

Democracy in Nepal: four models

DAVID N. GELLNER

NOT only does everyone in Nepal today believe in democracy, all politicians too claim to stand for democracy, just as they claim to be building the nation and seeking 'all-round development'. Even King Gyanendra, when attempting to rule without political parties in order to turn the clock back to the Panchayat days of his father King Mahendra, claimed to be doing so in order to establish democracy on firmer foundations. He pointedly claimed inspiration from his grandfather, King Tribhuvan, 'the architect of democracy' while actually following the model of his father.

There are and have been competing and radically incommensurable ideals of democracy in Nepal, a clash of visions that led to many deaths and great turmoil in the civil war that wracked the country between 1996 and 2007. Speaking broadly, four main ideologies can be identified, with four different understandings and claims about the implications of democracy: king-led, liberal, leftist,

and multicultural. Of these, the first is now moribund, but was for many years powerful and convincing to many. The last is the most recent, but promises to play a large part in the Constituent Assembly that is to be elected on 22 November 2007 – provided all procedures are put in place and some degree of security can be assured.

In political and social terms Nepal has travelled a very long way in the last sixty years. In 1947, when India and Pakistan became independent, Nepal was ruled by the century-old hereditary and autocratic Rana aristocracy. The Hindu caste hierarchy still had the backing of law and the state's repressive machinery.¹ Hinduism of a traditional sort (not the denatured, Muslim-bashing and modernizing ideology of Hindutva) was still the state religion. This meant that, while the other pro-democracy conspirators could be tortured and hung in 1941, the Brahman member of the Praja Parishad, Tanka Prasad Acharya, though expelled from his caste and his property confiscated, could not be killed, but only impris-

David N. Gellner's two most recent books are *Resistance and the State: Nepalese Experiences* (edited, Berghahn 2007, Social Science Press 2003), and (co-author S. LeVine) *Rebuilding Buddhism: The Theravada Movement in Twentieth-Century Nepal* (Harvard University Press 2005).

*I would like to thank Krishna Hachhethu and John Whelpton for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

1. A. Höfer, *Caste Hierarchy and the State: A Study of the Mulukhi Ain of 1854*. Universitätsverlag Wagner, Innsbruck, 1979. (Reissued 2004 by Himal Books, Lalitpur, Nepal.) The most comprehensive introduction to the history of Nepal, concentrating on the modern period, is J. Whelpton, *A History of Nepal*. CUP, 2005.

oned.² Literacy was around 5%.³ The Ranas' subjects were expected to act out their subordination in the most humiliating ways.

Despite the Ranas' best attempts to isolate their subjects, it was impossible to prevent people from travelling to India and imbibing anti-colonial and democratic ideals. There were sporadic anti-Rana protests during the 1940s and eventually the regime collapsed in 1951 after King Tribhuvan fled to India. The 1950s were a period of turmoil and manoeuvring. King Tribhuvan died in 1955 and was succeeded by his son Mahendra. There was a general election in 1959, won decisively (thanks to the first-past-the-post system) by the Nepali Congress. Its leader, B.P. Koirala, became the country's prime minister. Eighteen months later King Mahendra clapped

him in jail and embarked on his experiment in Partyless Panchayat Democracy.

Political parties were banned. A kind of stability prevailed for 30 years, but it could not last. There were severe contradictions between various countervailing processes and forces: (a) the regime rhetoric of democracy, equality, and development for all, (b) the practices of increasing marketization, universal education (literacy for men today approaches two thirds, and for women 50%), and open borders, (c) continuing deference and exceptions made for the royal family and those connected to them, and (d) the facts of massive and increasing inequality, especially between towns (and in particular the capital, Kathmandu) and the rural hinterland.

The fact of an open border with India has been very important. The border is not just open in practice and de facto; it is open by right and treaty. Any Indian can walk into and work in Nepal and any Nepali can do the same in India. The only constraint is that Indians may not own property in Nepal nor have government jobs. This makes the Indo-Nepalese frontier very different from India's borders with other South Asian countries. It means that truly independent economic policies are hardly possible in Nepal. Also that politically Nepal cannot be isolated from developments in India, since so many Nepalis live, work, and are educated in India.

All this means that within the lifetime of today's senior generation (including that of the present PM, the octogenarian younger brother of BP, Girija Prasad Koirala) Nepal has moved a very long way. Before 1951 Dalits were obliged to cringe at the roadside in order to avoid polluting higher castes as they walked down the centre of the road; touching one's forehead to the feet of a passing Brahman was commonplace; and many people refused the loans offered by the state for reconstruction after the devastating 1934 earthquake because they believed it was a sin to accept the king's patrimony (*rajaswa*). Today Nepal is a signatory to the 2001 Global Conference against Racism and Caste-based Discrimination, and activists from almost every minority are speaking up and attempting to ensure themselves representation within the Constituent Assembly.

TABLE I

Periods of Recent Nepalese History

Period	Polity	Ideology
Pre-unification (before 1769)	petty kingdoms	small warring states, Hindu kingship, all eventually conquered and unified into the present state by Prithvi Narayan Shah
Shah/Rana (1769-1951) Rana period (1846-1951) Pop. 1911: 5.6 million	patrimonial, strong hereditary prime ministers	authoritarian and autocratic, strongly Hindu, supporters of British Raj while minimizing foreign influences, kings as powerless figureheads
Panchayat (1960-1990) Pop. 1960 c. 9.4 million Pop. 1990 c. 18.5 million	guided, partyless democracy	developmentalist, nation-building (i.e. ethnic languages and cultures discouraged except as folklore), authoritarian, political parties and religious proselytizing banned
Multiparty (1990-2002) Pop. 2001: c. 23 million	constitutional monarchy	developmentalist, liberal, hesitant moves towards multiculturalism; Constitution still bans proselytization and defines Nepal as Hindu Kingdom, but religiously free in practice
'Regression' (4/10/2002-April 2006)	short-lived governments	King Gyanendra attempts to revive panchayat-style king-led polity, leading to collapse of 1990 Constitution
Reconstruction (April 2006 onwards)	contested: interim constitution pending constituent assembly	power-sharing between the seven-party alliance (SPA) and the Maoists, under an interim constitution in which Hinduism and the King are not mentioned (Jan 07): strong republican sentiments, assertive multiculturalism

2. J.F. Fisher, *Living Martyrs: Individuals and Revolution in Nepal*. OUP, Delhi, 1997.

3. M. Hoftun, W. Raeper and J. Whelpton, *People, Politics and Ideology: Democracy and Social Change in Nepal*. Mandala Book Point, Kathmandu, 1999, p. 5.

That Nepal's democratic activists were able to throw off the Rana yoke was connected to the achievement of Indian independence by a series of complex links, not least the fact that many Nepalis, studying or exiled in Benaras and Calcutta, had participated in India's independence struggle. But the Nepalese revolution was, nonetheless, a rather half-hearted affair compared to what happened in India. Although ethnic resentments played a role in the revolt in East Nepal, there was no minority leader, and certainly no Dalit leader, of the stature of Ambedkar. There were, therefore, no reservations, nor measures of affirmative action.

Equality before the law was proclaimed and enacted, but official and formal equality, without any measures to counteract or discourage tacit discrimination, meant that Bahuns (Brahmans) and Chetris (Kshatriyas), the two dominant castes making up 31% of the population, were able to fill the lion's share of the new jobs and positions in the modernizing nation, along with the upper-caste and educated section of the Newars, the indigenous population of the Kathmandu Valley (only 5% in the country as a whole but concentrated in the capital

and other urban centres). Hill tribes, known as Janajatis since 1990, ex-untouchable Dalits (another label that has come in only since 1990), Muslims, and plainspeople – principally Madhesi, i.e. Hindu, caste people (the most numerous of whom are Yadavs, as over the border in U.P. and Bihar) – have all obtained a much smaller proportion of high positions than their share of the population.

The Janajati movement is driven, fundamentally, by anti-Brahmanism and the overwhelming presence in public life of Bahuns, revealed by the 1991 census to be only 13% of the population as a whole (the point can be made more acerbically by saying that Bahun *men* constitute only 6.5% of the population but lead all the major political parties). Politics, the judiciary, the universities, and the civil service are all dominated by Bahuns. One attempt to quantify this, looked at the leaders of the judiciary, civil service, trade unions, and so on, and found that Bahuns and Chetris together had two-thirds of the jobs, whereas hill Janajatis (i.e. excluding Newars and Tharus) with 22% of the population had just 7% of the jobs, and Madhesi with 31% of the population only 11%.

Dalits with nearly 9% of the population had just 0.3% of the jobs.⁵

These inequalities were labelled the 'hidden facts' of Panchayat Nepal by Gopal Gurung, and he was imprisoned in 1988 for publishing them. After 1990 he founded the Mongol National Organization which seeks to build a non-Brahman movement that can take power. Unusually, it is an activist movement with rural, not urban, base, and has managed to capture power in some local administrative units in the far east of the country.⁶

Undoubtedly, the biggest event of the last twelve years in Nepal is the rise of the Maoists.⁷ The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) was formed out of one fraction of a kaleidoscope of leftist parties at the beginning of the 1990s, many of whom while sharing a broadly Maoist ideology differed over ideological questions such as who the 'principal enemy' was, and in particular whether the time was ripe for launching a 'People's War'. Out of the complex history of leftist factionalism, one group, the UML or Unified Marxist-Leninists, originally based in the east of the country, had

TABLE II

Population Breakdown by Ethnicity*

Parbatiyas ('hill people')	Hill minorities (Janajatis)	Language loss among minorities	Taraians ('plains people')	Others
Bahun 13%	<u>Magar</u> 7.2%	68%	<u>Tharu</u> 6.7%	Muslims 4.2%
Chetri 18%	<u>Newar</u> 5.5%	34%	<u>Yadav</u> 4%	
Dalit 9%	<u>Tamang</u> 5.6%	11%	(+ many small castes incl. Dalits and Janajatis)	
	<u>Rai</u> 3%	16%		
	<u>Gurung</u> 2.4%	50%		
	<u>Limbu</u> 1.6%	14.5%		
Totals 40%	25%		30%	5% = 100%

* 2001 Nepal census; total: 23.15 million, with figures for hill minority language loss.

Notes: Dalit = former Untouchables; Janajatis, underlined, are mainly those who were formerly called hill tribes; 59 groups were officially designated as Janajatis in February 2002, not all of which had been included in the 2001 census. The term Madhesi/Madheshi is contested: some Tarai dwellers, notably the Tharus and the Muslims, reject the label. Estimated figures for language loss are taken from Whelpton (1997:59).⁴ All figures are likely to be disputed.

4. J. Whelpton, 'Political Identity in Nepal: State, Nation, and Community' in Gellner *et al.* (eds.), *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*. Harwood, Amsterdam, 1997, pp. 39-78.

5. M. Lawoti, *Towards a Democratic Nepal: Inclusive Political Institutions for a Multicultural Society*. Sage, New Delhi, 2005, pp.104-5.

6. S. Hangen, 'Race and the Politics of Identity in Nepal', *Ethnology* 44(1), 2005, 49-64.

7. M. Hutt, (ed.), *Himalayan 'People's War': Nepal's Maoist Rebellion*. Hurst, London, 2004. The standard work on the main parliamentary parties, the Nepali Congress and the UML, is K. Hachhethu, *Party Building in Nepal: Organisation, Leadership and People: A Comparative of the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)*. Mandala Book Point, Kathmandu, 2002.

already in the 1980s begun to move away from Maoism, and emerged as the main parliamentary opposition after 1990. For nine months in 1994-5, they even formed a minority government, until they were brought down by Congress manoeuvring. Without abandoning their fundamentally Marxist outlook, they had moved away from the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and towards a kind of parliamentary road to communism, expressed in the adoption of Madan Bhandari's concept of 'multiparty democracy' (*bahudaliya janbad*) in 1993.

By contrast, the group which chose the People's War route, was based primarily in the two western districts of Rolpa and Rukum, with a history that can be traced back to experiments with communism in nearby Sallyan in the 1950s. The Kham Magar village of Thabang, known as the Maoists' capital, had a reputation as a stronghold of communism already in 1980 when almost the entire village abstained in the referendum on whether to continue with the Panchayat system.

The CPN(M) launched its war on 12 February 1996, with attacks on police stations in the districts of Rolpa, Rukum, and Sindhuli, and on a agricultural development bank in Gorkha district. Thanks to division, vacillation and lack of interest at the centre, plus the fact that the geography of Nepal – steep hills, jungle cover, an open border and access to the markets of India – is most conducive for guerrilla warfare, the Maoists were able to establish their bases and expand throughout the hills of Nepal very rapidly. Their own organization – based on classical, Leninist lines – was also a major factor in their success. It was a relatively simple matter to expel small and underarmed police from

rural areas, set up alternative governmental structures, and attract the cadres of the UML into their movement. They were keen to establish their own 'people's governments' as a way of establishing local legitimacy and many local teachers or activists were willingly or unwillingly co-opted on to them.

In November 2001 the Maoists finally launched an attack on the Nepal Army base in Ghorahi, Dang district. Up to that point the army had kept out of the conflict. Bizarrely, even as police posts nearby were over-run by the Maoists, they would sit and do nothing, because they had no orders 'from above'. The Ghorahi attack turned the conflict into a civil war – at the time of the Maoists' own choosing and when they were ready. It led to a series of states of emergency and the collapse of the parliamentary system. It enabled King Gyanendra to attempt to seize power, though he did not dare to do it directly. It led to years of drift and many fruitless military encounters in which thousands of fighters and innocent people died or were maimed for life.

It also led to the Maoist struggle spreading to the Tarai, the southern strip of Gangetic plain belonging to Nepal but bordering India and largely Indian in language and culture. Here the Maoists encountered more resistance and problems than they had initially. Though able to recruit Madhesis (that is, Nepalis of Indian, Hindu ethnicity) the Maoists were primarily seen as a hill Nepali institution, just like all other political forces in the country. It is in the Tarai that there were the first reports of villagers banding together to chase Maoists out.

King Gyanendra's foolish politics pushed the political parties into the arms of the Maoists, an alliance discreetly facilitated by India's South

Block once it had lost patience with the King's repeated ignoring of India's advice. Following massive street demonstrations in April 2006, labelled the People's Movement II (the revolution of 1990 being the original People's Movement), the army told Gyanendra that they were no longer willing to be his 'sacrificial goat', dying uselessly in his vain attempt to suppress the Nepali people and concentrate power in his own hands. Gyanendra finally realized that the game was up and handed power 'back to the people'.

Gyanendra's politics also led to the resuscitation of Girija Koirala. All parliamentary leaders, as well as the royal palace, are guilty of having tacitly encouraged the Maoists in their early years – the Congress Party because it thought it would embarrass the main opposition party (the UML), the UML because it did not wish to be seen to be opposing 'friendly forces of the left' (as well as because initially the targets of Maoist violence tended to be aligned with the Congress Party), and the palace because it thought that parliamentary democracy would be undermined by encouraging the Maoists (which indeed it was).

However, of all the irresponsible and corrupt parliamentarians, Koirala is ultimately the most culpable, since he held power for longer and more times than anyone else in the years after 1990. Further, he had also acquired a reputation for corruption and nepotism, as well as short-sighted selfishness in day-to-day politics. Throughout the 1990s, Girija's only aim appeared to be that of occupying the prime minister's chair or, failing that, making the life of whoever else did so as uncomfortable as possible, even if (or especially if) that someone was from his own party. For all these reasons, Girija's reputation was at a

very low ebb in October 2002. However, by consistent opposition to King Gyanendra, by refusing outright any compromise with him, and by being the only leading politician to insist, from day one and without wavering, on the reinstatement of Parliament, Koirala became the hero of democracy and the universal choice for prime minister after April 2006.

The first kind of democracy is the *king-led*. It might be thought that the term *prajatantra* or 'rule by subjects' has a special affinity with this view – and that is the argument made by many, not only leftists, today. However, for many years, and still for most ordinary Nepalis, this is the word which comes most naturally when talking about democracy; in the 1940s and 1950s even communists were happy to use the term. People talk of 'after democracy' and 'before democracy' meaning by that the year 1951. This was the term incorporated into the title of the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (National Democratic Party), a party formed by the ex-panchas, those politicians who had been involved in the panchayat regime, and continued into the post 1990 era.

The key point for the ideologues of the Panchayat regime was the whole country would unite behind the King, the guarantor of democracy, equality, and development for all. Divisive forces like parties, trade unions, and ethnic organizations should be banned in order to prevent unnecessary conflict. All would benefit from the energy released for development by this form of democracy that was 'native to the soil of Nepal'. The King was not just a symbol, but an active force, energizing the nation and leading it, embodying and expressing in his own virtues those of his country, and at the same time, in his unity, preventing the cultural and geo-

graphical diversity of the country from splitting the nation apart.

It is easy to now see that the Panchayat ideology was naïve, and even self-serving. It ignored the fact that traditional networks and structures of inequality were largely left intact. By not addressing – and by making it taboo to address explicitly – the structural inequalities that left Janajatis, Madhesis, women and, above all, Dalits behind (only the position of women was a partial exception here), the disadvantages were, if anything, exacerbated. Yet it would be unhistorical and anachronistic to fail to appreciate that for decades this patriotic vision had considerable appeal to many Nepalis, and for some continues to do so even today.

There was a certain plausibility in seeing the King as the initiator of democracy and development because the King had also lost his freedom under the Ranas and it was the flight of King Tribhuvan which precipitated the fall of the autocratic Ranas. The King could also plausibly claim to be, and King Mahendra consciously aimed to be, a guarantor of order and stability, rising above sectional interests. During the Panchayat period the country did experience considerable 'development', at least in terms of establishing near universal education and much improved health.

Elections were held, at first in an indirect manner, with village panchayats electing representatives for higher echelons who eventually elected those for the national panchayat; later, after 1980, there were direct elections to the national panchayat (though still, at least on paper, no open party affiliations). There was a kind of nod towards multicultural presuppositions and expectations of proportionality in the fact that the Panchayat regime, especially when under pressure in later

years, attempted to legitimate itself by appointing Janajatis to prominent positions.

The second vision of democracy, the *liberal*, hardly needs expounding. Having India to the South, where regular elections and changes of government occurred, despite all the criticisms that can be made, was a powerful exemplar of which no Nepali could be ignorant. On this vision, democracy is about having the freedom to organize parties and to compete in elections. It is about the freedom to organize and campaign openly, about a free press, and free and equal opportunities for all. Before 1990 there were government controlled newspapers and partisan party controlled weeklies. Following 1990 there was an explosion of free newspapers of all types, satisfying the demands of an increasingly literate public. A big question remains over whether the Maoists have adapted to liberalism sufficiently to be able to stomach a genuinely free press; recent events, in which members of the Young Communist League have intimidated and locked out newspaper editors do not bode well in this regard.

For many years the advocates of the liberal position were happy to use the term *prajatantra*, but after 2002 began to accept that monarchist assumptions were built into it. Now they have popularized a new one, *loktantra*, much more neutral etymologically: there is no inbuilt bias to constitutional monarchy as opposed to a republic.

The third vision is the *leftist*. The Communist Party of Nepal was founded in Calcutta in 1949 by Pushpa Lal Shrestha. The whole history of communism in Nepal is deeply intertwined with the history of communism in India, including the Maoist/Naxalite current. But many in the

Nepali Congress also shared socialist ideals, including of social reform, abolishing caste prejudice and addressing inequality. This vision of democracy goes beyond mere elections. In fact, elections under the bourgeois system are often dismissed as a farce or 'dirty game', in which corrupt politicians seek their own or their relatives' advantage and ignore the true needs of the people.

Intrinsic to this view, equality and democracy are really about the removal of poverty and 'feudal' relations of dependence. Mao's model of 'new democracy' is translated as *naulo janbad*, and enjoys much influence. The Maoists, in the hill areas under their control have sometimes allowed people to stand for election to their local 'people's governments' from other parties, barring parties deemed feudal (e.g. Congress and RPP). The UML, as noted earlier, completed its move away from Maoism when it adopted Bhandari's concept of 'multiparty democracy' (*bahudaliya janbad*) at the 1993 Congress. Ironically the Maoists have in effect followed them twelve years later by signing accords with the political parties and undertaking to respect the results of free multiparty elections.

The final vision of democracy is the *multicultural*. Ethnic politics – at least in a modern form – is a relative late-comer on the Nepalese scene. With the new political freedoms won in 1990 there was an efflorescence of ethnic organizations and new ethnic political demands.⁸ These were boosted by the UN's declaration of a year, subsequently changed to a decade, of indigenous rights in 1993. In this vision,

8. D.N. Gellner, J. Pfaff-Czarnecka and J. Whelpton (eds), *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*. Harwood, Amster-

every cultural group in the country should have political representation in precise proportion to its size in the country. At the same time, indigenous languages and cultures should receive special help in order to ensure their survival at a time of galloping globalization and cultural homogenization. There should be reservations for disadvantaged groups.

The Janajati category – a mixed bag of historically and culturally diverse ethnies, brought together mainly by the common negative traits of not being Bahun-Chetris, not being Indian, and not being Muslim – have ingeniously been divided into five categories: endangered, highly marginalized, marginalized, disadvantaged, and advantaged.⁹ It is proposed that reserved seats in educational institutions should in the first place only go to members of the most backward category and be offered to those from better-off categories only if there are no candidates available from those worse off. Although this preserves the principle of ringfencing resources for certain categories on the grounds of birth, it simultaneously introduces a welcome element of class disadvantage into the actual distribution of the benefits.

Evidence from opinion polls suggests that 'the people' have preferences for all of the first three types of democracy.¹⁰ A large majority think democracy is the best political system,

dam, 1997. Also, J. Pfaff-Czarnecka, 'Debating the State of the Nation: Ethnicization of Politics in Nepal – a Position Paper' in J. Pfaff-Czarnecka et al., *Ethnic Futures: The State and Identity Politics in Asia*. Sage, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 41-98.

9. D.N. Gellner, 'Class, Inequality, and Ethnicity in Nepal', *Economic and Political Weekly* 42(20), 2007, 1823-8.

10. K. Hachhethu, *State of Democracy in Nepal: Survey Report*. SDSA/Nepal Chapter and IIIDEA, Kathmandu, 2004.

but if challenged, decline to define it. Presented with four alternative definitions (opportunity to change the government through elections, freedom to criticize those in power, equal rights, and fulfilment of basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter), 51% say that the most essential characteristic is the last – the fulfilment of basic needs. A sizeable majority agree with the statement 'we should have a strong leader whether elected or not', but most also assert that the king should not rule (only 15% are in favour of an active monarch).

These four visions of democracy will come into direct conflict in the elections for the Constituent Assembly in November. The assembly itself will have to come up with some compromises. The present government is under considerable pressure from the Maoists and other leftist parties to declare a republic now; in other words, to rule out of court any possibility of a return to king-led 'democracy'. It is likely, however, that Koirala will continue to resist this, though undoubtedly there is a strong groundswell against the monarchy. Only three years ago most people supported the idea of constitutional monarchy; now less than half do so, and the same number are in favour of its abolition. When asked why the monarchy is becoming unpopular, over 50% cite the royal massacre. But since that happened back in 2001, it can at most be part of the background conditions and Gyanendra's power grab between 2002 and 2006 must be the real reason.¹¹ Another recent poll of over 4,000 respondents in 40 districts found a striking 59% now in favour of a republic.¹²

11. Interdisciplinary Analysts 2007, 'Nepal Contemporary Political Situation IV: Political Opinion Poll'. www.asiafoundation.org/pdf (accessed 4/7/07).

Most analysts now assume that the country will become a republic once the Constituent Assembly is elected; the Maoists and many others are pushing hard for the interim assembly to declare Nepal a republic even before this. Prime Minister Koirala has stated that the monarchy can only save itself by the King and his unpopular son Paras abdicating in favour of Paras' infant son, Hridayendra.

It seems likely that the Janajati and Madhesi activists will succeed in having a large part of their agenda adopted, with a federal constitution, considerable powers devolved to the districts and rights for minorities, whether ethnically or regionally defined, built in to the constitution. How much further the constitution will go in terms of entrenching indigenous rights is difficult to say, but it is certain that the era of effortless Bahun domination in all spheres of public life is over.

The civil war has seen a tragic loss of life and the brutalization of a generation. At the same time the ethnic activists have the Maoists to thank for putting their concerns at the top of the political agenda. And it may be – as many in Nepal's vibrant civil society hope – that some of the Maoists' laudable stated aims can be achieved under a new political dispensation, while avoiding the worst of their violent and intimidating methods. It is possible that out of the peace process – for which unwittingly King Gyanendra provided so much assistance – may come a more consensual and more democratic Nepal. The alternative is a continued drift into barely disguised gangsterism and local fiefdoms, increased militarization, and a revival of civil war.

56 12. 'State of Democracy in Nepal'. www.idea.int/asia_pacific/nepal/upload/nepal_survey_keyfindings07.pdf (accessed 9/7/07).