

# Diminishing Popularity of the Political Parties in Nepal: An Analytical Study

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## Abstract

The study of the declining popularity of political parties in Nepal, their variations, evolving forms, and their applicability in the modern world serves as the basis for the research. Numerous secondary sources are used in the study and supported by primary data sources. Preliminary information is obtained through interviews with individuals and public institutions on how they have performed their various political functions in Nepal. The media's ability to disseminate news, views and analysis is critical to rehabilitating individuals. They should play a normative role, bringing people from different parts of society together by displaying their shared ideals. Journalism must adhere to fundamental principles, including accuracy, truthfulness, fairness, impartiality, independence and public accountability. Democratic practices have taken on many shapes and sizes. Three conditions specific to Nepal are necessary to understand the country's democratic transition. First, people of voting age in Nepal are all adult citizens. Second, most Nepali voters cannot read ballot papers. As such, they tend to choose candidates based on their party symbols. Third, support for pro-democracy political movements in Nepal has declined dramatically. This study examined this trend here.

## Keywords

Political Parties, Democratic, Popularity, Election, Government

## 1. Introduction

Just after WWII ended, Nepalese society began its transition toward democracy. On the other hand, it started to pick up steam around 1990. Along with the fall of the USSR and the unparalleled emergence of liberal democracy worldwide, the People's Movement restored democracy in 1990, the year in Nepal after 30 years of the "partyless" Panchayat system. Around the time of what [Huntington](#)

(1993) calls the third wave of democratisation. Nepal was not immune to the effects of the unprecedented shifts in international politics at the time. Although the state has established a non-aligned foreign policy, Nepal's political spectrum was split between the two blocs throughout the Cold War, as was the situation with many other nations at the time. But following the political transition of 1990, most of these differences were eliminated. The prospects for liberal democracy's success were, in reality, quite optimistic. However, things were not as smooth as hoped throughout the transfer. Political changes are complicated, drawn out, and frequently unpredictable. There is a historical precedent for countries establishing liberal political systems to revert to authoritarianism. Some academics have even gone so far as to suggest that transitions may be more theoretical than actual in certain circumstances, given the ease with which they can be manipulated, halted, or even abandoned (Diamond, 1996).

In Nepal, democracy did not emerge as a brand-new form of government. However, some historical precedent exists for democratically based forms of government. Although governments may not have followed contemporary democratic procedures like regular elections and parliaments, in some cases, decision-making and leader selection were based on conversations and the people's will (Dahal & Bhatta, 2008). Nepal has undergone many changes on the road to democracy in 1950, 1980, 1990, and 2006. Different authoritarian regimes fell due to political movements backed by political parties and their supplementary organisations. The majority of these uprisings not only sparked or contributed to the overthrow of existing governments but also directly led to the overthrow of such governments. The most recent of these, led by the Nepal Communist Party Maoist (NCPM), began as an uprising in 1996 and ended with a political deal in 2006. The political landscape of Nepal has seen an incredible transformation due to these movements, but they also contributed to the country's instability on both a constitutional and political level. Even Nevertheless, Nepal's democratisation process includes all these (failed) attempts to establish democracy as building blocks.

Seventy-plus years to make the change to democracy seem excessive. It took longer than this, though, even in some well-established democracies. Looking at Western democracies more closely, we see no easy ways to ensure democracy's long-term success. Two world wars and the rise and fall of fascism occurred in Europe over a lengthy transition period during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the United States, it took a bloody civil war and a hundred years of democratic consolidation until full liberal and democratic rights were granted to all citizens. Considering the current predicament of various democracies in Europe and the United States, they might conclude that the fight for democracy is far from done. Rising populism has been linked to democratic reconsolidation in some long-standing democracies (Foa & Monk, 2017). A populist was elected President of the United States only a few years ago, and there has been a recent, frightening uptick in right-wing populism and extremism across Europe. In sev-

eral countries inside the European Union, such as Poland and Hungary, liberal democracy has come under severe pressure.

The main objective of this study is to the causes of the declining popularity of the old political parties established in the politics of Nepal. As the popularity of the established old political parties decreases, the environment for the emergence of new political forces remains. Therefore, in this article, the reasons for the decline in the popularity of political parties are studied.

## 2. Research Method

This section focuses on the method used to achieve the research goals. The study of the diminishing popularity of the political parties in Nepal, their variations, evolving forms, and their applicability in the modern world serves as the basis for the research. It is an interpretative technique that emphasises understanding the meaning of words related to the subject. Numerous secondary sources are used in the study and are supported by primary data sources. Extensive research is carried out in many relevant reference works, articles, magazines, and reports. Preliminary information is obtained through interviews with individuals, business institutions, and public institutions on how they have performed their various political functions in Nepal. The study examines the change and characteristics of the political system through qualitative data analysis. A reasonable inference is therefore drawn from this. The searches, a set of search terms, keywords, and synonyms related to the failure of Nepal's political system, were constructed using both practical and theoretical concepts and problems. The researcher used a journal and an organisational website.

## 3. Result and Discussion

Nepal is an intermediate-sized South Asian country located between India and China. It has been ruled by dynasties of dynastic heirs throughout the vast majority of its history. A small communist group called the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) started an armed uprising in 1996. Nepal's political transition would be heavily influenced by questions of identity, dignity, and the rights to one's own culture, language, and social institutions. Historically oppressed communities were fighting for their rights and trying to gain representation in government. May 28 was the inaugural meeting of Nepal's constituent assembly, which resolved to abolish the monarchy.

China's constituent assembly held a series of controversial elections in 2010. During this time, the constituent assembly was able to make some progress and gain consensus on the most critical topics. The most difficult among the remaining issues was federalism, which became a source of conflict. Nepal's leaders could not form a governing coalition for nine months, from the middle of 2012 to the beginning of 2013. A second election for the constituent assembly was held in November 2013. The media's ability to disseminate news, views, and analyses is crucial to re-socialising individuals. Nepal has recently begun a new

political direction after emerging from a brutal conflict that lasted almost a decade. The media's role here goes beyond merely reporting the news. They should take on a normative role in bringing individuals from different parts of society together by showcasing their shared ideals. Journalism must adhere to fundamental principles, including accuracy, truthfulness, fairness, impartiality, independence, and public accountability. Credibility and public trust are attained and maintained via adherence to these same standards. A trust gap develops when these core ideals are disregarded. Guthi existed before the Mallas (1200-1768). In this period, collective labour and collaboration were practised. The "notion of private property defined by sticking within a bloodline or an identified group" and the "idea of CBO got popularised and institutionalised".

Since the end of the Cold War, efforts to promote democracy from without have become a focal point of international aid. After the Maoist insurgency ended in 2005-2006, more actors entered the country. There was a concerted effort by these groups to help the Nepalese government tackle two pressing issues.

In 2013, the Nepali Congress party overtook the Maoists to become the second-largest party. The polls for the second Parliament under the federal constitution are nearly complete. In 2017, a House of Representatives election took place for the first time under the current national body.

#### **4. Political History**

Nepal is an intermediate-sized South Asian country located between India and China. The government is highly varied geographically, culturally, linguistically, religiously, and socially. Nepal has been ruled by dynasties of dynastic heirs throughout the vast majority of its history. The Jana Andolan (People's Movement) movement of 1990 ushered in India's new era of political freedom. However, political instability and poor leadership resulted from persistent in-fighting and factionalism inside and across political groups.

A small communist group called the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) started an armed uprising in 1996. The rebellion grew throughout the country and targeted government installations and police stations during the following decade. The Maoists increased their attacks not only against the army and the police but also against the sympathisers of Nepali Congress (Karki & Seddon, 2003), throughout the decade-long struggle, over 13,000. Given the elected government's failure to quell the insurgency in February 2005, the then-king staged a coup with the backing of the armed forces and assumed total control. The CPN (Maoist), after April 2006, has been willing to have its insurgency presented as a glorious event (Hachhethu, 2009). It created a triangular conflict between the "democratic" political parties, the Maoists, and the military-backed monarchy.

A little more than a year later, the king was finally compelled to give up direct power by a second popular revolt, the Jana Andolan II, led by a coalition of democratic parties and the Maoists. As a result, the mainstream parties and the Maoists embarked on a peace process, culminating in a ceasefire agreement in

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May 2006 and a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November of the same year. After that, however, political parties established an interim government before fresh elections and reinstated Parliament. The UN (UNMIN) Mission came to Nepal to help with the transition.

Historically oppressed communities were fighting for their rights and trying to gain representation in government as the peace process progressed. As a result, the country's political transition would be heavily influenced by questions of identity, dignity, and the rights to one's own culture, language, and social institutions.

Due to disagreements amongst the major political parties, the constituent assembly election had to be postponed twice from its original 2007 date. To write the new constitution, voters in April 2008 selected a 601-person assembly. May 28 was the inaugural meeting of Nepal's constituent assembly, which resolved to abolish the monarchy and establish the country as a federal democratic republic.

During the election, there were high expectations that Nepal's new political leaders would address unfinished business in the peace process, including commitments made to historically marginalised groups, former Maoist combatants, and security sector reform. The creation of an inclusive and democratic new constitution, economic development and growth, and the improvement of the security environment and the rule of law. But, the election marked the end of the "politics of consensus" that had encouraged advancement, beginning an era of zero-sum politicking, at least at the national level. So, although advancing the nation into a new stage of the transition process, the constituent assembly election also had many significant and regrettably negative repercussions for the procedure.

The elections showed the Maoists to be the most popular party. Still, their time in power was cut short by a series of controversial choices, including an attempt to remove the chief of army staff that ultimately failed. In addition, the Maoists precipitated the formation and dissolution of several unsuccessful government coalitions, none of which had the political support necessary to advance the peace process. During this time, the constituent assembly was able to make some progress and gain consensus on most important topics, despite the ongoing political deadlock. Unfortunately, the discussion of federalism escalated into a significant source of conflict. Meanwhile, it became clear that constitution writing and the peace process were intertwined; disagreements over what to do with former Maoist combatants (still being held in cantonments across the nation) hampered efforts to resolve lingering constitutional questions.

In November 2011, a new political agreement contributed to resuming peace talks. As a result, a deal was reached that offered former combatants who "retired" huge cash settlements and a limited opportunity to join the national army or get other professional training. As a result, all Maoist cantonments had been cleared out and shut down by October 2012. A small group of ex-combatants had begun reintegrating into the military.

By early 2012, political parties had extended the constituent assembly's tenure four times. The most difficult among the remaining issues was federalism. Both supporters and opponents of identity-based federalism staged a series of protest activities across the country, some of which escalated into lengthy strikes. As a result, the days leading to the May 28 deadline to finalise a new constitution were agitated and polarised, with real fears that significant violence could break out in multiple areas. In addition, there were legitimate concerns that substantial violence may break out in several locations. As a result, the deadline for a new form was missed, plunging the country into a protracted era of constitutional turmoil and intense political infighting.

Nepal's leaders could not form a governing coalition for nine months, from the middle of 2012 to the beginning of 2013, when they ultimately agreed to install an interim electoral council (IEC) led by a "nonpolitical" prime minister. With the help of the IEC, a second election for the constituent assembly was held in November 2013. The election results showed a drastic shift from 2008, with the Maoists and identity-based parties faring poorly and established parties returning. As a result, the first sessions of Nepal's second constituent assembly began in January 2014.

## **5. Media and Democracy**

Democracy and the media have a mutually beneficial relationship. The media's ability to disseminate news, views, and analyses is crucial to re-socialising individuals. Professional media may encourage democratic politics among the populace and assist individuals in developing a critical conscience.

Both free press and representative government developed simultaneously in the Western world. They have established stable institutional structures that facilitated the development of the nation and its economy. They also created brand new social contracts and political road plans. As a result, media became known as the "Fourth Estate" because of the weight it carries in society. It was done to appreciate their duty to monitor the state's executive branch, legislature, and judiciary. The extraordinary media expansion and its essential role have also contributed to the spread of constitutional democracies worldwide.

Media played a similar role in historic political shifts in many other emerging nations, Nepal included. The media became a potent tool for the oppressed and the silent majority. When faced with oppression from their rulers, whether dynastic, democratically elected, or oligarchical, they turned to the media. During times of relative calm, it is the responsibility of the media to keep an eye on government and elected officials to ensure they fulfill their mandated duties and provide necessary public services on schedule. They act as a solid anti-establishment, undemocratic.

Democratic values, such as popular sovereignty, social inclusion, and positive rights, are to be promoted by the media in the post-conflict period. Nepal has recently begun a new political direction after emerging from a brutal conflict

that lasted almost a decade. However, the media's role here goes beyond merely reporting the news. On the contrary, they should take on a normative role in bringing individuals from different parts of society together by showcasing their shared ideals.

The phrase "news media" refers to any medium used to disseminate information to the public. This type of outreach helps to focus and broaden the reach of a specific topic and alters public opinion. The term media is used synonymously with "communication," "mass communication," "journalism," "the press," and "the fourth estate," even if there may be subtle differences between these phrases." Several media types (print, radio, television, and the internet) are used to examine and support the article's central argument. The media significantly impacts many people's social, political, cultural, and behavioural patterns, a phenomenon known as the "mediatisation" of society. The modern media landscape is more intricate, rapid-fire, and competitive than ever, thanks to the proliferation of the internet and social media. To be responsive to society and to carry out essential democratic responsibilities, journalism must adhere to a set of fundamental principles, including accuracy, truthfulness, fairness, impartiality, independence, and public accountability. Credibility and public trust are attained and maintained via adherence to these same standards. A trust gap develops when these core ideals are disregarded.

## 6. Democracy in Retrospect

Collective action, civic engagement, and community-based public spheres in Nepal have a long and storied history, with documents like the dharma shastras and the shastra outlining some of the underlying regulatory principles that have made civic participation possible in the country. Other examples of communal efforts that can be traced back to an unknowable epoch are the Gurukul, Guthi, and Parma institutions and traditions, all of which survive now, albeit with significant modifications.

With the Lichhavi Period, Nepal entered its "historical" era (100 - 880 AD). Historically, Nepal's first written record dates back to the reign of Lichhavi King Manadev I (464 AD) and is located at the Changu Narayan temple. For the first time, we have a record of how people have trusted one another and worked together in the past, and I'm going to term this "Community Based Organization" (CBO). Nevertheless, Panchali formed a centralised control of the village. The central control over the Valley weakened, and the Lichhavis declined during the eighth century. Dvairajya Rajya (simultaneous governance by two individuals) was widespread up to the eleventh century. After the Pashupati inscription (733 AD) of Jayadev II, the Lichhavi period ended, and the Kathmandu valley, which was then part of the Nepal Upatyaka, entered a period of relative isolation and decline (Sharma, 2054 BS: p. 8). Mainly, this was because no relevant historical records survived from the time in question.

Given the numerous artefacts attesting to Guthi's existence before the Mallas

(1200-1768), we can assume that the practice of collective labour and collaboration persisted and even expanded during this period. Other indigenous groups, such as Gurukul, a voluntary residential school, and Bheja among the Magars, have thrived and been sustained through the generations because of the support they receive from their host communities. In addition to serving as the indigenous systems of government, such customs were essential in maintaining the distinctive identities of various communities.

## **7. Effect of External Sources on Democracy**

Since the end of the Cold War, efforts to promote democracy from without have become a focal point of international aid. Democracy has been strengthened in many countries thanks to the efforts of many groups working together. The participation of these actors has aided the democratisation process in Nepal. After the regime change in the 1990s, external support for democracy became more apparent. After the Maoist insurgency ended in 2005-06, the intensity of this support increased, with more actors entering the country. There was a concerted effort by these groups to help the Nepalese government tackle two pressing issues: 1) seeing the peace process through to its natural conclusion and 2) establishing novel political institutions in light of the sweeping political shift. The government of Nepal needed this assistance because it lacked the resources to deal with the problems at hand.

Two distinct strategies can be taken by external actors providing democracy aid: the first can be thought of as an initiative toward fostering democracy. In contrast, the second is aid toward establishing legitimate institutions (typically in the form of financial assistance). Both methods have their advantages and disadvantages, and depending on the health of the democratic system; you might find them operating independently or in tandem. Support may come in the form of a complete outside initiative in some countries, while in others, it may bolster democratic institutions. The second part has been especially significant in Nepal's move toward democracy. First, however, we will need to review the setting and background information to think critically about the dynamics of such support.

## **8. Voting Trends in Nepal**

In 2013, the administration, led by then-chief judge Khilraj Regmi, agreed to call elections for a second Constituent Assembly after years of political parties fighting over the failure to draught a constitution. The Congress grew in power in the second assembly, surpassing the UML to become the second-largest party and pushing the Maoists into third place. Under President Sushil Koirala, Congress formed a government with the UML as a significant coalition partner. Two years after being elected, the second CA ratified the first federal constitution for the country. In 2017, a House of Representatives election took place for the first time under the current national body. The polls for the second Parliament under the federal constitution are nearly complete.



During the first constituent assembly election in 2008, the Maoist party got the highest PR seats with the maximum votes (29.85%). The Nepali Congress party has 73 PR seats. During the second constituent assembly election in 2013, the Nepali Congress party overtook the Maoists party. It stood as the number one party with 91 PR seats and 27.16% votes, followed by the UML party with 84 PR seats. In the 2017 election of the House of Representatives, the UML party won the race election with 41 PR seats and 37.27% votes, while the Nepali Congress party got second place in the election race with 40 PR seats.

## 9. Conclusion

To keep a democracy functioning, free and open communication and a transparent administration are essential. Due to the proliferation of digital platforms, there is now a greater chance of spreading false or misleading information and immediately reaching a broader audience with the truth. Everything flows from the idea that public workers in a democracy are there to serve the people. The more information is made available by government agencies and other public institutions, the simpler the lives of ordinary citizens become. Access to digital spaces has improved, and communication channels have become more horizontal and vertical all around the country. Democracies are in danger because of the absence of accountability and legislation protecting digital rights. Consumers are more susceptible to misinformation and disinformation due to a lack of accurate and current information and a failure to fact-check.

The Covid epidemic has demonstrated that rather than focusing solely on growing in popularity, the mainstream media should raise the quality of its reporting. We must remember the close connection between freedom of expression and societal progress. Of course, the expansion of the digital sphere has also contributed to the globalisation of local issues, the rise of the resistance movement, the ease with which workers from various industries and sectors can organise themselves, the politicisation of civic technology, and the increased power and influence of for-profit businesses.

According to Thomas Piketty, taxation in a democracy is to extract money from the wealthy and distribute it to the lower and middle classes. Likewise, those who are connected, empowered, and already use technology must collaborate with minorities and the underprivileged as responsible global citizens.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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