geïnterpreteerd als een concessie aan de publieke opinie. Echter, zelfs een dergelijke genuanceerdere beoordeling ontkent de kloof tussen elites en publieke opinie niet, en er is geen empirisch bewijs dat dergelijke concessies hebben geleid tot meer publieke steun. Maar het is mogelijk te vroeg om een conclusie te trekken over de legitimiteit en consolidatie van het nieuwe politieke systeem van Nepal. Zo zijn er af en toe oproepen voor een terugkeer naar een hindoestaat of zelfs voor een herstel van de monarchie. De rechtse Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) organiseert bijvoorbeeld massademonstraties om het herstel van zowel de monarchie als de hindoestaat te eisen. De partij stelt dat deze twee dingen noodzakelijk zijn om de democratie te beschermen en politieke stabiliteit in het land te brengen. Tot op heden (2024) lijken dergelijke bewegingen of initiatieven echter geen significante bewegingen te mobiliseren.

Tot slot. Met de afkondiging van de grondwet van 2015 werd formeel een van de meest radicale transformaties van een politiek systeem in de recente geschiedenis afgerond: van een monarchie naar een republiek; van een hindoestaat naar een seculiere staat; van een eenheidsstaat naar een federale staat; en van één officiële taal naar een meertalige staat. De politieke elites van Nepal bewezen zich daarbij de welwillende bewakers te zijn van politieke tolerantie en minderheidsrechten. Nepal is altijd gekenmerkt geweest door een grote culturele diversiteit, maar vanaf de oprichting van het Gorkha-rijk in 1768 kan de geschiedenis van Nepal worden gezien als een lange poging tot politieke en culturele eenwording, gemodelleerd naar de cultuur van de dominante hindoeïstische hoge kastegroep. De nieuwe grondwet laat dat project varen en tracht de diversiteit van het land te omarmen en formeel te erkennen.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Mr. Pawan Kumar Sen (Darsing Dahathum, Nepal, 1970) studied the two-years Senior Secondary Certificate (Science Group) in Punjab School Education Board (Chandigarh, India) between 1989 and 1991, and a two-years Bachelor's degree of Science (with courses in Mathematics, Statistics and Meteorology) in Tri-Chandra College (Kathmandu, Nepal) between 1992 and 1993, that allowed him to the MSc program. He completed his first Master's degree in Statistics from Tribhuvan University (Kathmandu, Nepal) in 1995 and second Master's degree in Water Resources and Environmental Management from the International Institute of Geo-information Science and Earth Observation (Enschede, Netherlands) in 2004. His academic training is augmented with the short courses of Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis (Leiden University, the Netherlands, 2012); Philosophy of Science (Leiden University, the Netherlands, 2012); and Survey Data Analysis (Institute for Social and Environmental Research Nepal in Collaboration with the University of Michigan, 2011).

Mr. Pawan Kumar Sen has experience of more than 26 years in designing and implementing social researches, public opinion polls, evaluation studies, impact assessments and situational assessments. Research methodology and data analysis are the core areas of his expertise. He possesses profound knowledge on demography and socio-political issues of Nepal. He is interested in contemporary political and state restructuring issues of Nepal, in particular republicanism, federalism, secularism and multilingualism. He has taken lead roles in many public opinion polls on social and political issues. He was one of the team members that conducted the country's first nationwide general election public opinion poll in 1999 for Himal Association with the financial support of DANIDA. He and his team conducted a series of nationwide public opinion polls - Nepal Contemporary Political Situation - during the period of political transformation (between 2004 and 2012) that enabled him to study the structure of and the changes in public opinions related to the country's contemporary politics, and to compare these to the positions taken by the major political parties. He has received extensive learning opportunities from abroad which have given him confidence and extensive knowledge to deliver high quality outcomes and to resolve challenges in his professional career. He had provided technical assistance to survey projects in Afghanistan undertaken by The Asia Foundation between 2007 and 2012. He has published research papers on contemporary issues of Nepal in peer reviewed journals. He is currently the Chair and Managing Director of Himalaya Comprehensive Research Pvt. Limited (Dhobighat, Lalitpur Metropolitan City, Ward-3, Bagmati Province, Nepal).