



Interdisciplinary Analysts (IDA)

GPO Box 3971

Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: 5528111, 5542354

ida@wlink.com.np



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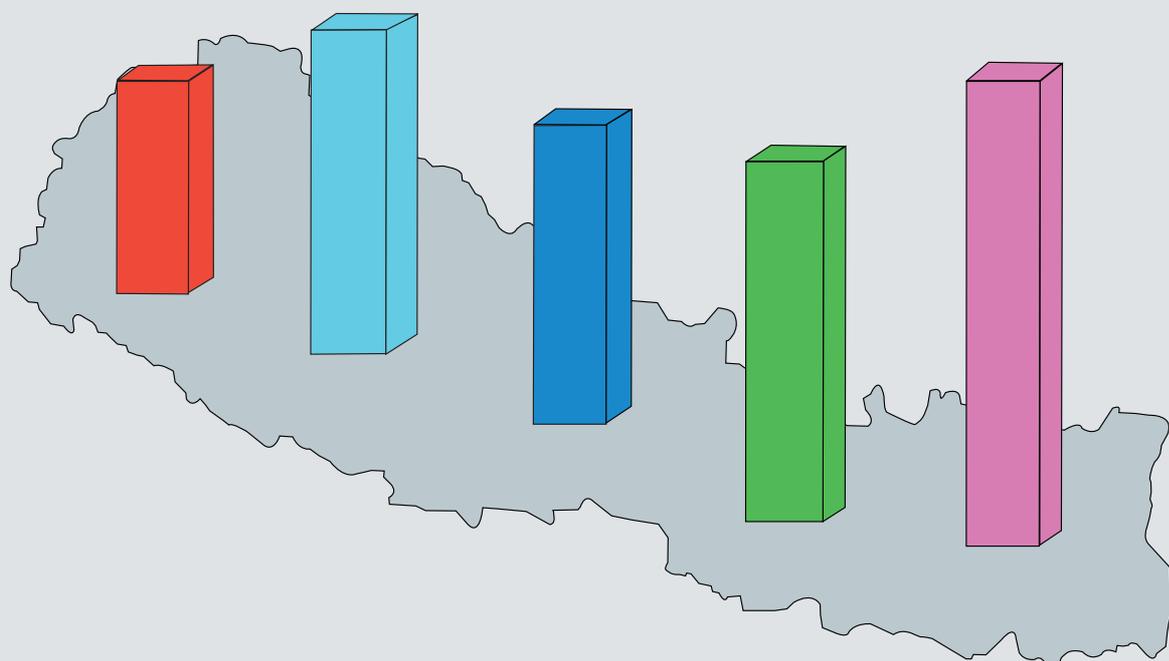
G.P.O Box: 935, Bhat Bhateni

Kathmandu, Nepal

Nepal

Contemporary Political Situation – II

Opinion Poll Report



Sudhindra Sharma
Pawan Kumar Sen

interdisciplinary Analysts

2006

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Preface

As Nepal moves more firmly into the era of mass politics, it becomes increasingly necessary to have the tools, and organizations with skills to use them, to scientifically gauge mass opinion. Interdisciplinary Analysts has been trying to fill this service gap in quantitative social sciences over much of the last decade. Our involvement in measuring mass opinion began in 1997 with a survey of electricity users in Kathmandu Valley and their response to energy saving compact fluorescent lamps. Soon thereafter, we conducted a survey of sex habits of Valley residents. Our major political opinion poll survey was in 1999 just before the third general elections, and was followed by another one at the end of 2004 and published in 2005. This survey follows the 2005 exercise almost exactly a year later, using a similar questionnaire format and the same survey team, thus providing what we hope are valuable synchronic and diachronic measures of public opinion in Nepal's political landscape.

Public opinion is dynamic, sometimes it is even said to be fickle; but every change has a past, a base from which it mutates. And rarely is change so dramatic that it cannot be genetically traced to a past. Our job as social scientists is to photo-trap that moment, thus providing a snapshot of public opinion that can serve as a baseline from which both scholars studying voter behaviour and politicians moulding voter opinion can find a scientific basis to launch their analysis or campaigns. What is presented in this report is, therefore, not our opinion but that of the mass of Nepali voters. The numbers are measurements and we find that others using a similar methodology have arrived at similar results (see Chapter 5); but the interpretations wherever they occur in this report are ours, and they have been kept to a minimum. They must be critiqued: this 'peer review' is crucial because the measured result have a habit of surprising even those of us doing the measuring.

In the 1999 poll survey, the breakaway ML faction of the CPN (UML) was widely expected, including by many of us conducting the survey, to win at least half of what the united CPN would have. The survey results that started coming in, however, indicated that they would garner only about 4 per cent of the popular votes. Rechecking indicated nothing wrong with our methods, so we published the findings; and immediately the polemical wrath of the ML hit us with charges of every kind. However, when the actual election results were announced, ML had received just 6.4 per cent of the votes and none of their candidates got elected to parliament. This incident effectively illustrates the old adage: "Don't bite my finger, look where it is pointing!"

This particular survey, even though it shows robust continuity of public opinion over the year, does have elements of surprise for us. Given the diversity of opinions on what constitutes a 'political solution' to the current difficulties, many of us personally believed that fresh elections to the House of Representatives would be the ideal way out. Surprisingly, the percentage of Nepalis who subscribe to this view declined dramatically from 22 per cent last year to only 9 per cent this year. This unexpected (to us) result is a measured fact, and we are unable to explain why, except perhaps to say that, with the mainstream parties boycotting the elections, this view does not have any organizational instrument to influence the masses.

We hope this report will be useful to scholars as well as those in the business of moulding public opinion in their favour, viz. the political parties. Politicians, by the very nature of their profession, do have a finger on the public pulse; but even exceptional leaders can be blinded by their biases or sidetracked by the coloured interpretations of a coterie with vested interests. Independent, scientifically-conducted opinion polls can, and should serve as a yardstick to define, strategise and implement their policies.

We have discovered that opinion poll surveys are also an art as much as they are a science, and the dexterity increases with repeated exercises. Several months hence, we hope to conduct similar surveys to gauge voter opinion, and we sincerely solicit robust feedback to help us hone our techniques and refine our methods. It will be, we hope, a small but important step in strengthening the democratic culture in Nepal.

Dipak Gyawali
Chairman, *Interdisciplinary Analysts*

Acknowledgement

I thank all fellow-Nepalis who had candidly expressed their opinions to our enumerators. Without their consent to be interviewed and active participation in the interview process, this report would not have come to the present shape.

I am grateful to The Asia Foundation (TAF) - Nepal, in particular to Dr. Nick Langton, Representative of TAF for providing us the financial support for undertaking this survey. I am grateful to Dr. Sagar Prasai, Consultant at TAF for his initiative in helping us start the work on time and for his feedback during various stages of the work.

I am grateful to our organization, Interdisciplinary Analysts, Kathmandu for providing us the opportunity to take up this and to its chairman, Mr. Dipak Gyawali for his comments, suggestions and other backstopping support during the project period.

I am grateful to Mr. Hari Sharma (Director, Social Science Baha) for his inputs in questionnaire formulation. I appreciate the efforts of Mr. Fatik Bahadur Thapa in fieldwork monitoring. I thank them both for their comments on the draft report.

This opinion poll could not have been accomplished without the assistance of ACNielsen Nepal Pvt. Ltd. in conducting the fieldwork and in managing the processing of data. I heartily appreciate the efforts of the field supervisors and enumerators of ACNielsen Nepal Pvt. Ltd. in administering questionnaires in the difficult situation that prevails in the field.

I am grateful to Mrs. Perry Thapa for copy-editing the text, her skills having made this report much more readable than would have been otherwise.

At Interdisciplinary Analysts, I was fortunate to have received assistance from Mrs. Gita Bhoomi and Mrs. Sunita Munakarmi in word processing, Mrs. Ganga Shrestha for layout and Mr. Narayan Adhikari for layout, formatting and cover page designing. My thanks to all of them.

As the principal investigator of the study, I sincerely thank the co-author of this study, Mr. Pawan Kumar Sen, for putting in significant inputs in designing the sampling frame and in data analysis, interpretation and report writing, and absolve him of shortcomings remaining in the report by taking them upon myself.

It needs reminding that a public opinion poll, which meets minimum criteria of scientific merit - and I believe this one does - represents not just the views of the sample but of the entire population with the caveat that in this political opinion poll the urban population is over-represented. Since the opinion poll was conducted between 5 and 25 January 2006, I believe the political opinion poll correctly reflects the views of the people during that period in time. In normal circumstances, the opinion of the public tends to persist. Given the dramatic turn of events during much of April 2006 there could be, theoretically speaking, equally dramatic shifts in opinions held by individuals. How much of a swing there has been because of the second Jana Andolan (6 April – 24 April 2006) is for future opinion polls to find out. While it maybe obvious, it does, however, need re-emphasizing that this opinion poll reflects the opinions of the people at large and not that of the authors of this report. The authors can and should however, be critiqued for any interpretation of those measured opinions that readers feel is unjustified.

Sudhindra Sharma, PhD
Principal Investigator

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Executive Summary

General Background and Rationale

This nation-wide political opinion poll, Nepal Contemporary Political Situation II 2005 (NCPS-II 2005), was carried out by Interdisciplinary Analysts, a Kathmandu-based research organisation and funded by The Asia Foundation. The opinion poll was designed between November and December 2005 and administered with the support of ACNielsen Nepal Pvt. Ltd., a marketing research organisation, between 5 January and 25 January, 2006. Data processing and analysis were carried out in February 2006, and the report was prepared and finalised in March and April 2006.

Nepal is in the midst of a conflict and has no parliament*. During normal times, when a parliament functions, representatives can articulate the concerns of the citizenry. In times with no parliament, however it is difficult to ascertain what the concerns of ordinary citizens are. In this situation, a well-designed and systematically undertaken opinion poll can bring to the fore the concerns of ordinary people. Moreover, poll-taking is a technology that democratises politics by providing for the wide participation of the general public. In the present context an opinion poll that brings into the public domain what the people at large think is a crucial need.

On 1 February 2005, King Gyanendra dismissed the Deuba government he had appointed under Article 127 and formed a cabinet under his own chairmanship. In a televised address to the nation he declared a state of emergency throughout the country and promised to hold a local municipal election within one year and a general election to the parliament within three years, after which time he would hand power back to the elected parliament. The king asked the National Election Commission to hold municipal elections by the end of the Nepali year, 13 April 2006.

On 9 October 2005, the king declared that local municipality elections would be held on 8 February 2006. On the scheduled date, elections were in fact, held in 36 municipalities of the kingdom. Only 21 per cent of the total municipal voters cast their votes.

The main objective of NCPS II was to develop a systematic barometer of public opinions about and attitudes toward the Nepali polity. It aimed to document how the public evaluates the contemporary Nepali polity and to gauge people's perceptions about the ongoing Maoist movement, prospects for peace and the processes through which peace could come about. In addition, the poll attempted to uncover the public's attitude toward and possible participation in the municipal election scheduled for 8 February 2006.

Methodology

Two sets of structured, closed-ended questionnaires were administered to respondents in 28 randomly selected districts that represent all five of Nepal's development regions and all three of its ecological zones. The sample size was 3,000 respondents. The distribution of the sample

* At the time the report was being finalised in late April 2006, the country had no parliament

across the districts was based on probability proportionate to size and was divided equally into rural and urban areas (1,500 respondents from each). All the municipalities that lie in the sample districts were selected. In addition, Village Development Committees (VDCs) were randomly selected using a stratified random sampling technique and then the VDC sample was further distributed into wards using a simple random sampling technique. In each sample ward, households were selected using the right-hand-rule method; then, respondents were selected from the sample households using the Kish-grid method. This method ensured that each member of a selected household had an equal chance of being selected.

Democracy and Monarchy

A majority of Nepalis (74 per cent) think that democracy is a suitable political system for the country. The four most important advantages of democracy identified by the Nepali people in order of decreasing rank are freedom of expression, including freedom of the press; rule by representatives elected by the people; the rule of law and freedom of religion. The four most serious weaknesses of democracy in order of decreasing seriousness are misuse of authority/rise in corruption, politicians not returning back to their villages or constituencies after election, changes in administration when a new party gains a majority in the government and continuous protest by opposition parties.

A majority of Nepalis (51 per cent) are in favour of a fully constitutional monarchy, but small but sizeable number (15 per cent) prefer an active monarchy. More extreme options were less popular: only four per cent favour absolute monarchy and just six per cent no monarchy at all. If the undecided proportion (the 19 per cent who said that they did not know or could not say) is excluded, nearly 64 per cent favour a constitutional monarchy.

A high proportion (42 per cent) of Nepalis believes that a prime minister responsible to the parliament is the most legitimate form of government. The preference for this type of government far outstrips other types. However, a small but sizeable portion (26 per cent) favour direct rule by the king as a legitimate form of government. If the undecided proportion (the 14 per cent who said that they did not know or could not say) is excluded, nearly 50 per cent favour a prime minister responsible to the parliament as the most legitimate form of government.

These responses corroborate and together reveal the Nepali people's clear preference for a multi-party democracy with a constitutional monarchy over other systems of governance.

The King-led Government

As their answers to the first question reveal, the Nepali people are ambivalent about the king's active role in politics since 1 February 2006. This ambivalence is also revealed in their assessment of the king-chaired government. The people are fairly equally divided among those who approve, disapprove and do not know/cannot say with regard to the king's step on 1 February, 2006. Their assessment of the performance of the last government chaired by the king is similarly divided; about a third of respondents each feel that it is performing well, feel it is not performing well and do not know or cannot say.

People, in general, do not see many positive features in the king's last government. Those who do see positive features, identify the decrease in corruption and restrictions on the misconduct of political parties as the major strengths. People identify restrictions in political freedom, the

constitution having been made inactive and the decreased possibility of peace talks as the negative features of the present context. A majority of people (52 per cent) disagree with the government's claim that the Maoist movement has been checked and overall security has improved since the king's takeover.

Among those who know about the Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC) formed by the king-led government, almost three-quarters (74 per cent) approved its finding some high-ranking individuals guilty in a corruption case and sentencing them. The reason most often given for approval are that the corrupt must be punished, the second most common reason was that corruption must be discouraged. The responses corroborate each other. The quarter who disapproved did so for three main reasons: because the commission was unconstitutional, because the commission was prejudiced against certain individuals and because it was not the right body to take the action. As high as 64 per cent of the people are aware that the constitutional body which deals with corruption is the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) and not the RCCC.

Constituent Assembly

The opinion poll attempted to understand the public's view on the proposed constituent assembly, an important episteme in the current political discourse in Nepal. About 55 per cent of the Nepali population have heard about the proposed constituent assembly. Among them, only about 43 per cent believe that they know what a constituent assembly is. Of those who thought that they knew, only 63 per cent actually do know what a constituent assembly is. All in all, around 15 per cent of the people in Nepal actually understand what a constituent assembly is all about.

Local Government

In a context where there have been no elected local government units i.e., district development committees (DDCs) municipalities or Village Development Committees (VDCs), since June 2002, a clear majority surprisingly reported having experienced no difficulties due to the absence of an elected local government. Forty-eight per cent are not aware that the government has nominated officials to run the local government. Of those who reported that they are aware only 46 per cent are satisfied with the performance of the nominated officials. Of the 54 per cent who are not satisfied with the performance of nominated officials, the reasons, cited in order of decreasing popularity are that they have not been selected through a proper election, they are not fulfilling their responsibilities properly, they are not bringing development and they do not have an untarnished reputation.

The Municipal Elections

The 1500 urban respondents were asked several questions pertaining to the municipal elections scheduled for 26 Magh, 2006 (8 February, 2006). The first was whether they knew that municipal elections were due to be held on 26 Magh, 2006. A vast majority of urban respondents (96.5 per cent) said that they did know. Asked if the municipal elections were, in the present context, important in that it would be able to restore the stalled democratic process, about 20 per cent of urban respondents thought it is very important, while another 32.0 per cent thought it was somewhat important. As for whether they thought the municipal elections would be held in a free and fair manner, only 16 per cent answered affirmatively.

About 43 per cent of the urban respondents said that they planned to vote in the forthcoming municipal elections, 31 per cent said that they had not yet decided and about 20 per cent said that they would not vote. Those who said they did not intend to vote gave the following reasons, in order of decreasing rank: it is not safe to go to the polling station, the election is unconstitutional, nothing is going to change after this election and parties and politicians are not to be trusted. The poll asked those urban respondents who said they were going to vote about the qualities they would like to see in the candidates they intended to vote for. The people ranked honesty as most important, followed by the ability to bring about development, contribution to social work and educational level.

While the opinion poll suggested 43 per cent of respondents would vote during the municipal elections, only around 21 per cent or only around half that figure actually cast their ballot on 8 February 2006, according to data made available by the National Election Commission. Two major reasons explain the discrepancy. The first is events which occurred in the interval between the survey and the election. Second is the bearing of other questions in the survey on respondent's decision to vote, which had not been properly interpreted earlier. What these two reasons together suggest is that those who voted during the municipal elections were those who were not significantly affected by Maoist violence either directly or indirectly and those who felt that it was important to vote in spite of the fact that the usual election-associated activities were absent.

The Movement of Political Parties

The opinion poll asked respondents about their knowledge of the 12-point memorandum of understanding (MoU) reached between the seven-party alliance and the Maoists. Forty-five per cent of the people said they knew about it, while about 40 per cent did not. Among those who knew about it, a majority (43 per cent) approved it. Another 29 per cent partly approved and partly disapproved of it. Only a small proportion (10 per cent) disapproved of it altogether. People are divided about whether they believe that the Maoists are actually committed to the democratic norms and values expressed in the MoU: 39 per cent said that they did not believe in the Maoists' sincerity while 37 per cent said they did. In the agreement, the seven-party alliance and the Maoists (CPN) asked people to boycott the municipal elections. A simple majority of the people (40 per cent) responded that it was right to boycott the municipal elections while slightly fewer (37 per cent) said that it was wrong. A majority of Nepalis (56 per cent) do not see any problems with an arrangement in which the Maoists and the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) are brought under the supervision of the United Nations or some other international agency in order to ensure an end to the hostilities. The majority of Nepalis (52 per cent) are not happy that the seven-party alliance and the Maoists reached the accord in foreign territory. They think that it would have been better if they had reached an understanding within Nepal itself.

The Maoist Movement and Possibilities for Peace Talks

About the state of the Maoist movement in the respondents' local area - not at the national level - more than half of the people (52 per cent) indicated that they believe that it is the same i.e., it is neither expanding nor declining. The proportions of those who believe that the movement is either spreading or declining is about the same: eight-nine per cent.

The poll attempted to gauge the public's view about what they considered was the main demand of the Maoists. In order of decreasing rank these are: the abolition of the monarchy, holding elections for constituent assembly and the establishment of a Maoist dictatorship.

Regarding the solution for ending the conflict, the most popular choice is peace talks among the concerned parties (i.e., the king's representatives, parliamentary parties and the Maoists). The declaration of a ceasefire, an allied concept, comes second in rank. Solutions like the suppression of Maoist rebels by the state security forces and the suppression of the security forces by the Maoists are not favoured. The majority of Nepalis remain optimistic about peace talks: almost two-thirds (63 per cent) believe that the Maoist movement will eventually be settled through talks. At the time the poll was conducted, however, they did not trust the king-led government, the Maoist leadership or the political party leaders, believing that none of the three parties were serious about restoring peace in the country. Most (54 per cent) are in a favour of third-party mediation to break the deadlock between the government and the Maoists. They would like to see human rights organisations (23 per cent) or the United Nations (18 per cent) serve as mediators.

Ceasefire and its Effects

The CPN Maoist declared a three-month ceasefire on 3 September 2005 (18 Badra, 2062), and then extended it for another month on 2 December 2005 (17 Mangsir 2062). The poll attempted to find out how people perceived the effects of this ceasefire on their daily lives. More than half of the respondents (56 per cent) reported that their lives had improved while 35 per cent said it was about the same. The poll discovered that the vast majority of respondents (80 per cent) felt that the government also should have declared a ceasefire in response to the Maoists' unilateral declaration.

Solution to the Current Political Stalemate

Most Nepalis (57 per cent) think that round-table talks with all sides should be the first step in overcoming the current political stalemate. After that most people (46 per cent) want to see an interim government which includes the Maoists. Other options, such as a general election to the House of Representatives (9 per cent), restoration of the dissolved House of Representatives (8 per cent) or the formation of a coalition government of parliamentary parties (12 per cent), are not popular among the people. Most people (49 per cent) have no particular views about constitution related processes. More people favour amending the present constitution (25 per cent) than formulating a new constitution (16 per cent). Only 8 per cent of all respondents support the formulation of a new constitution through a constituent assembly.

The Main Message of the Poll

Nepalis strongly favour a democracy with a constitutional monarchy. They do not want a republic or an absolute monarchy. They believe that a legitimate government is one in which a prime minister is responsible to an elected parliament.

People believe that the Maoist conflict will be settled through peace talks, not military action. They feel that neither the king-led government nor the Maoist leadership is serious about restoring peace in the country. They think that third-party mediation is needed if the conflict is to be ended.

Though a constituent assembly is a core issue in Nepal's national politics, only around 15 per cent of Nepalis correctly understand what it is and only 8 per cent advocate using it to resolve the present political stalemate.

All in all, the Nepali people favour an inclusive political structure wherein the monarchy, the parliamentary parties and the Maoists should all participate and co-exist within a framework of

constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. They do not as some political parties propose agree to restoring the dissolved House of Representatives. Nor do they agree to conducting a national election of representatives by next year as the king intends, or to establishing a constituent assembly as the Maoists demand. They want the monarchy, political parties and the Maoists all to have a place in the political structure, and want all three to sort it out through mutual talks.

Introduction



1.1 Background and Recent Political Developments

Nepal is in the midst of a constitutional and a political crisis. A constitutional crisis emerged when the elected prime minister, using the powers bestowed upon him by the Constitution of 1990, dissolved the House of Representatives. He had promised to hold elections within six months but, when the time came, was unable to do so. The framers of the present constitution had not foreseen such an eventuality, so there were no directives in the constitution to guide the state in such circumstances. This state of affairs then led to a constitutional crisis in which the major legitimate political players – the monarch and the political parties hitherto represented in the dissolved House of Representatives – viewed the situation and the possible solution to the stalemate differently. Some political parties asked for the reinstatement of the dissolved house, while the monarch pushed for new elections.

The country is experiencing a political crisis as well. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) or CPN-Maoist or Maoists for short, opposes the current configuration of the state and the Constitution of 1990 and has adopted violence to achieve its political objectives. This political party, which is largely a guerilla force, has acquired indirect control over large areas of the country. It poses a serious challenge to the state's monopoly over the instruments of coercion, which in some sense constitutes the very definition of the state. Governments of the past and present have dubbed the Maoists "terrorists" and the state has adopted a primarily military solution to what it views as "the Maoist problem". However, years of military action has not succeed in suppressing this political force. The fact that this unconstitutional political actor (unconstitutional in the sense that it does not recognise the present constitution), by virtue of its indirect control over a large part of the country, seriously challenges the sovereignty of the state constitutes a political crisis for the Nepali state.

The number of deaths arising out of the conflict between state security forces and the Maoists has exceeded 13,000 and is increasing by the day. The internationally recognised figure of internally displaced persons lay between 100,000 and 200,000 in 2004 (Gnyawali, 2005).

On 1 February 2005, King Gyanendra dismissed the appointed Deuba government and formed a cabinet under his own chairmanship. The king declared a state of emergency throughout the country and promised to hold a local municipal elections within one year and a general election to the parliament within three years, after which time he would hand power back to the elected Parliament. In a televised address, the king asked the National Election Commission to hold municipal elections by the end of the Nepali year or 13 April 2006.

On 8 May 2005, the leaders of seven agitating political parties signed a document known as the 'Common Agreement and Commitment' and formed an alliance to protest against the king's take-over of 1 February 2005. On 18 June 2005, the seven-party alliance formally declared that it would boycott the municipal elections.

On 3 September 2005, the CPN-Maoist unilaterally declared a ceasefire for three months. The government did not reciprocate, stating that it had not declared a war against the Maoists in the first place.

On 9 October 2005, the king declared that local municipality elections would be held on 8 February, 2006.

The CPN-Maoist and the seven-party alliance entered into a 12-point Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 22 November, 2005. In it, the seven-party alliance and the Maoists expressed their commitment to establish 'total democracy' by ending 'autocratic monarchy'.

On 2 December, 2005, the CPN-Maoist extended the ceasefire for another month. The government did not reciprocate this time either. On 4 January, 2006, the CPN-Maoist unilaterally called off the ceasefire and, as the date for municipal elections drew nearer, launched attacks against state security forces in various parts of the country.

Elections were held in 36 municipalities around the kingdom on 8 February, 2006. Only 21 percent of the total municipal voters eligible cast their votes.

1.2 History of Opinion Polls in Nepal

Conducting opinion polls was an unheard of activity during the non-party Panchayat era (1960-1989). Since the reinstatement of parliamentary democracy in 1990, however, opinion polls have become an important tool for gauging the public sentiment.

The history of the opinion poll in Nepal goes back to 1991, when the Political Science Association of Nepal (POLSAN) and the Institute of Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) conducted opinion polls related to the 1991 parliamentary elections. POLSAN polled 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 nine districts (Political Science Association of Nepal 1991; Hachhethu 2004). In 1992 POLSAN carried out a second opinion poll, in which it questioned 805 party activists and 256 members of Parliament in 13 districts (Political Science Association of Nepal, 1992). In 1993, the Nepal Opinion Survey Centre (NOSC), employing a multi-stage random sampling technique, conducted an opinion poll of 522 respondents from the three districts of the Kathmandu Valley (Nepal Opinion Survey Centre, 1993). 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 carried out in 1999 by Sudhindra Sharma and Pawan Kumar Sen for Himal Association on the eve of the third general election. The fieldwork for the poll was carried out by ORG-MARG Nepal. Sharma and Sen (1999) used a stratified random sampling technique at the district level and a quota sampling technique to select respondents (Sharma and Sen, 1999a). This is probably the only opinion poll conducted in Nepal to date that has tried to predict the popular vote that political parties would obtain in a national election. Himal Association conducted another large-scale opinion poll of 3,902 respondents from 20 districts in 2001 (Himal Association, 2001).

With the beginning of the new millennium, a few other institutions entered the scene of poll-taking. Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies (NCCS) and Himal Media, for example, have been conducting polls regularly since 2001. In 2001, NCCS polled 245 Members of Parliament. Since then, NCCS has carried out two other polls, one on elections and another on participatory

democracy. In both cases, it used a purposive sampling technique to select 500 respondents in five districts (Hachhethu, 2004).

Several opinion polls got underway in 2004. A preliminary report entitled 'Nepal Public Opinion Research' was released by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research Inc. in July 2004¹. The poll sampled 3,000 respondents from across 60 districts. It employed a systematic sampling technique at the VDC and ward levels. Households and respondents were selected through the right-hand rule and Kish grid respectively². *Himal Khabarpatrika* made public its Kathmandu Valley-based poll in October 2004. It covered 500 respondents. Nothing was said about the sampling technique employed in the survey (Dahal, 2004).

In 2004, a survey entitled 'State of Democracy in Nepal' (SDN 2004) was undertaken by the State of Democracy in South Asia/Nepal Chapter in collaboration with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). This opinion poll covered the entire country using a systematic random sampling technique at each of three stages: the constituency, the polling centre and the voters. A sample of 3,249 respondents was drawn from 163 polling centres in 39 constituencies spread over 38 districts (Hachhethu, 2004).

The Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research Inc. published another opinion poll, 'Rising Concern about Maoist Strength,' (RCMS 2005) in January 2005 as a follow-up poll to the July 2004 poll. It covered 3,222 different respondents from the same 60 districts that had been covered in the previous poll. The sampling methodology that was employed was the same as the earlier one³.

Interdisciplinary Analysts, with Sharma and Sen, reappeared on the scene in March 2005 with a nation-wide opinion poll 'Nepal Contemporary Political Situation' as the first phase of a number of longitudinal polls. The poll covered 3,059 respondents from 35 districts representing Nepal's five development regions and three ecological zones. Among them, the poll included victims of both sides of the ongoing armed conflict - state security forces and Maoists rebels - in its booster sample. The distribution of the sample across the sample districts was based on probability proportionate to size (PPS). The samples were then further divided into rural and urban areas as per the rural-urban ratio of the country. Village Development Committees (VDCs) from the sample districts were randomly selected using a systematic random sampling technique. Wards from the sample VDCs were selected using the same technique. In each of the sample wards, households were selected using the right-hand-rule⁴ and then respondents from the sample households were selected using a Kish-grid technique⁵. This method ensured that each member of the selected households had an equal chance of being selected (Sharma and Sen, 2005).

Himalmedia conducted a nation-wide poll in 2006. In terms of its methodology, the poll first stratified the country into 15 ecological-development regions using its three ecological regions

¹ The report was circulated among the donor community. The wider public has not yet had a chance to peruse it.

² Based on interview with Deepal Thapa of AC Neilsen, and the coordinator of this research.

³ The information about this survey was based on interview with Deepal Thapa of AC Neilsen.

⁴ To use the right-hand-rule, the enumerator first identifies the central point of human settlement in a village and then starts walking randomly. He selects for interviewing every household that is located on his right-hand side till he has surveyed the required number of households from that village. The right-hand rule actually works in name only as, in returning along the same street the enumerator again selects households located on his right. (which were Previously on his left) In this way, households located on both sides of a street are selected.

⁵ A Kish-grid is a table of random numbers. Household numbers from 0 to 9 are placed in a first row and family sizes starting from 1 are placed in the first column. The table generates a random number by establishing a correspondence between a household number and its family size. For instance, the number for a household is '3', third eldest member of that household is chosen to interview.

(mountain, hill and Tarai) and five development regions. Later, the western, mid-western and far-western mountains were merged into one ecological-development region due to their low population densities and poor accessibility. From the remaining 13 ecological-development regions 37 districts were sampled purposively, taking into account their accessibility and population size. The total sample size of 5,033 was distributed across these sample districts according to PPS. *Himal Khabarpatrika* does not, however, reveal the sampling technique it used at the VDC and ward levels; we do not know if selection was random or if quota sampling was adopted. We do know, however, that quota sampling was adopted to identify individuals for the interview.

How the results of the current opinion poll, Nepal Contemporary Political Situation II (NCPS-II) compare with the results of NCPS-I, RCMS 2005, SDN 2004 and Himalmedia 2006 are discussed in Chapter V.

1.3 Rationale for the present study

Nepal is in the midst of a conflict and is without a parliament. During normal times, when there is a functioning parliament, people's representatives can articulate the concerns of common men and women. In times when there is no parliament, however, it is difficult to ascertain what the concerns of ordinary citizens are. In this state the main avenue open to the public for expressing its views has been the media, which has been covering various areas of public concern. The media does not, however, employ rigorous research methods and does not base its arguments on large and nation-wide samples.

A well-designed and systematically undertaken opinion poll can bring to the fore the concerns of ordinary men and women. In a scientifically designed poll, all elements within a defined universe have an equal chance of being represented. Moreover, poll-taking is a technology that democratises politics by facilitating the wide participation of the general public. In the present context, the need for an opinion poll that brings into the public domain what Nepalis at large think is urgent.

In view of the local elections scheduled for the first time after a gap of eight years, it was also important to understand what the general public thought of utilising their right to vote.

It is believed that conducting a series of poll-taking exercises will help refining the techniques employed, ranging from methodologies (including sampling) to formulating questions that are relevant to understanding the contemporary situation. For a science that is still in its incipient stages, this initiative would enhance the base of social science research in Nepal and help contribute to the public discourse.

1.4 Objectives

The overall goal of NCPS II, as it was in the case of NCPS I, is to develop a systematic barometer of public opinions and attitudes regarding the Nepali polity. Its specific objectives are as follows:

- To document how the public evaluates the contemporary Nepali polity.
- To gauge people's perceptions about the ongoing Maoist movement, prospects for peace and the processes by which a resolution could be ensured.
- To document people's opinions about the present movement of political parties.

- To document how the public assesses the current government.
- To help pursue the mandate for peace and ensure a negotiated settlement of disputes.
- To predict the public's participation in the forthcoming municipal elections.

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Questionnaire

Two sets of structured closed-ended questionnaires designed to fulfil the aforementioned objectives (Set A and Set B) were formulated after consulting a wide range of experts and stakeholders. Questions pertaining to democracy, the monarchy, a constituent assembly, solution to the current political stalemate and the forthcoming municipal elections were asked through both sets of questionnaires. In addition, Set A contained specific questions pertaining to the situation after 1 February, 2005, and included questions related to the performance of the current government, local government and the activities of political parties. Set B contained specific questions pertaining to the Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC), the Maoist movement, peace talks and ceasefires. Set A was administered to half of the total respondents, while the other half were interviewed using Set B. The rationale for having two sets was to reduce the length of each questionnaire so administering it would not take too long. Both questionnaires were first formulated in English and then translated into Nepali. A pre-test was conducted in the Kathmandu Valley on 29 December 2005, and, after processing feedback, the questionnaire was finalised on 30 December, 2005. The actual interviews were conducted throughout the country between 5 January and 25 January 2005.

1.5.2 Sampling Technique

Twenty-eight of Nepal's total 75 districts were randomly selected⁶. Together, they represent the five development regions and the three ecological zones of Nepal. The sample size was 3,000 respondents.

The distribution of sample respondents across the sample districts was based on PPS, and was equally divided into rural and urban residents (1,500 respondents from each).

VDCs were randomly selected from the sample districts by mapping their spatial positions. In this technique, if three VDCs have to be selected from a sample district which spreads from north to south, one VDC is selected from the north, one from the centre and one from the south. If it extends from east to west, however, the selections were made so that one district is in the west, one in the centre and one in the east. The numbers of sample VDCs varied according to the district sample size. In rural areas, one VDC was selected for every 20 respondents. If 40 rural respondents had to be selected from a sample district, two VDCs, each with around 20 respondents, were selected. The VDC sample size was further distributed into wards. For a VDC sample size of 20, two wards were selected using a simple random sampling technique and 10 respondents in each ward were identified (see Annex III for a detailed breakdown of the sample).

In each sample ward, households were selected using the right-hand rule. Respondents were selected using a Kish-grid. All household members above 18 years of age were listed; then, using

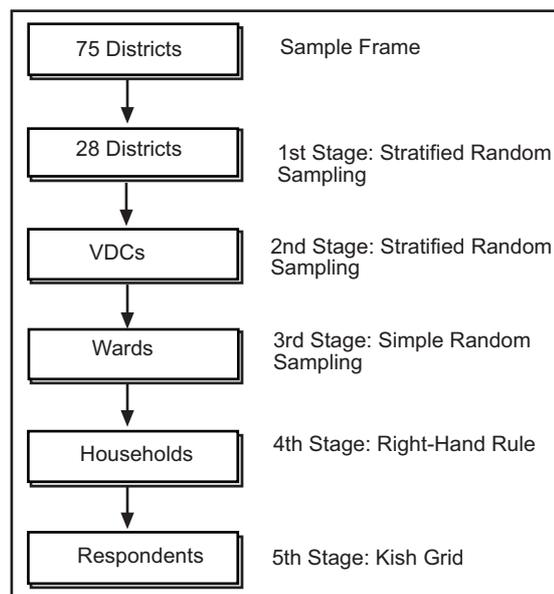
⁶ Two districts, which were randomly selected, Kalikot in the mid-western mountains and Jajarkot in the mid-western hills had to be dropped because of security reasons. Through a random process Dailekh from the mid-western hills and Jumla from the mid-western mountains were selected in their stead.

the grid, one was selected to be interviewed. This method ensured that each eligible member in a selected household had an equal chance of being selected.

1.5.3 Fieldwork/Data Collection

An agreement was signed between Interdisciplinary Analysts and ACNielsen Nepal Pvt. Ltd., that gave ACNielsen Nepal a mandate to administer IDA's questionnaire in the field and to process the data. Field supervisors and enumerators experienced in survey methods were deployed to carry out the fieldwork. Before their deployment, the enumerators were provided with an orientation on survey research methodology, their responsibilities and the field operations plan. They were also instructed about how to clarify questions in case any confusions arose. Altogether 11 field supervisors and 35 enumerators conducted the fieldwork. (The list of individuals involved in the opinion poll is attached as Annex IV.)

Chart 1.1: Sampling Design of NCPS II



1.6 Database Management and Analysis

Data was processed and analysed using the programmes FoxPro, Quantum, SPSS and MS Excel. A data entry programme was created using FoxPro software. To prevent contamination of the data, legal codes as well as authorised range, consistency and extreme case check systems were included in the data entry programme. After the data had been entered, it was imported into Quantum software, where it was cleaned in order to ensure its quality. Next, the data was imported into SPSS software, where it was analysed and presented in tabular form. In the final stage, the data was imported into MS Excel to produce charts and graphs. Cross tabulations between significant questions (i.e., dependant variables) and demographic/geographic composition such as age group, education, sex, development region, and ecological region (i.e., independent variables) were carried out. This write-up uses visual aids like pie charts, bar graphs and line graphs where relevant. (The tables that show the cross tabulations between the dependant and independent variables are presented in Annex II.)

1.7 Limitations

The opinion poll has several limitations, most of which have to do with its sampling methodology. Some of these limitations may have serious implications, while others are likely to be minor. First, urban dwellers are over-represented in the sample. The reason for this was that one of the objectives of the poll was to gauge the public's views on the municipal elections that were scheduled to be held on 8 February, 2006. Since prospective voters in municipal elections live in urban areas, the urban sample size was increased to represent them. Since most of the municipalities in Nepal are located in the central region and are dominated by Newars, the central region and Newars are over-represented in the sample. This was an unintended consequence of trying to increase the urban population in the sample. Second, the sample districts included in the poll did not represent the mountain districts in the western development region. This omission

may not be overly problematic because this area has a low population density. Hill and Tarai districts from all five-development regions are well represented in the sample. The characteristics of the sample are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

1.8 Organisation of the Report

Chapter 1 discusses recent political events in Nepal, outlines the history of opinion polls in the country, identifies the rationale of the study and delineates its objectives. In addition, the chapter also describes the methodology employed in the poll and outlines database management techniques.

Chapter 2 highlights the characteristics of the sample used in the poll. It describes the demographic, geographic and social compositions of the sample, its distribution across educational status and occupation, and the proportion of conflict-affected respondents.

Chapter 3 discusses the key findings of the poll. Findings about the public's view obtained from the analysis of single-choice questions are presented in terms of percentages, while findings acquired by analysing multiple-choice questions are presented in terms of ranking. In addition to general frequency and proportion, public response to every question is examined by disaggregating the responses across several variables, such as sex, age group, development region, ecological zone, urban-rural settlement pattern, caste/ethnicity and educational status.

Chapter 4 focuses on the municipal elections.

Chapter 5 compares the results of the current poll, NCPS-II, with other public opinion polls such as NCPS-I, RCMS 2005 and SDN 2004, and analyses certain responses longitudinally.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions.

In addition, the study includes several annexes.

Annex I contains a map of Nepal that illustrates the sample districts.

Annex II contains frequency tables of the public's view on every question as well as cross tabulations across different dependent variables.

Annex III shows the distribution of the sample VDCs and municipalities included in the opinion poll.

Annex IV lists the names of researchers involved in the project.

Annex V contains the two sets of questionnaires administered.

Sample Characteristics

2

2.1 Demographic Composition

Of the 3,000 respondents interviewed, 1,503 (50.1 per cent) were male and 1,497 (49.9 per cent) female. Compared to the population census of 2001, females are slightly under-represented in the sample.

About 24 per cent of respondents could be termed “the young generation”; or individuals between the ages of 18 and 25. Some 25 per cent could be termed “the old generation”, or individuals above 45 years. The rest (51 per cent) fall in between these two categories. The age distribution of the sample was not compared with the age distribution of the 2001 census because age groups are categorised differently.

2.2 Geographic Composition

The distribution of the sample across the five development regions shows that most respondents were from the central development region and the fewest from the mid-western development-region. Compared to the population census of 2001, the mid-west region is under-represented and the central development-region is over-represented in the sample.

In terms of ecological zones, most of the respondents interviewed (51 per cent) live in the hills. The percentage of respondents from the Tarai was 44 per cent. As is true of the country’s total population, the respondents living in the mountains comprise only a small proportion of the sample. Compared to the 2001 census, the hilly region is over-represented and the Tarai and the mountain are under-represented.

2.3 Social Composition

Respondents from hill caste groups dominate the sample. Newars are second, followed by hill ethnic groups and Tarai Vaishya.

Table 2.1: Sex composition

Sex	Sample (%)	2001 Census
Female	49.9	50.1
Male	50.1	49.9
Total	100.0 (N=3,000)	100.0

Note: N stands for total number of respondents

Table 2.2: Age-group composition

Age group	Sample (%)
25 and below	24.1
26 – 35	31.1
36 – 45	20.2
Above 45	24.6
Total	100.0 (N = 3,000)

Table 2.3: Development-region composition

Development Region	Sample (%)	2001 Census (%)
Eastern	17.0	23.1
Central	52.9	34.7
Western	15.4	19.7
Mid-west	6.0	13.0
Far-west	8.7	9.5
Total (N = 3,000)	100.0	100.0

Table 2.4: Ecological region composition

Ecological Region	Sample (%)	2001 Census (%)
Mountains	5.3	7.3
Hills	51.0	44.3
Tarai	43.7	48.4
Total	100.0 (N = 3,000)	100.0

Examining the sample in terms of the religious affiliations of respondents, Hindus are over-represented and adherents of Buddhism are slightly under-represented. Followers of Islam and the Kirat religion are under-represented. Christians are proportionately represented.

2.4 Educational Status

In terms of educational status, those that are illiterate (22 per cent) and those with secondary-level education (21 per cent) dominate the sample. Only one out of ten respondents reported having a Bachelor's degree or higher.

2.5 Occupation

The majority of respondents (almost 29 per cent) are housewives or househusbands. Those who are involved in subsistence agriculture form the second largest group (about 19 per cent). Industrialists/business persons and students are the third and fourth most populous groups respectively.

2.6 Conflict-Affected People

The sample also included conflict-affected people. The criteria for qualifying as "conflict-affected" included mental or physical torture, displacement from one's original settlements, or having a family member killed, kidnapped or wounded by either the government security forces, the Maoists or both sides. Fourteen per cent of the total respondents were found to have been directly affected by the present conflict. Of the conflict-affected respondents, the majority had been affected by the Maoists, but a significant number of respondents have been affected by government security forces.

Table 2.9: Composition of conflict-affected people

	Percent
Directly affected by both sides	5.5
Directly affected by the Maoist	5.8
Directly affected by the state security forces	2.3
Total respondents affected by the conflict	13.6

Table 2.5: Caste/ethnicity composition

Caste/ethnic Group	Sample (%)
Hill caste	38.3
Newar	22.3
Hill ethnic	12.3
Tarai Vaishya	8.5
Tarai Dalit	6.1
Tarai caste	3.8
Tarai ethnic	3.4
Hill Dalit	2.4
Muslim	1.9
Others	1.0
Total	100.0 (N = 3,000)

Table 2.6: Religion composition

Religion	Sample (%)	2001 Census (%)
Hindu	87.1	80.7
Buddhist	9.3	10.7
Islam	2.0	4.2
Kirat	1.0	3.6
Christianity	0.5	0.5
Atheist	0.1	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 2.7: Educational status composition

Educational Status	Sample (%)
Illiterate	22.2
Literate but no formal education	10.9
Primary level	10.2
Lower secondary level	9.8
Secondary level	21.3
Intermediate level	15.9
Bachelor's level	8.2
Master's level and above	1.7
Total	100.0 (N = 3,000)

Table 2.8: Profession composition

Occupation	Sample (%)
Housewife/husband	28.8
Subsistence agriculture	18.9
Industry/business	18.0
Student	10.5
Teaching	3.9
Labour	3.9
Unemployed	3.0
Govt/semi-govt service	2.9
Private sector	2.7
Retired	2.0
Traditional family profession	1.8
Commercialised agriculture	1.4
Non-government service	1.1
Medical service	0.7
Others	0.5
Total	100.0 (N = 3,000)

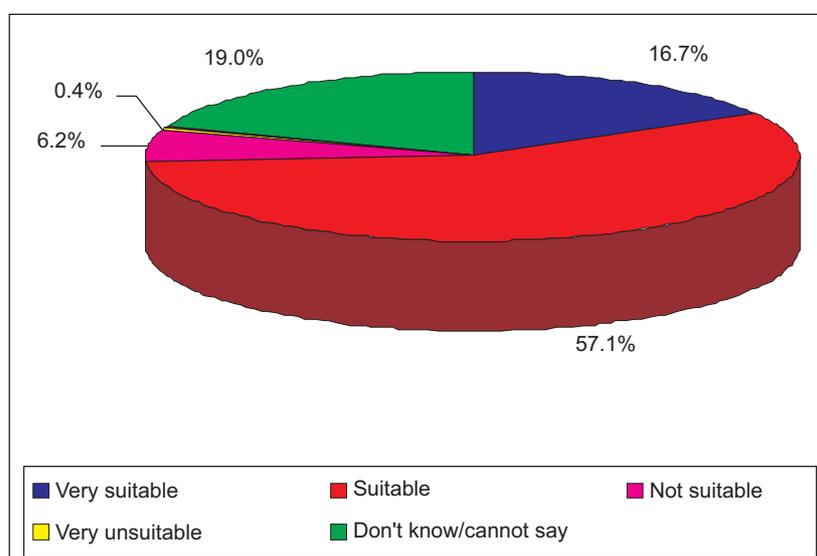
Key Findings

3

3.1 Democracy

‘In the context of our country, how suitable is democracy?’ was a key question asked of every respondent. About three-fourths of the respondents believe that democracy is either a suitable or a very suitable political system for Nepal.

Chart 3.1: In the context of our country, how suitable is democracy?



When this question was related with various variables, some specific correlations emerged. While a majority of both sexes think that democracy is a suitable system of governance, a significant proportion of females (30 per cent) stated that they didn't know or were unable to say anything definitive. Disaggregating data by ecological region reveals that the people of Kathmandu Valley have a different view than do residents in the mountains, hills and Tarai. The proportion of people in the Valley who identify democracy as an unsuitable system is relatively high (14 per cent) though the majority of Valley residents (67 per cent) continue to favour a democratic political system. The beliefs of urban residents and rural residents were not significantly different. However, the proportion of those who said 'don't know or cannot say' is higher among rural residents (23 per cent).

Respondents of all age groups follow the general trend. However, the proportion who said 'do not know or cannot say' is higher in the age group above 35. In terms of caste/ethnicity, the majority of each group is in favour of democracy. However, a higher than average (19 per cent) proportion of Tarai ethnic (42 per cent), Tarai Dalit (38 per cent), hill ethnic (26 per cent), hill Dalit (26 per cent), Muslims (25 per cent) and Tarai Vaishya (24 per cent) reported not knowing or not able to say anything about the suitability of democracy. The variation in the responses of

uneducated and educated people is considerable: democracy is seen in a more positive light by educated people than by the illiterate or those with little education.

Respondents were asked to identify the advantages of democracy. The three most important advantages of democracy identified by the Nepali people in order of decreasing priority are freedom of expression (including freedom of the press), rule by representatives elected by the people and the rule of law. 'Freedom of religion' comes fourth in rank.

Table 3.1: Advantages of Democracy

Advantage	Rank
Freedom of expression (including freedom of the press)	1
Rule by representatives elected by people	2
Rule of law	3
Freedom of religion	4

Ranking is used for those questions where there can be multiple responses and for those that require specifying priority. Both frequency of response and priority are better captured by rank order than by percentages.

The rank order is the same across all development regions except in the mid-western development region, where 'freedom of religion' ranks third. Moreover, the proportions of respondents who reported not knowing or being unable to respond are significantly high in the eastern and central development regions.

Disaggregating data by sex, ecological region, urban-rural settlement, age group and educational status did not reveal any significant differences from the general trend. However, the proportions of respondents who do not know or cannot say is significantly high among females, in the Tarai, in rural areas, in the age group above 35 and among the illiterate and those with little education.

In terms of caste/ethnicity, all groups follow the general trend except Tarai ethnic groups, Tarai Dalits and Muslims. Among Tarai ethnic communities, 'freedom of religion' and 'rule of representatives elected by the people' come in the second and third ranks, while 'freedom of religion' comes in the third rank among Tarai Dalit communities and Muslim.

The poll also attempted to gauge people's views about the weaknesses of democracy. People identified the misuse of authority/rise in corruption as the most significant weakness of democracy. The tendency of politicians not to go back to their villages or constituencies after election was next in rank.

Changes in administration when a new party is elected to the government and continuous protest by the political parties of the opposition are third and fourth in rank respectively.

Table 3.2: Weaknesses of Democracy

Weakness	Rank
Misuse of rights/rise in corruption	1
Politicians do not go back to constituencies after election	2
Changes in administration when a new party forms the government	3
Continuous protest by the political parties of the opposition	4

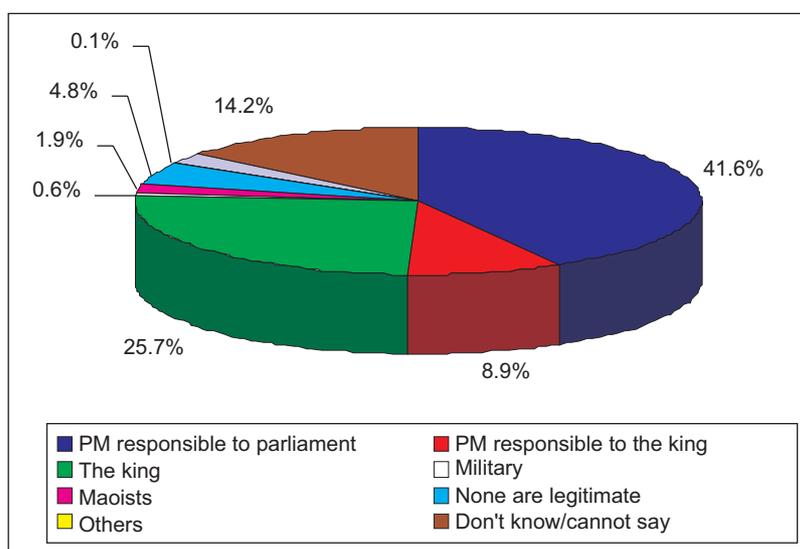
There are no significant differences in ranking across different demographic or social variables though, as in the previous questions, the proportion among females, the Tarai rural areas, illiterates, Muslims and ethnic and Dalit communities (both in the hills and the Tarai) who say 'do not know or cannot say' is high. The ranking is the same across the development regions except in the mid-west development region, where respondents ranked 'changes in administration

when a new party is elected to the government’ and ‘continuous protest by the political parties of the opposition’ second and third respectively.

3.2 Legitimacy of the System

The poll attempted to understand people’s perceptions about legitimate government. In response to the question ‘Who should rule the country for the rule to be legitimate?’ a clear majority said that a prime minister responsible to the Parliament was a legitimate ruler. About one-fourth said the King should rule, while just nine per cent gave a prime minister responsible to the King as their answer.

Chart 3.2: Who should rule the country for the rule to be legitimate?



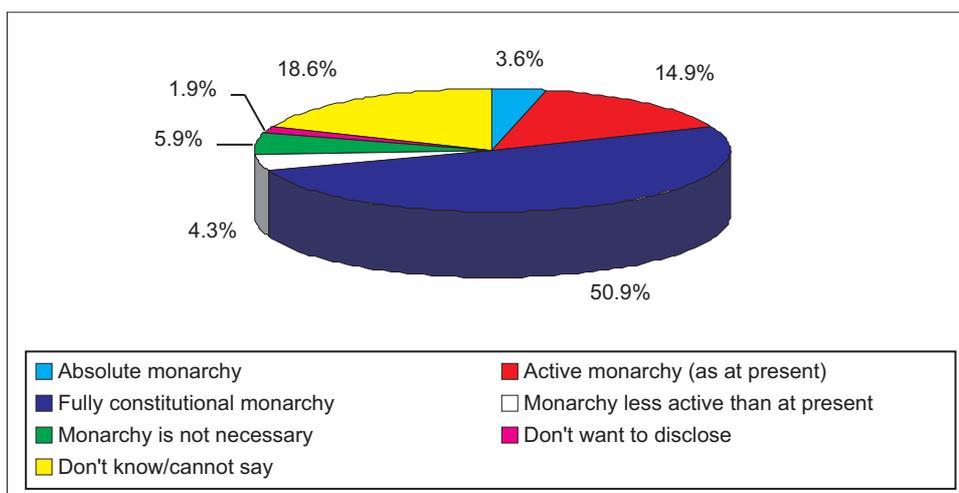
There was a significant difference in the ordering of the responses among females and males. A clear majority of males (52 per cent) gave the answer ‘a prime minister responsible to the Parliament’ while a simple majority of females (31 per cent) identified ‘the king’ as their top choice for a legitimate ruler. The trend across all development regions is similar, except in the mid-western development region, where 40 per cent cite ‘a prime minister responsible to the king’ as the legitimate ruler. All ecological regions follow the general trend. However, the proportion of those who favour the king is significantly higher in the Tarai (29 per cent) and the Valley (26 per cent). Settlement in rural/urban areas did not have a significant influence on beliefs, but age did. While the majority of all ages said that a prime minister responsible to the Parliament is legitimate, among those above 45, direct rule by the king was seen as equally legitimate.

The response to the question is revealing when the figures are broken down by caste/ethnicity. Muslims, Tarai Vaishya, Tarai Dalit and Tarai ethnic have distinctly different views from the general trend: they identified direct rule by the King as the most legitimate (48, 44, 38 and 32 per cent respectively). The majority of hill Dalits (27 per cent) could not give definitive answer in this matter. Education also has an influence on people’s views: the higher a respondent’s educational attainment, the more likely s/he was to identify rule by a prime minister responsible to the Parliament as legitimate.

3.3 Monarchy

In response to the question, ‘What type of monarchy should there be in Nepal?’ a clear majority (51 per cent) expressed their preference for a constitutional monarchy. However, a sizable number (15 per cent) would like an active monarch (as it existed under the king-led government) and a significant proportion (19 per cent) are not in the position to give a definite answer. Nearly 6 per cent feel that the monarchy is not necessary. Excluding those who did not have a definite answer, the proportion of people favouring a constitutional monarchy is 64 per cent and those favouring an active monarch increases to 19 per cent. All in all, the support for some kind of monarchy is very high.

Chart 3.3: What should be the type of monarchy in Nepal?



When responses are disaggregated by sex, there are no significant variations though a significant portion of females (26 per cent) do not have a clear idea about the matter. People from all development regions more or less follow the general trend, but the far-western region stands out in that the largest proportion (28 per cent) favour an absolute monarchy. One-fourth of people aged above 45 could not give definitive answer to this question.

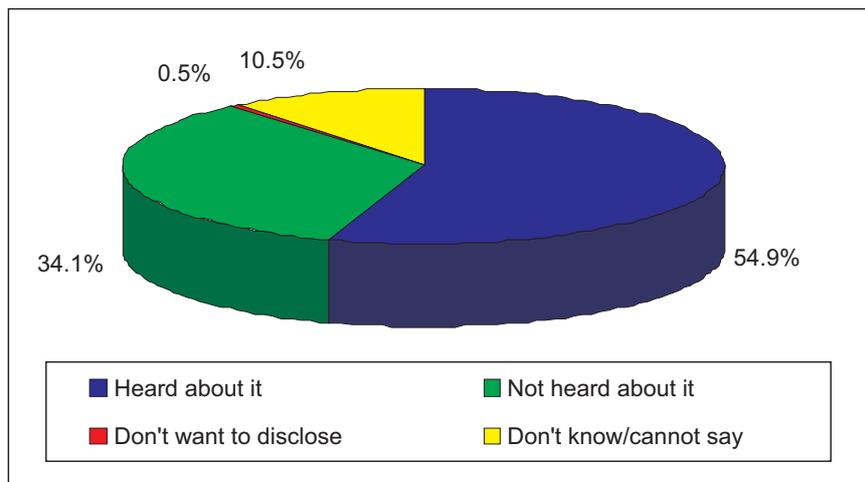
Along caste/ethnicity lines, too, all communities follow the general trend except, hill Dalits and Tarai ethnic groups. The number of people who do not know or cannot say constitute a majority among hill Dalits (41 per cent) and Tarai ethnic groups (35 per cent). Among illiterates, the majority (41.4 per cent) are not in position to provide a definitive answer. Literate respondents follow the general trend.

The people who support an active monarchy are largely those aged above 45 and those with no or little education. In contrast, people with at least a college education show the most preference for a constitutional monarchy. While active monarchy does not get support from this group, most of the adherents of republicanism this category.

3.4 Constituent Assembly

The present poll was designed to find out how many have heard about the proposed constituent assembly, if they feel they know about it and if so to assess their knowledge about it. It was found that slightly more than half of the people have heard about the constituent assembly while half have not.

Chart 3.4: Have you heard about constituent assembly?

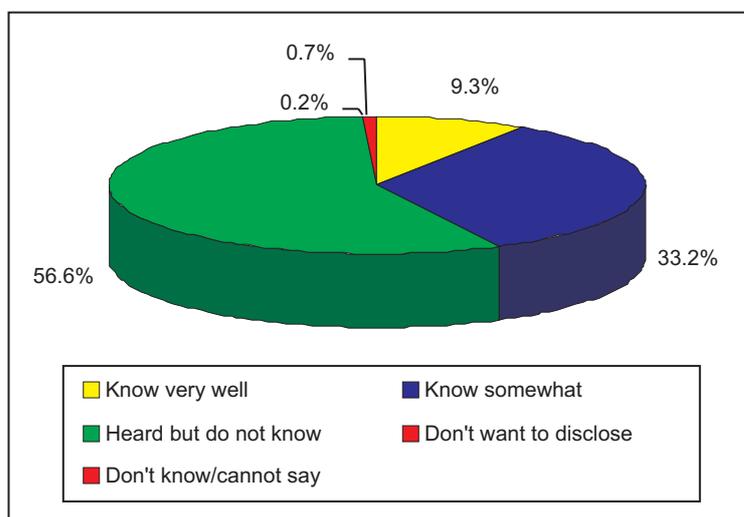


The variation by sex in responses to this question is significant: 69 per cent of males have heard about the proposed constituent assembly but only 43 per cent females have. Age also has a very significant effect on this matter. The majority of the people aged above 45 (46 per cent) have not heard about the proposed constituent assembly.

Interesting results are revealed when responses are disaggregated in terms of caste/ethnicity. Most caste/ethnic groups follow the general trend, but the majority of Tarai Dalits (48 per cent) do not. Almost 37 per cent of Tarai ethnic communities professed ignorance of the proposed constituent assembly. A sizeable proportion of hill ethnic (44 per cent) and hill Dalit (41 per cent) communities have not heard of it either. The level of education of a respondent has an influence on the issue too: the higher the education level, the greater the percentage of people who reported having heard of the constituent assembly.

Respondents who reported having heard about constituent assembly were asked if they knew what it is about. About 43 per cent claimed they had some or very good knowledge, while 57 per cent said that they had only heard about it but did not know what it was.

Chart 3.5: Do you know about constituent assembly?

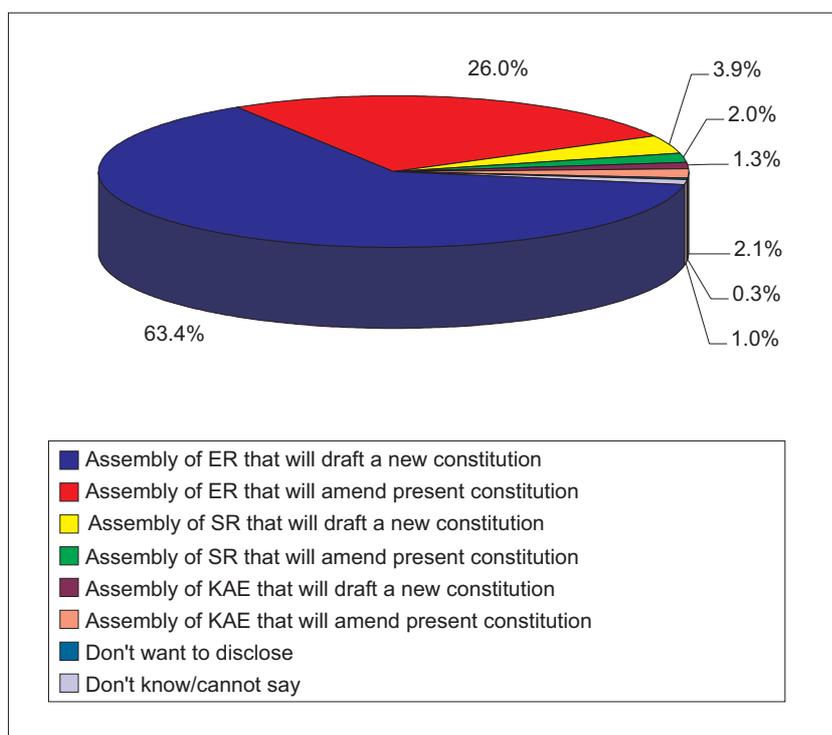


Disaggregating data reveals that males feel that they are more familiar with the concept of a constituent assembly than females do. All development regions except the far-western development region follow the general trend. Responses from the far-western development region are conspicuous in that the majority (67 per cent) profess some or total knowledge. Ecological region is also significant. The majority of residents in the mountains (61 per cent) and the Valley (52 per cent) claim that they know very well or know somewhat well about the proposed constituent assembly, while the majority of hill (65 per cent) and Tarai (58 per cent) dwellers say they do not know.

Across caste/ethnic lines follow the general trend, all responses except those of Tarai caste. The majority of Tarai caste groups (60 per cent) said that they know very well or know somewhat about the proposed constituent assembly. The level of education of a respondent has a very big influence on his/her knowledge: the higher the education level, the higher the likelihood that people know very well or somewhat well.

Respondents who stated that they know about constituent assembly very well or somewhat well were asked a follow-up question: 'What do you think the constituent assembly is?' The purpose of the question was to ascertain whether indeed they did correctly understand the term. About 63 per cent actually understood that the constituent assembly is an assembly of representatives elected to draft a new constitution. The rest gave incorrect answers. What may be surmised from the responses is that only 15 per cent of all Nepalis genuinely understand what a constituent assembly is. In sum, although the idea of a constituent assembly has gained significant currency in public discourse, only a small proportion actually understands it.

Chart 3.6: Understanding of constituent assembly



Note: ER: elected representatives, SR: selected representatives, KAE: King-appointed experts

All five development regions follow the general trend, although a significantly higher proportion of the people from the far-western (76 per cent) and eastern regions (77 per cent) have an accurate understanding of what a constituent assembly is. There is no significant deviation across the different age groups. Generally, however, younger people understand the idea of a constituent assembly better than their elders.

All caste/ethnic groups follow the general trend except Tarai Dalits, the majority of whom have an inaccurate understanding. Among the illiterate who claimed to know what the constituent assembly is, a large proportion (52 per cent) do not actually understand it.

Chart 3.7: Public's understanding of the constituent assembly

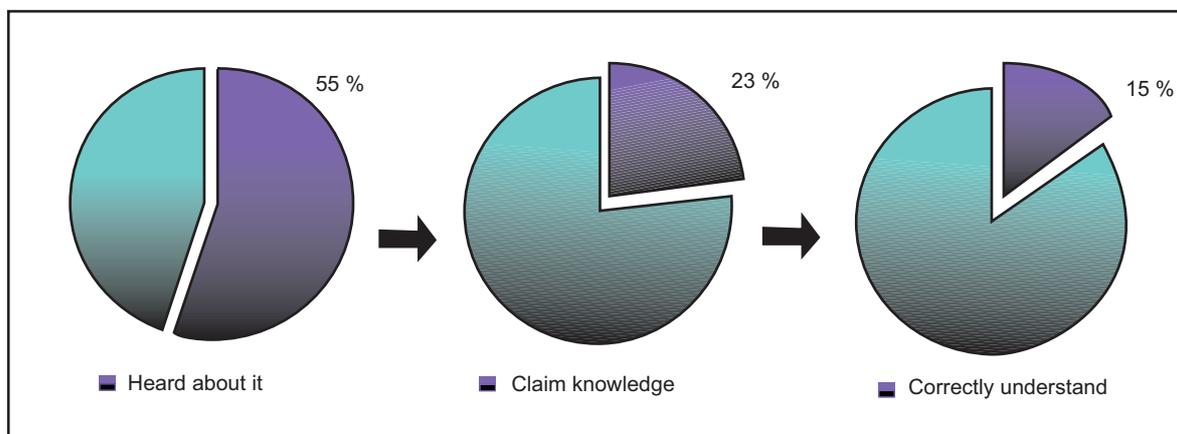
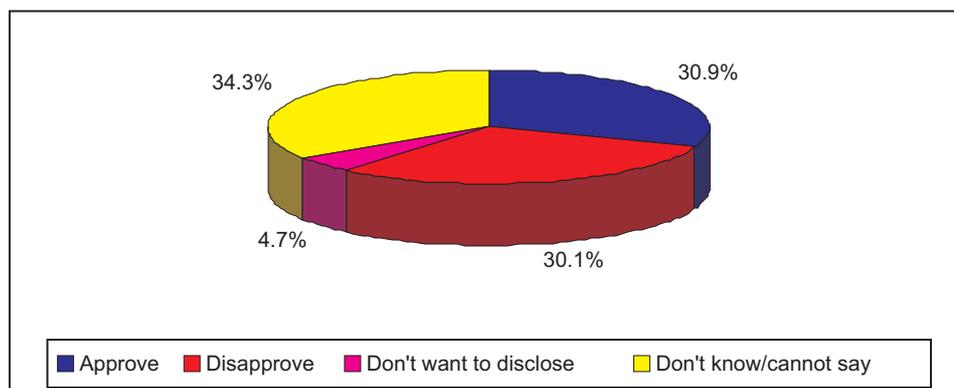


Chart 3.7 shows the percentage of those who have heard about it, those who feel they know about it and those who correctly understand it.

3.5 Situation after 19 Magh, 2061⁷

The poll endeavoured to uncover the public's perception of the King's political action on 1 February, 2005 (19 Magh, 2061). In response to a question about whether they approve or disapprove of the King's action, most people (34 per cent) report not being in a position to give a definitive answer. About 31 per cent approve of the King's action whereas almost the same proportion (30 per cent) disapprove of it.

Chart 3.8: Do you approve or disapprove to the king's action taken in Magh 19th, 2061 (i.e. February 1, 2005)?



⁷ The questions pertaining to the situation after 19 Magh, 2061 were asked only of those who responded to the Set A questionnaire. Hence, total number of respondents to these questions is limited to 1,500.

The sex of respondents seems to be an important variable influencing responses to this question. A majority of females (48 per cent) do not know or cannot say anything about the King's action. A significant proportion of males (38 per cent) disapprove of the King's action.

The public's reaction to the king's action varies significantly across development regions. The proportion of those who disapprove of his action is highest in the western (33 per cent), mid-western (41 per cent) and far-western (45 per cent) development regions. The other two development regions follow the general trend. Ecological zone also has a significant influence on this topic. The vast majority of mountain residents (62.8 per cent) disapprove of the action while a simple majority of Valley residents approve of the action. The other two ecological zones follow the general trend. It was found that most urban residents (35 per cent) approve of the step while the response of rural residents follows the general trend. The age of respondents also has a significant effect. Most people below the age of 25 disapprove of the action while their elder counterparts follow the general trend.

The majority of hill ethnic groups (46 per cent), Tarai ethnic groups (44 per cent), Tarai Vaishyas (48 per cent), Tarai Dalits (57 per cent) and Muslims (63.3 per cent) do not have a clear view on the matter. The majority of Tarai caste (41 per cent) and hill caste (40 per cent) groups disapprove of the king's action. A sizeable number of Newars (36 per cent) and hill Dalits (37 per cent) are in favour of the action. The level of education of people had a key influence on responses: most illiterate and little educated people are not able to give a clear opinion, whereas the majority of moderate and highly educated people disapprove of the action.

Respondents were asked two separate questions designed to elicit their views on the positive and negative features regarding the country's political situation after 1 February, 2005. Most respondents ranked 'no positive features' first; 'corruption has decreased' second and 'misconduct of parties restricted' third.

Table 3.3: Positive features of the king lead government

Positive Feature	Rank
There are no positive features	1
Corruption has decreased	2
Misconduct of parties has been restricted	3

An examination by development regions reveals that the eastern region is an exception, in that 'corruption has decreased' ranks first. Mountain and Kathmandu Valley residents also deviate from the general trend. In these two regions, 'corruption has decreased' ranks first. The same holds true among urban dwellers and people aged above 45.

Most castes and ethnic groups mirror the general trend, but Newars and Tarai Dalits believe that the decrease in corruption is the top-ranking positive feature of the king's step. Many hill Dalits, Tarai ethnic groups, Tarai Vaishyas and Tarai Dalits have no idea about this subject. Along educational lines, only illiterate people and literate people without a formal education do not reflect the general trend. They see the decrease in corruption as the most positive feature.

In terms of the negative features of the king's action since February 1, 2005, most people ranked 'political freedom has become restricted' first, 'constitution has been made inactive' second, and 'possibility of peace talks has been reduced' third.

Table 3.4: Negative features of the king lead government

Negative Feature	Rank
Political freedom has become restricted	1
Constitution has been made inactive	2
Possibility of peace talk has been reduced	3

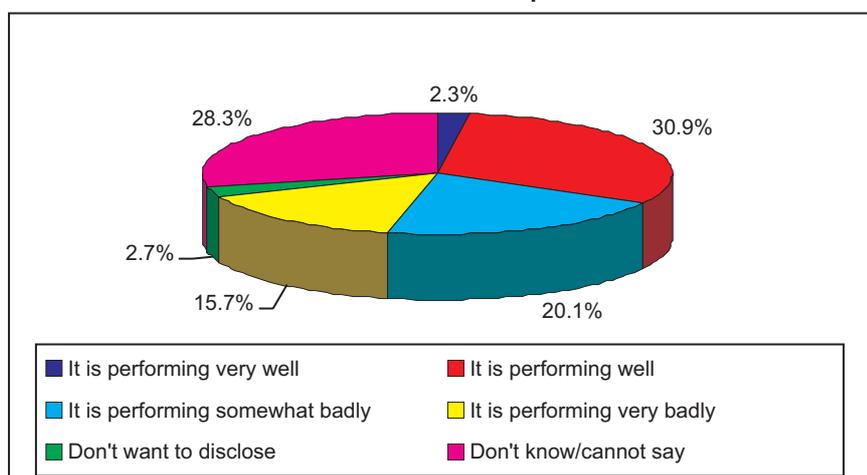
An examination by development region reveals a significant variation. ‘Constitution has been made inactive’ ranks first in the eastern development region while ‘possibility of peace talks has been reduced’ ranks first in the mid-western and far-western regions. Mountain and Tarai residents deviate from the general trend. ‘Constitution has been made inactive’ ranks first among mountain dwellers while ‘possibility of peace talk has been reduced’ ranks first among people in the Tarai. Rural residents also deviate from the general trend in that they rank ‘possibility of peace talks has been reduced’ first. People aged between 26 and 35 also rank that response first.

Most castes and ethnic groups mirror the general trend, but Tarai caste groups and Tarai Dalits see the reduced possibility of peace talks as the top-ranking negative feature of the present political situation. Tarai ethnic groups think the security situation has deteriorated while Tarai Vaishyas think there are no negative features. In terms of education, neither illiterate people nor people with little education reflect the general trend. Illiterate people think there are no negative features while those with little education see the reduced, possibility of peace talks as the most negative feature.

3.6 Present Government⁸

The poll attempted to document the public’s evaluation of the government under the king’s chairmanship at the time when the question were administered viz. 5 to 25 January 2006. Responses to the question ‘What is your opinion regarding the overall performance of the government under the king’s chairmanship’ reveal that about 31 per cent believe that the government is performing well. A significant proportion (28 per cent) do not have a definitive answer. One-fifth of the people think that the government is performing somewhat badly.

Chart 3.9: What is your opinion regarding the overall performance of the government under the king’s chairmanship?



The sex of respondents seems to be an important variable influencing responses to this question. A majority of females (39 per cent) do not know or cannot say anything about the performance of the government while a high proportion of males (33 per cent) think it is performing well.

The public’s response on this matter varies significantly across development regions. The proportion of those who were able to give a definitive answer were highest in the eastern (32 per cent) and central (31 per cent) development regions. The other three development regions follow the general trend. Ecological zone also has a significant influence on this matter. The

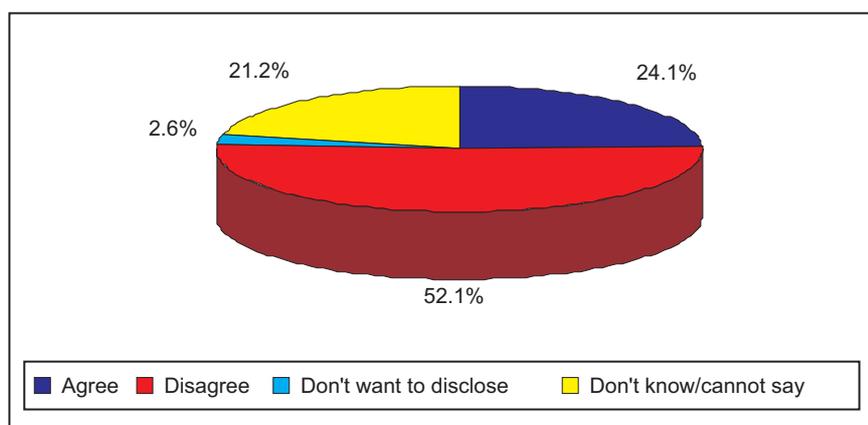
⁸ The questions pertaining to the present government (and in this report, “present government” refers to the government chaired by the king at the time of the survey viz. January 2006) were asked, only of those who answered the Set A questionnaire. Hence, the total number of respondents to these questions is limited to 1,500.

majority of mountain dwellers (35 per cent) think the government is performing somewhat badly while most Valley residents (33 per cent) are not in a position to provide a definitive answer. The other two ecological regions follow the general trend. Looking at the settlement pattern, it was found that most urban residents (34 per cent) think that the government is performing well while most rural residents were not able to give a definitive answer. People of all age groups follow the general trend except those aged above 45, most of whom (34.0 per cent) profess ignorance on this matter.

The majority of hill ethnic groups (36 per cent), Newars (30 per cent), Tarai ethnic groups (35 per cent), Tarai Dalits (37 per cent) and Muslims (43 per cent) profess ignorance on the matter, whereas other caste/ethnic groups mirror the general trend. Education had a key influence on responses: most illiterate respondents (52 per cent) and literate, respondents with no formal education (42.1 per cent) are not in a position to give a clear opinion, whereas the majority of people with Bachelor's degrees (34 per cent) and people with Master's degrees (40 per cent) think that the government is performing very badly.

The current government claims that the Maoist movement has been checked and that the overall security has improved since the king's takeover. The poll attempted to gauge the public's views on this matter. Responses to the question 'Do you agree or disagree with the government's claim that the Maoist movement has been checked and overall security situation has improved?' revealed that a clear majority of people (52 per cent) disagreed. Only 24.1 percent agreed with the claim.

Chart 3.10: Do you agree or disagree with the government's claim of checking the Maoist movement and improving overall security?



Responses to this question do not vary significantly across the variables of sex, development regions, ecological zones, urban/rural settlement patterns, age groups or caste/ethnic. Sizable proportions of female, people living in the western development region, rural residents, people aged above 45, hill Dalits, Tarai ethnic people, Tarai Vaishyas, Tarai Dalits and Muslims could not give a definitive answer. People with all levels of education reflect the general trend except the illiterate, the majority of whom (43 per cent) profess ignorance on the matter.

3.7 Local Government⁹

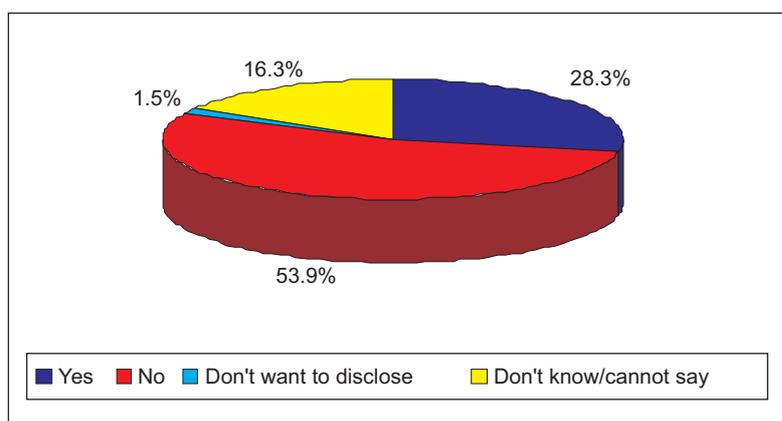
There have been no elected local government units (DDCs, VDCs or municipality development committees) since June 2002¹⁰. Local elections have not been held for various political reasons

⁹ The questions pertaining to the local government were asked through the Set-A questionnaire only. Hence, total numbers of respondents to these questions are limited to 1,500.

¹⁰ The poll was conducted before the municipal election scheduled for February 8, 2006.

and because of the lack of security. In several locations, however, local units did function under government-appointed office secretaries. Many of these functionaries were forced to resign by the Maoists. The poll explored how the people perceive absence of local government. A clear majority (54 per cent) reported having experienced no difficulties due to the absence of elected local governments.

Chart 3.11: Have you come across difficulties due to the absence of elected local government?

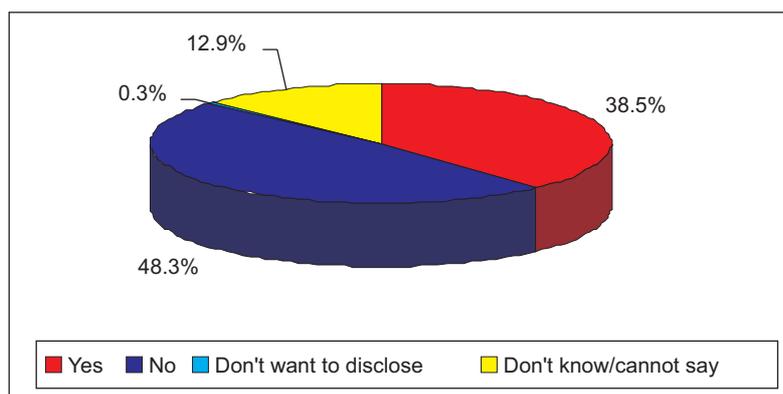


Responses across development regions deviate from the general trend particularly in the mid-western region, where the majority of respondents (45 per cent) reported having difficulties. An almost equal proportion of respondents in this region (44 per cent), however, said that they had no difficulties. Looking by ecological zone, difficulties are pronounced among most Tarai inhabitants (72 per cent). Other ecological zones mirror the general trend.

Caste/ethnicity is another variable that significantly influences the public's views on this matter. Except for Tarai ethnic groups no communities report facing difficulties. The majority of Tarai ethnic groups (44 per cent) profess ignorance on this matter.

The poll also attempted to understand how far people are aware that the government has nominated officials to run local (VDC, DDC, and municipal) governments. A simple majority of 48 per cent stated that they are not aware of this fact while 39 per cent said they were.

Chart 3.12: Are you aware of the fact that the government has nominated officials for running the local governments?

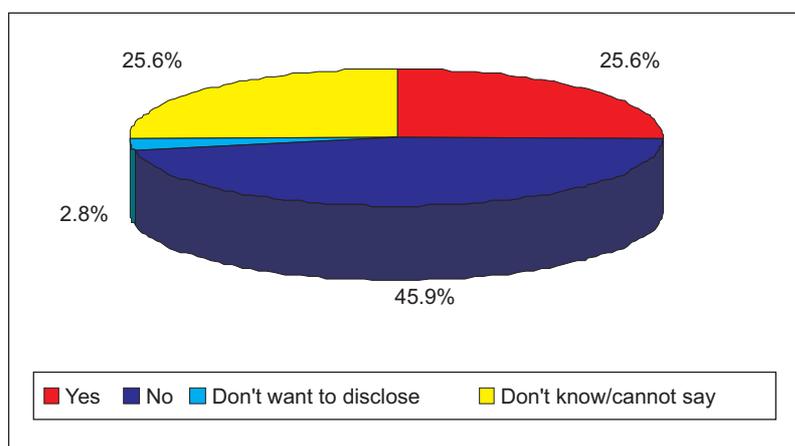


The sex of people seems to be an important variable influencing responses to this question. A majority of females (56 per cent) do not know that the government has nominated officials, while a majority of males (52.1 per cent) do report knowing about it. Respondents responses on this matter varied significantly across development regions. The proportions of those who are aware are highest in the western (48.1 per cent), mid-western (56.3 per cent) and far-western (63.8 per cent) development regions. In the other two development regions, in contrast, the majority are not aware of the government's action. Ecological zone has also significant influence on this matter. The majority of mountain dwellers (47 per cent) and Tarai residents (43 per cent) stated they were aware of while most hill (55.2 per cent) and Valley (55.3 per cent) people are not. Age group is also significant. People aged below 35 are divided almost equally into 'aware' and 'not aware' groups while the majority of people aged above 35 are not aware about it.

All communities except hill and Tarai caste groups and Tarai ethnic groups follow the general trend. The majority of hill caste (51 per cent) and Tarai caste (59 per cent) groups are aware of the nomination while the majority of Tarai ethnic groups (44 per cent) profess ignorance on the matter. Education had a key influence on responses: the higher a respondents educational status, the more likely she/he was to be aware of the official nominations.

Respondents who reported that they are aware of the nomination of officials by the government were asked whether they are satisfied with the performances of the officials nominated to run the local government. A simple majority of 46 per cent stated that they are not satisfied while 26 per cent said that they are satisfied and the same proportion professes ignorance about the matter.

Chart 3.13: Are you satisfied with the performance of officials nominated for running the local government?



Both men and women follow the general trend. However, a sizable proportion of females (32 per cent) could not give a definitive answer. Responses on this matter do not vary significantly across development regions. However, proportion of those who are not in a position to give a definitive answer is large in the eastern (33 per cent) and western (34 per cent) regions. All ecological zones mirror the general trend. However, the proportion of respondents in the Valley who profess ignorance (32 per cent) is substantial. Age group did not seem to be a significant variable although the proportion of people who said they were not satisfied is large in the age groups of 36-45 and of above 45 (both 30 per cent).

All communities except Tarai ethnic groups follow the general trend. The majority of Tarai ethnic groups (54 per cent) profess ignorance on this matter. The proportion of those who profess ignorance is also high among Muslims (38 per cent). Education had a key influence on responses: the higher the educational status, the greater the proportion of people who are not satisfied.

A majority of respondents (46 per cent) reported that they were not satisfied with the performances of the nominated officials. When they were asked why they were not satisfied, most people ranked 'they have not been selected come through a proper election' first, 'they are not fulfilling their responsibilities properly' second, 'they are not bringing development' third, and 'they do not have an untarnished reputation; they have a criminal record' fourth.

Table 3.5: Why are you not satisfied with the performance of nominated officials

	Rank
They have not been selected through a proper election	1
They are not fulfilling their responsibilities properly	2
They are not bringing development	3
They do not have an untarnished reputation; they have a criminal record	4

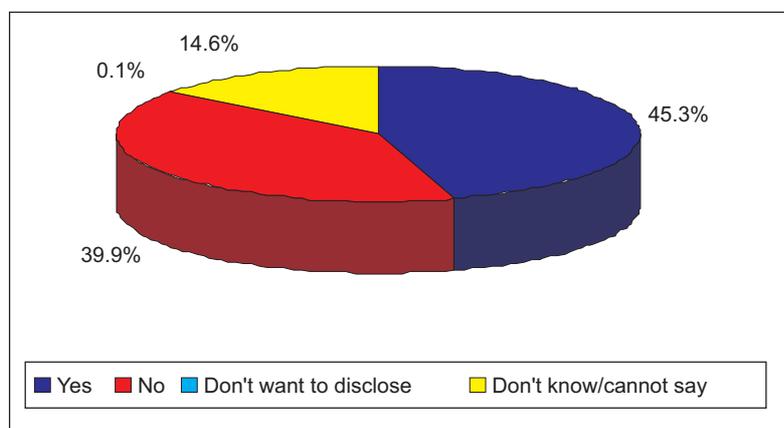
An examination by development regions reveals a significant variation in the eastern region, where 'they are not fulfilling their responsibilities properly' ranks first. All other development regions follow the general trend. All ecological zones except Tarai reflect the general trend. Tarai people rank 'they are not fulfilling their responsibilities properly' first.

Most castes and ethnic groups mirror the general trend, but Tarai Vaishyas, Tarai Dalits and Muslims think 'they are not fulfilling their responsibilities properly' is the top-ranking reason for dissatisfaction. Along educational lines, literate people with no formal education and people with Master's degree do not reflect the general trend. They both rank 'they are not fulfilling their responsibilities properly' first.

3.8 The Movement of Political Parties¹¹

On 22 November 2005, the seven-party alliance entered into a 12-point MoU with CPN-Maoist. The poll asked people about their views on this matter. It was found that 45 per cent of respondents knew about the MoU while about 40 per cent did not.

Chart 3.14: Do you know about the 12- point MoU between seven party alliance and the Maoists?



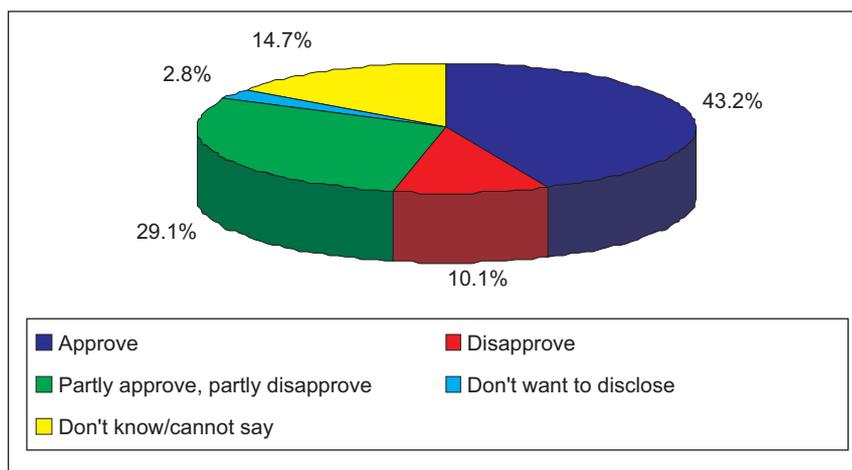
¹¹ The questions pertaining to the movement of political parties were asked only of respondents to the Set A questionnaire. Hence, total number of respondents to these questions is limited to 1,500.

The variation by sex the in response to this question is significant: 61 per cent of males but only 30 per cent of females know about the MoU. Disaggregating by ecological zone reveals that only mountain residents do not follow the general trend. There the majority of people (51 per cent) do not know about it. Urban residents mirror the general trend but rural residents do not. The majority of rural residents (42 per cent) have not heard of the MoU. A significant variation is observed across the different age groups. The majority of people aged below 35 have heard about the MoU while the majority of people aged above 35 have not.

When responses are disaggregated in terms of caste/ethnicity, the data reveals that a majority of Newars and hill and Tarai caste groups have heard about it, but that the majority of other communities have not. Almost 44 per cent of Tarai ethnic groups professed ignorance about the MoU. Not surprisingly, the level of education of respondents has an influence: the higher the education level, the greater the percentage of people who reported knowing about the MoU.

Respondents who reported knowing about the understanding were further asked if they approved or disapproved of it. About 43 per cent approved of it while about 29 per cent partly approved and partly disapproved. Only 10 per cent disapproved of it. The remaining 15 per cent professed ignorance.

Chart 3.15: What do you think of the MoU?



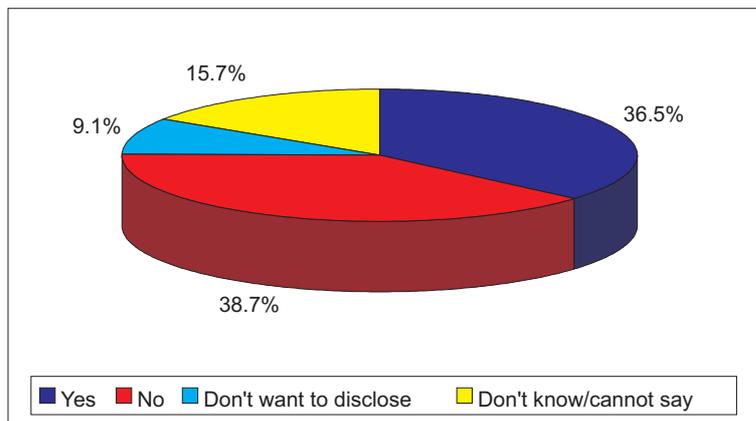
Eastern and central development regions follow the general trend while the majority of respondents in the other three regions partly approve and partly disapprove of the MoU. While the mountainous Tarai ecological zones follow the trend, the hilly zone does not. The majority of hill resident (38 per cent) partly approve and partly disapprove of the MoU.

Except for hill Dalits responses across caste/ethnic lines follow the general trend. The majority of hill Dalits (55 per cent) profess ignorance. The level of education of a respondent has a big influence on his response: the higher the education level, the larger the percentage of people who partly approve and partly disapprove.

In the understanding, the CPN Maoist has expressed its commitment to democratic norms and values like a multiparty system of governance, civil liberties, human rights, the concept of the rule of law and fundamental rights. Respondents who reported knowing about the MoU were further asked if they, the Maoists, were committed to democratic norms and values. The majority of people (39 per cent) said that they did not believe the Maoists were indeed committed while a slightly smaller proportion (37 per cent) said that they did. Another 16 percent professed ignorance.

The central and western development regions follow the general trend while the majority of respondents in the other three regions do not have faith in the Maoist’s commitment. Ecological zone have an impact on the public’s view on this matter. Nearly three-fourths of the respondents in the mountains (73 per cent) and 41 percent of Tarai inhabitants believe the Maoists while the majority of hill people (46 per cent) and Valley residents (49 per cent) do not. The Urban-rural

Chart 3.16: Do you believe in the Maoist’s commitment to democratic norms and values?

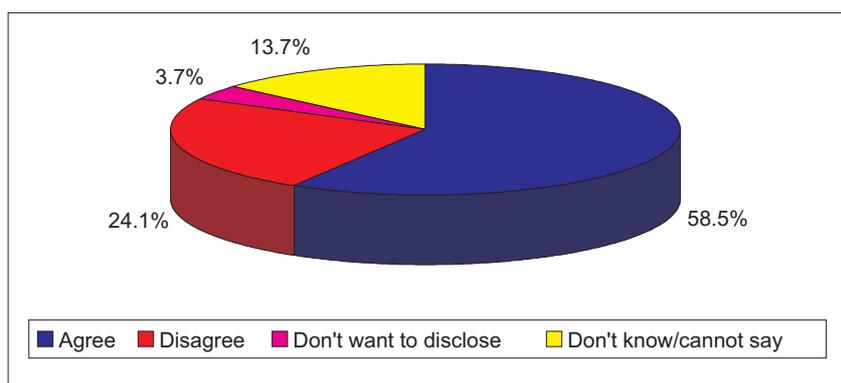


settlement variable also has a significant influence. The majority of urban residents (44 per cent) do not believe the Maoist claim while the majority of rural residents (37 per cent) do. All age groups except '25 and below' follow the general trend. The majority of people aged 25 or below (38 per cent) trust in the Maoists.

Caste/ethnicity seems to be a significant variable shaping answers to this question. Though the majority of hill caste groups (41 per cent) and Newars (49 per cent) believe the Maoists are committed to democratic norms and values, the majority of other communities do not. Along educational lines the higher the education level, the larger the percentage of people who do not believe in the Maoists.

The MoU proposes that the Maoist army and the (RNA) be brought under the supervision of the United Nations or some other international agency to ensure an end to the hostilities and to ensure that free and fair elections to the constituent assembly be held. Respondents who reported knowing about the MoU were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with this arrangement. The majority of people (59 per cent) agree while 24 per cent said they disagreed and another 14 percent professed ignorance.

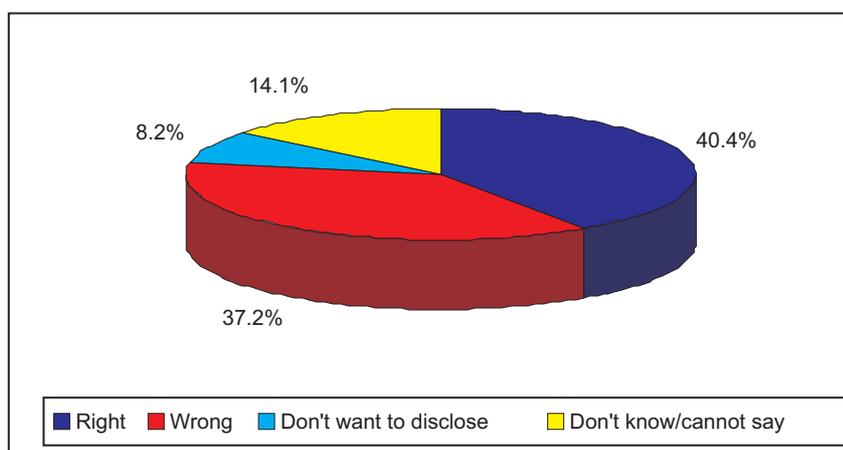
Chart 3.17: Do you agree or disagree with the arrangement of bringing the Maoists army and the RNA under international supervision?



Sex does not significantly influence the public's view on this matter. None of the other control variables make significant differences either. However, sizable proportions of women (20.7 per cent), residents in the mid-western (33 per cent) and far-western regions 29 (per cent), literate with no formal education (33 per cent), people educated to the primary (29 per cent) or lower secondary level (20 per cent), hill Dalits (36 per cent), Tarai ethnic groups (33 per cent) and Muslims (33 per cent) profess ignorance.

In the MoU, the seven-party alliance and the CPN-Maoist asked people to boycott the municipal elections that were scheduled for 8 February, 2006 and the forthcoming general election. Those respondents who reported knowing about the MoU were asked an additional question – whether they thought it was right or wrong. A simple majority (40 per cent) claimed that it was right while slightly fewer (37 per cent) said that it was wrong; another 14 per cent professed ignorance.

Chart 3.18: Is it right or wrong to boycott the forthcoming municipal election?

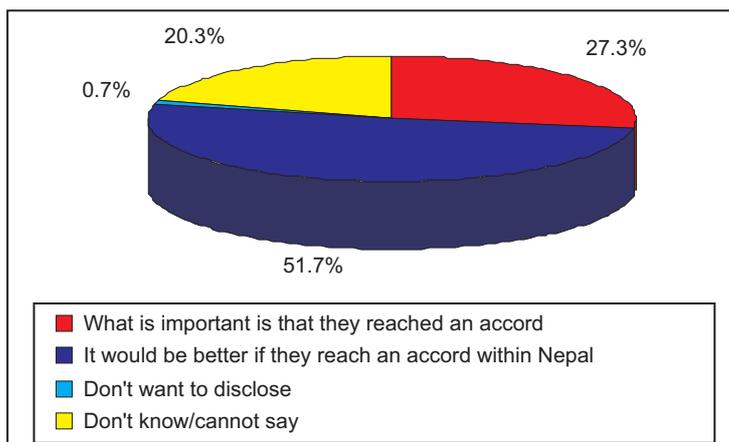


Mid-western and far-western development regions follow the general trend while the majority in the other three regions do not. Ecological zones do have an impact on the public's view of the boycott. Nearly 87 per cent of mountain inhabitants and 46 per cent of Tarai inhabitants believe it is right while the majority of hill dwellers (43 per cent) and Valley residents (41 per cent) think it is wrong. Urban-rural settlement also has a significant influence. The majority of urban residents (43 per cent) think it is wrong while the majority of the rural residents (45.5 per cent) think it is right. Looking at age groups, it is found that the majority of those below the age of 35 think it is right to boycott elections while the majority of older age groups think it is wrong.

All communities except the Newar and Tarai Vaishya follow the general trend. The majority of Newars (43 per cent) and Tarai Vaishyas (44 per cent) think it is wrong to boycott elections. In terms of education, moderately educated people seem to be more in favour of elections than illiterate people, people with little education and highly educated people.

The media has reported that the leaders of the seven-party alliance talked with Maoist leaders and reached an understanding in a foreign territory. The respondents were asked how they feel about the fact that the two parties reached the understanding in a foreign territory. A majority (52 per cent) said that it would be better if they had reached an accord within the territory of Nepal while 27 per cent said that what is important is that they reached an accord; where they reached it is not important. Another 20 per cent profess ignorance on this matter.

Chart 3.19: How do you perceive reaching the MoU in a foreign territory?



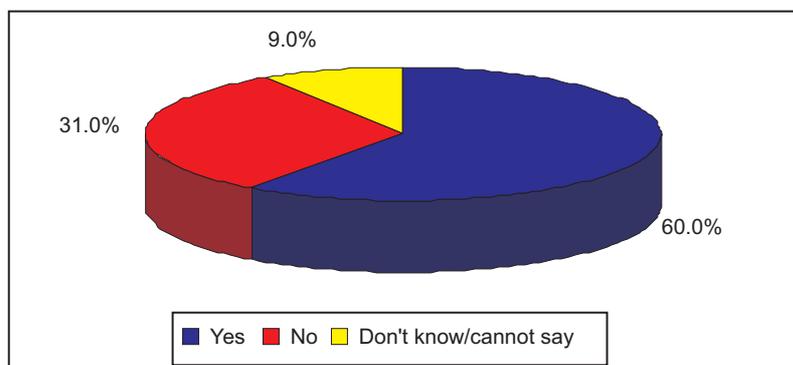
Sex did not influence the public’s view on this matter significantly. However, the proportion of females who professed ignorance is sizable (29 per cent). All development regions except the far-western region follow the general trend while the majority in the far-west region (54 per cent) think what is important is that they reached an accord; where they reached it is not important. Among ecological zones, only the mountain region deviates from the general trend. About 63 per cent of them believe that what is important is that they reached an accord, regardless of the place.

All caste/ethnic groups except the Tarai caste and Tarai ethnic groups mirror the general trend. Tarai caste people are equally divided between those saying ‘what is important is that they reached an accord; where they reached it is not important’ and those saying ‘it would be better if they had reached an accord within the territory of Nepal’ (44 per cent each). The majority of Tarai ethnic people (48 per cent) profess ignorance on this matter. In terms of education, the higher the education level, the larger the percentage of people who said that what is important is that they an accord was reached regardless of where.

3.9 Royal Commission for Corruption Control¹²

The king chaired government formed a Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC) to investigate cases of alleged corruption by office bearers¹³. The poll found that 60 per cent have heard of it while 31 per cent have not.

Chart 3.20: Have you heard of the Royal Commission for Corruption Control?



¹² The questions pertaining to the RCCC were asked only to those who answered the Set B questionnaire. Hence, the total number of respondents to these questions is limited to 1,500.

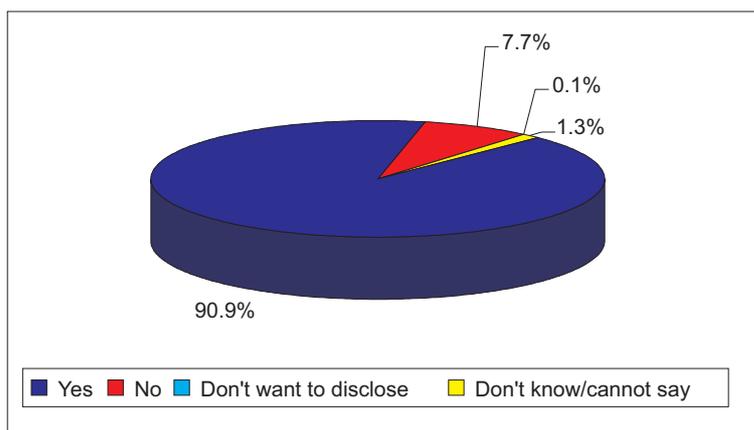
¹³ The commission was dissolved on the Supreme Court’s order on 13 February, 2006.

Both males and females follow the general trend. However, the proportion of females who profess ignorance about the RCCC is quite high (42 per cent). The hill and Tarai ecological zones follow the general trend, but the majority of mountain people (43 per cent) have not heard of the RCCC. Rural/urban settlement patterns do not make a significant difference. However, a sizable number (38 per cent) of rural residents have not heard of it. All age groups except those above 45 mirror the general trend. People aged above 45 are equally divided into ‘heard of it’ and ‘not heard of it’ (45 per cent and 44 per cent respectively).

When disaggregated by caste/ethnicity, the majority of hill Dalits (47 per cent), Tarai Vaishyas (41 per cent), Tarai Dalits (52 per cent) and Muslims (46 per cent) have not heard of the Commission. In term of education, the higher the educational level, the greater proportion of people who have heard of the RCCC.

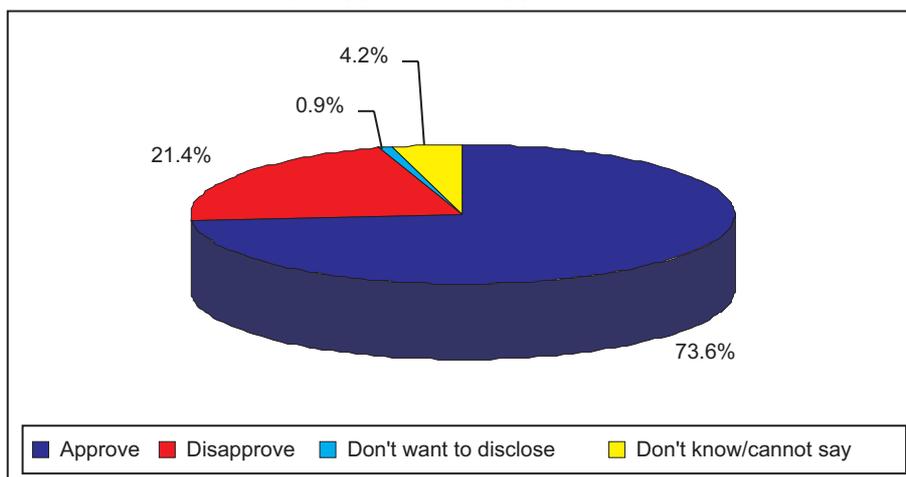
Respondents who mention that they have heard of the Commission were asked a complementary question: whether they know that the Commission has found some people guilty of corruption and sentenced them. The overwhelming majority (91 per cent) said that they were aware of the RCCC’s action. Only 8 per cent said they did not know.

Chart 3.21: Do you know that the RCCC has given some persons sentences?



Respondents who know that the Commission has sentenced some people were asked another question: whether they approved or disapproved of this action. About three-fourths of them approved the action while 21 per cent disapproved. Those who approve the action constitute 40 per cent of the total respondents.

Chart 3.22: Do you approve or disapprove of the RCCC’s action?



In terms of education, the majority of people (58 per cent) who have Master's degree or higher disapprove of the Commission's act.

Respondents who approve the Commission's action were asked to disclose the reasons why they approve. They ranked 'the corrupt must be punished' first and 'corruption must be discouraged' second. Other reasons were not found to be significant.

Table 3.6: Why do you approve the commission's action?

Reasons for approval	Rank
The corrupt must be punished	1
Corruption must be discouraged	2

The respondents who disapprove of the Commission's action were also asked to

disclose the reasons why they disapprove¹⁴. People identified 'the Commission is unconstitutional', 'the Commission is prejudiced against certain parties/

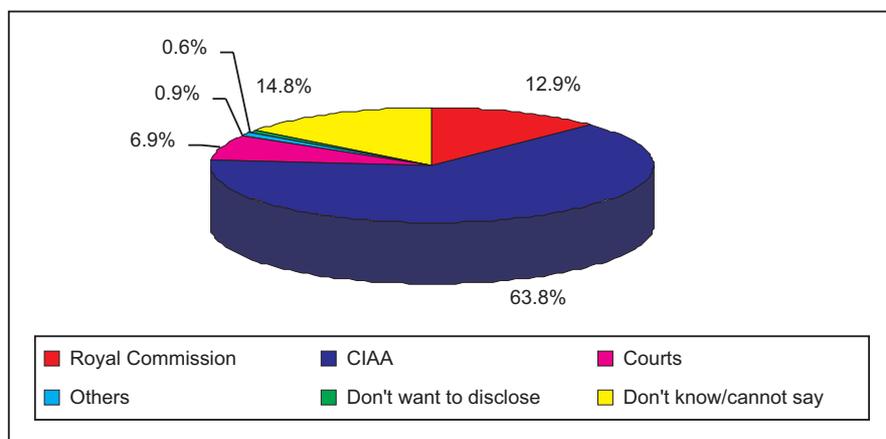
Table 3.7: Why do you disapprove the commission's action?

Reasons for disapproval	Rank
The Commission is unconstitutional	1
The Commission is prejudiced against certain parties/persons	2
Action should be taken by constitutional entities like the CIAA	3

persons' and 'action should be taken by constitutional entities like the CIAA' as the three prominent reasons for their disapproval in that order.

The poll tried to uncover the public's opinion about which body should deal with corruption. About 64 per cent said it was the CIAA. A sizable proportion (15 per cent) professed ignorance on this matter while 13 per cent thought that it was the RCCC.

Chart 3.23: What in your opinion is the correct entity to deal with corruption?



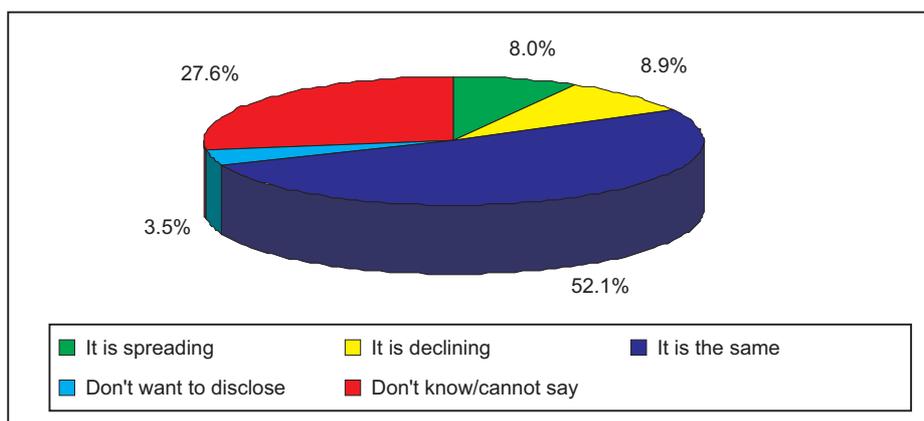
There is no significant variation across sex though the proportion of females who profess ignorance is high (25 per cent). All development-regions follow the general trend, a sizable number of people in the eastern region (23 per cent) could not give a definitive answer. Disaggregating the data by other variables like ecological zone, urban and rural residency, age group and caste/ethnic group mirrors the general trend. However, the proportion of those who profess ignorance in this matter are sizable among people aged above 45 (24 per cent), hill Dalits (33 per cent) and Tarai Vaishyas (25 per cent). When disaggregated by educational status, it becomes clear that the majority of literate people (54 per cent) were unable to give a definitive answer while the response of literate people with no formal education are equally divided into 'CIAA' and 'do not know/cannot say' (35 per cent for each). People who have obtained primary or higher education follow the general trend.

¹⁴ Since a minority of the total respondents (21 per cent) disapprove of the Commission's action, a detailed analysis about why they disapprove was not performed.

3.10 The Maoist Movement¹⁵

The poll attempted to uncover what Nepalis think about the state of the Maoist movement in their local area. Respondents were asked ‘What is the situation of the Maoist movement in your local area?’ No attempt was made to uncover their views on national level dynamics. Almost half of the respondents claimed that the movement is the same, while almost one-fourth declined to answer. Very few people think that it is either spreading or declining.

Chart 3.24: What is the situation of the Maoist movement in your local area?



Analysis by development region reveals that the majority of people living in the mid-western region (40 per cent) think that the Maoist movement is spreading. The majority in the central region (44 per cent) declined to give a definitive answer. Going by ecological zone, the majority of mountain dwellers (73 per cent) think the Maoist movement is expanding while the majority in the Valley (70 per cent) did not answer. The other two zones follow the general trend. All caste/ethnic groups mirror the general trend except Newars and hill Dalits. The majority among these two communities profess ignorance (56 per cent and 37 per cent respectively).

People who said that the Maoist movement was spreading were asked ‘What factors have contributed to its spread?’ The top four ranking factors were ‘corrupt individual politicians’, ‘under-privileged communities lagging further behind’, ‘unequal development of rural areas’ and ‘inactiveness on the part of political parties’.

Table 3.8: Factors contributing to the spread of the Maoist movement

Reasons for the spread of the Maoist movement	Rank
Corrupt individual politicians	1
Under-privileged communities lagging further behind	2
Unequal development of rural areas	3
Inactiveness on the part of political parties	4

Analysing by disaggregating the responses into various variables is not important in this category as the proportion of respondents in who say the Maoist movement is expanding is very small (only 8 per cent).

People who said that the Maoist movement is declining were also asked to give reasons. Most said that main reason was

Table 3.9: Reasons behind the decline of the Maoist movement

Reasons for the decline in the Maoist movement	Rank
Action by the state security forces against the Maoists	1
People are losing faith in their movement	2
People are gaining confidence in the government	3
There has been much infighting among the Maoists	4

¹⁵ The questions pertaining to the Maoist movement were asked only to those who answer the Set B questionnaire. Hence, the total number of respondents is limited to 1,500.

the action by the state security forces against the Maoists. Other reasons given were the fact that people are loosing faith in the Maoist movement; the fact that people are gaining confidence in the government and the fact that there has been much infighting among the Maoists - in that order.

Disaggregating responses across various variables is not important as the proportion of respondents who say the Maoist movement is declining is very small (only 8.9 per cent).

The poll attempted to gauge the public’s views about what the main demand of the Maoists is. Most people said that they did not know. Among those who gave an answer, ‘the abolition of the monarchy’, ‘holding elections for a constituent assembly’, ‘the establishment of a Maoist dictatorship’ and ‘ensuring equality among all people’ were the top ranking answers in the order.

Table 3.10: What do you think the main demand of the Maoists is?

Public’s perception of Maoist demands	Rank
Abolition of the monarchy	1
Holding elections for a constituent assembly	2
Establishment of a Maoist dictatorship	3
Ensuring equality /among all people	4

Disaggregating responses across various variables is not important, as most people did not provide a definitive answer.

The poll endeavoured to understand the public’s views about possible solutions to the Maoist movement. First priority was awarded to peace talks. The declaration of a ceasefire between Maoist and state security forces was ranked second, while the fulfillment of the Maoists’ demands by the government was third. Solutions like having security forces suppress the Maoist rebels and having Maoist rebels suppress the security forces do not figure in to the priority ranking.

Table 3.11: Solution to the Maoist Movement

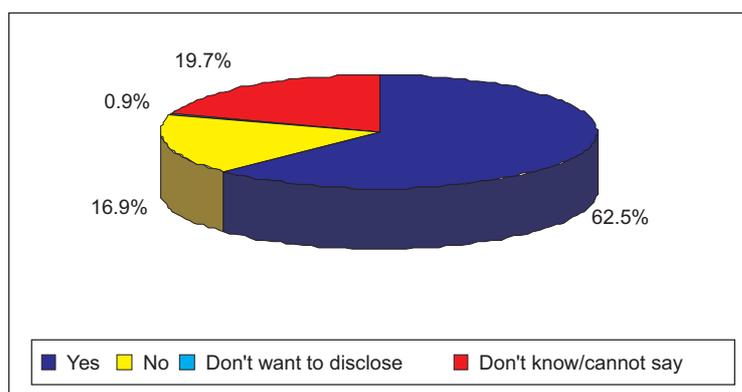
Solution to the Maoist Movement	Rank
Having peace talks among the related parties	1
The concerned parties declaring a ceasefire	2
Fulfilling the demand of the Maoists	3

Responses vary across development regions. While respondent in the other regions far-west follow the general trend those in the mid-western region rank, having the concerned parties declaring a ceasefire first.

3.11 The Peace Talks¹⁶

Respondents were asked if the Maoist movement could eventually be settled through peace talks. Almost 63 per cent of the respondents were optimistic: they believe that talks can settle matters.

Chart 3.25: Do you think that the Maoist movement will eventually be settled through talks?



¹⁶ The questions pertaining to the peace talks were asked through the Set-B questionnaire only. Hence, total numbers of respondents to these questions are limited to 1,500.

There is no significant variation in terms of sex though a sizable proportion of female respondents (29 percent) had no response to this question. The trend holds true if one disaggregates the data by development region, ecological zone, settlement pattern, age group and caste/ethnicity. However, a significantly high proportion of people living in the western region (27 per cent), in far-western region (26 per cent) and in the Valley (29 per cent), people aged above 45 (27 per cent), Tarai Vaishyas (27 per cent), Tarai Dalits (30 per cent) and Muslims (23 per cent) say they do not know or cannot say. In terms of education, the majority of illiterate people (42 per cent) profess ignorance on this matter while those who are literate follow the general trend.

The poll also made an attempt to understand the public’s view about how sincere the King-led government and the Maoists are about restoring peace to the country. In response to the question about the King-led government, a majority (46 per cent) said that the government is not serious. About 30 per cent do not know or cannot say anything on this matter. Similarly, a majority (37 per cent) do not know or cannot say anything definitive about how serious the Maoists are about restoring peace to the country. A significant portion of the people (36 per cent) do not think that the Maoists are serious about restoring peace to the country. Taken together, these two questions reveal that the public do not believe that either the king-led government or the Maoist leaders are serious about ushering in peace.

Chart 3.26: Do you think that the king-led government is serious to restore peace in the country?

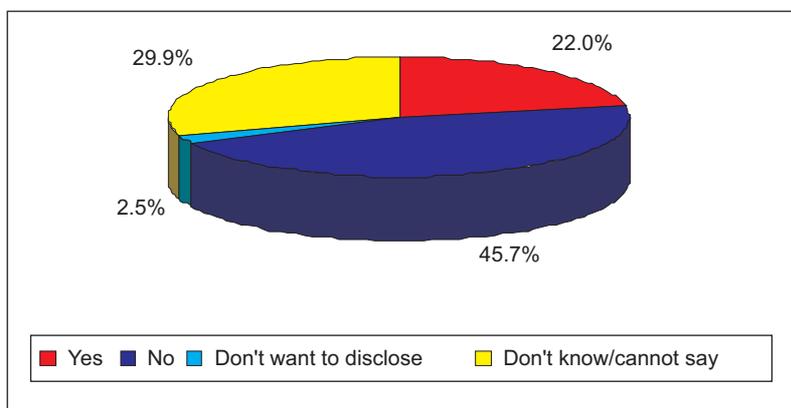
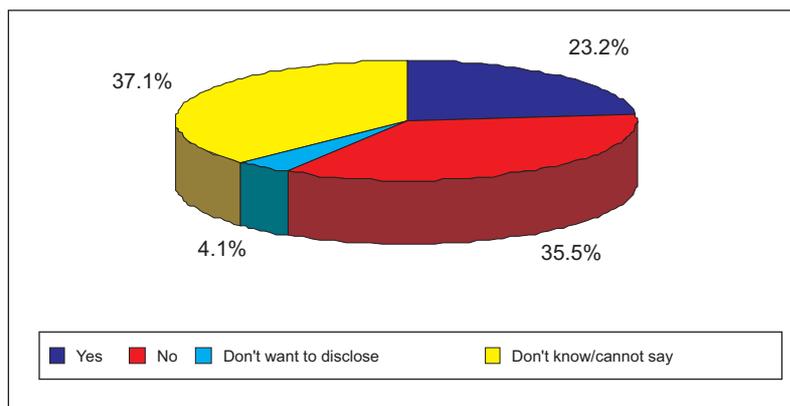


Chart 3.27: Do you think that the Maoist leaders are serious to restore peace in the country?



Sex has a significant influence on the public's view on this matter. The majority of male respondents (55 per cent) believe that the king-led government lacked sincerity but the majority of females (41 per cent) professed ignorance. Opinions across the five development regions are similar to the general trend except in the western region, where people are equally divided between the view that the concerned parties are not serious and 'do not know/cannot say' (43 per cent for each). While public views disaggregated by ecological zone do follow the general trend, a significant portion of hill dwellers (36 per cent) has no clear idea. Settlement pattern has no significant influence but a large proportion of rural residents (33 per cent) did not answer the question. All age groups except people aged above 45 follow the general trend. The majority of people aged above 45 (36 per cent) were not in a position to respond.

Caste/ethnicity is a significant variable in this matter. Hill caste and hill ethnic group, Newars, Tarai caste groups and Tarai Dalits mirror the general trend while the majority of hill Dalits (51 per cent), Tarai ethnic groups (43 per cent) and Tarai Vaishyas (37 per cent) gave no answer. The proportions of Muslims who both exhibit a positive attitude towards the government and profess ignorance are equal and sizable (35 per cent each). Isolating the education variable reveals that a slight majority of illiterate people (48 per cent) and literate people with no formal education (42 per cent) think that the king-led government is serious while people with a primary education are equally divided between having a negative attitude towards the government and having with no clear idea (38 per cent for each). People with more than a primary education follow the general trend. In general, the higher a respondent's educational status, the less likely s/he was to have faith in the king-led government.

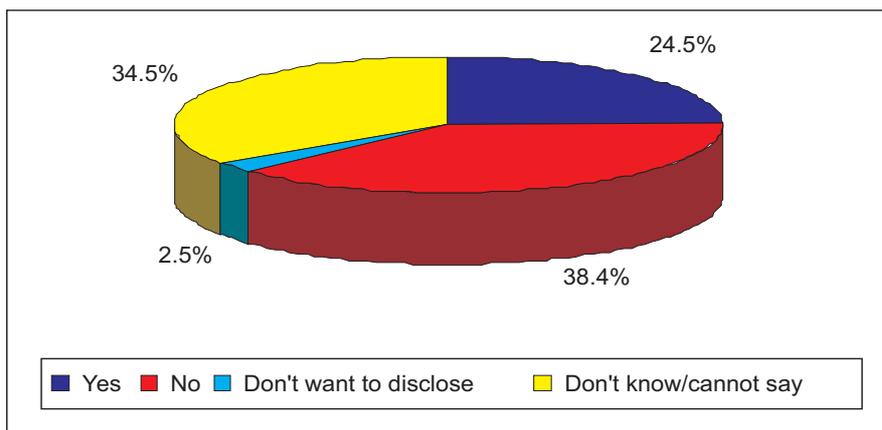
In terms of how serious Maoist leaders are about bringing peace to the country, the majority of male respondents (41 per cent) believe that Maoist leaders were not serious about bringing peace to the country while the majority of female respondents (49 per cent) could not answer the question. When development region is isolated as a variable the data reveals that the majority of people in the western (45 per cent), mid-western (41 per cent) and far-western (56 per cent) region profess ignorance while the majority of people in the eastern (36 per cent) and central (40 per cent) regions think that the Maoist leaders are not serious. All ecological zones follow the general trend except the Kathmandu Valley where the majority (40 per cent) said that Maoist leaders are not serious. Rural people follow the general trend but the majority of urban residents (42 per cent) has a negative attitude toward Maoist leaders. Similarly, people aged below 25 and between 36 and 45 do not trust the Maoists on this matter.

All caste/ethnic groups more or less mirror the general trend except hill caste groups and Newars. The majority of these groups (37.5 and 40 per cent respectively) have a negative attitude toward Maoist leaders. The higher a respondent's educational achievement, the less faith s/he showed in the Maoists.

The poll also tried to measure the seriousness of parliamentary parties in restoring peace to the country. A slight majority of 24 per cent mentions that the leaders of parliamentary parties are serious about restoring peace to the country. A sizable number (35 per cent) did not provide an answer to the question.

Responses to this question vary significantly by sex. The majority of male respondents (45 per cent) believe that the leaders of parliamentary parties are not serious about restoring peace to the country while the majority of female respondents (47 per cent) could not answer. When

Chart 3.28: Do you think that the parliamentary parties are serious to restore peace in the country?

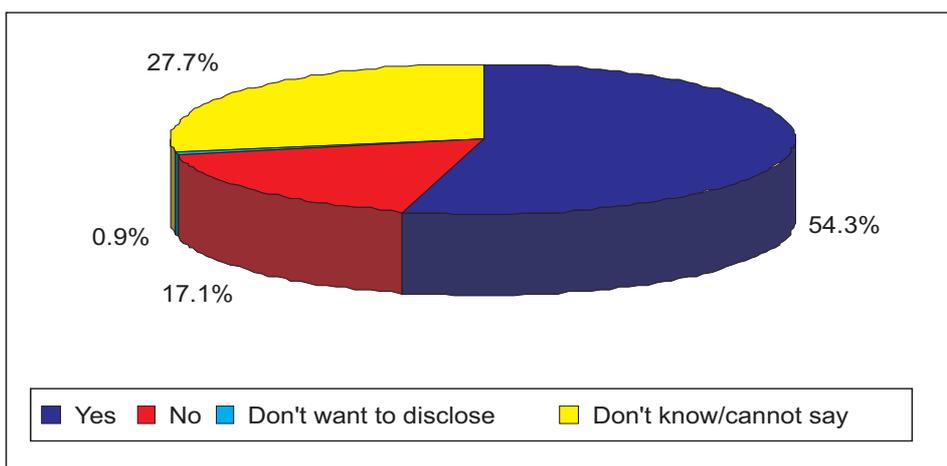


development region is isolated as a variable, the data reveals that the majority of people in the western (48.3 per cent), the mid-western (47.5 per cent) and the far-western (51 per cent) regions profess ignorance while the majority of people in the eastern region (45 per cent) show a positive attitude towards the party leaders and the majority in the central region (48 per cent) think that the party leaders are not serious. Going by ecological zone, respondents in the Tarai and Kathmandu Valley follow the general trend while the majority in the mountains (43 per cent) thinks that party leaders are serious and majority in the hills (41 per cent) could not provide an answer. Urban residents follow the general trend while the majority of rural residents (39 per cent) profess ignorance. People aged above 45 also deviate from the general trend in that the majority (40 per cent) said they have no knowledge on the matter.

Caste/ethnic groups more or less mirror the general trend except hill Dalits, Tarai ethnic groups and Tarai Dalits. The majority of hill Dalits (44 per cent) and Tarai Dalits (40 per cent) profess ignorance while the majority of Tarai ethnic groups (42 per cent) has a positive attitude toward party leaders. The higher a respondent’s educational achievement, the less faith s/he showed in parliamentary party leaders.

The poll attempted to gauge the public’s view on the involvement of a third party in peace talks. A clear majority (54 per cent) favour third party involvement, but slightly more than one quarter is not in a position to express a clear view in this regard.

Chart 3.29: Do you like any other third party/mediator to be involved in the peace talks?

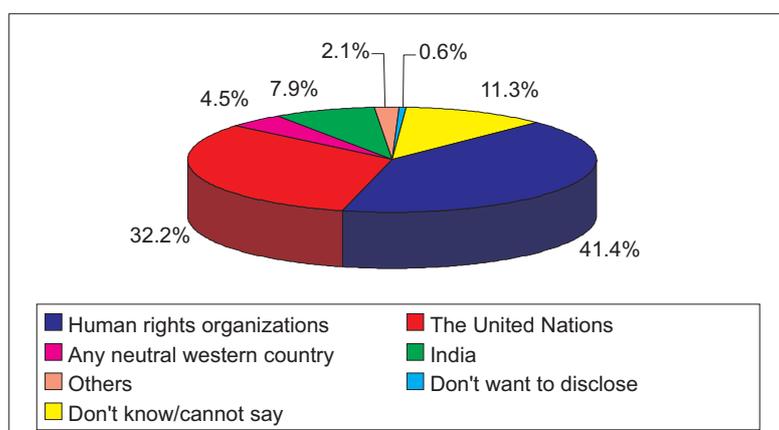


Both men and women follow the general trend, but the proportion of women who could not answer was high (40 per cent). All development regions follow the general trend except the mid-western, where the majority (50 per cent) are not in a position to give a definitive answer. All ecological zones mirror the general trend. However, a sizable numbers of hill dwellers (34 per cent) do not have a clear idea. Age groups show no variation from the general public trend but 36 per cent of the age group above 45 could give no answer.

Along caste/ethnic lines, the majority of hill Dalits (47 per cent), Tarai ethnic groups (53 per cent) and Tarai Vaishyas (41 per cent) are not in a position to express a clear view. Significant proportions of Tarai Dalits (36 per cent) and Muslims (31 per cent) are also unable to state a viewpoint. The results show that education level has a very significant role. Educated people are in favour of third party mediation and inclination towards this view increases with education level. The majority of illiterates (53 per cent) and literates with no formal education (45 per cent) have no clear idea about this matter.

Respondents who advocate third-party mediation were asked to identify who they would like to see involved. A simple majority of people (41 per cent) prefer human rights organisations and a significant proportion prefers the United Nations (32 per cent). These groups make up 23 and 18 per cent of the total respondents respectively.

Chart 3.30: If you agree about the third party mediation, who do you like to see involved as mediator?



The majority of males (40 per cent) would like to see the United Nations be the third party while the proportion favoured by human rights organisations (39 per cent) is a close second. Females mirror the general trend. By development regions, those in the eastern and the western region differ in favouring the United Nations by a slight majority (34 per cent and 44 per cent respectively). A significantly higher proportion than average of people in the far-western region (26 per cent) would like to see India get involved. All ecological regions follow the general trend, but mountain residents are divided in their response; with 32 per cent favouring the United Nations and the same proportion favouring any neutral western country.

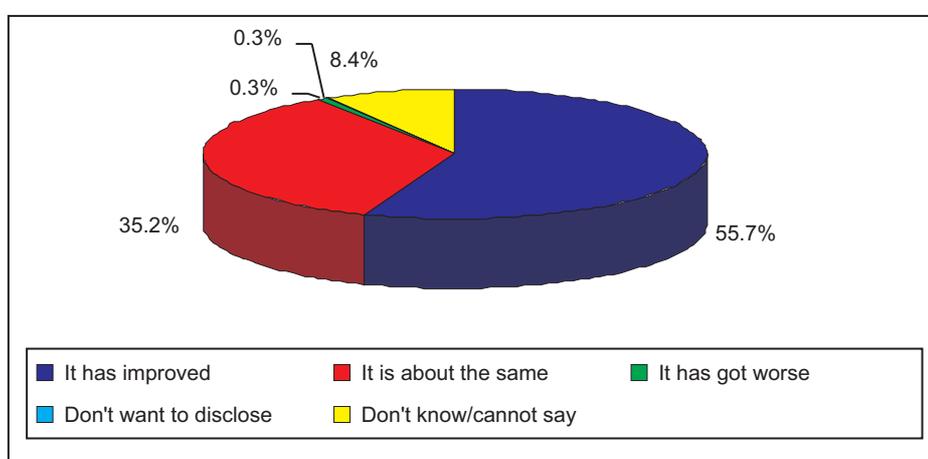
All caste/ethnic groups except Tarai caste groups and Muslims mirror the general trend. The majority of Tarai caste groups (41 per cent) favour the United Nations while the majority of Muslims (42 per cent) favour India's involvement. Educational status has a very significant influence: the higher a respondent's educational status, the more trust s/he has in the United

Nations. The majority of literate people with no formal education and moderately educated people trust human right organisations while the majority of illiterate people were unable to give an opinion.

3.12 Effect of the Ceasefire¹⁷

The CPN-Maoist declared a three-month ceasefire on 3 September 2005 (18 Badra, 2062), and then, on December 2, 2005 (17 Mangsir, 2062) extended it for another month. The poll attempted to find out about how people perceived the effects of the ceasefire on their daily lives. More than half of the respondents (56 per cent) reported that their lives have improved and 35 per cent said their lives were about the same.

Chart 3.31: How did the ceasefire affect your life?



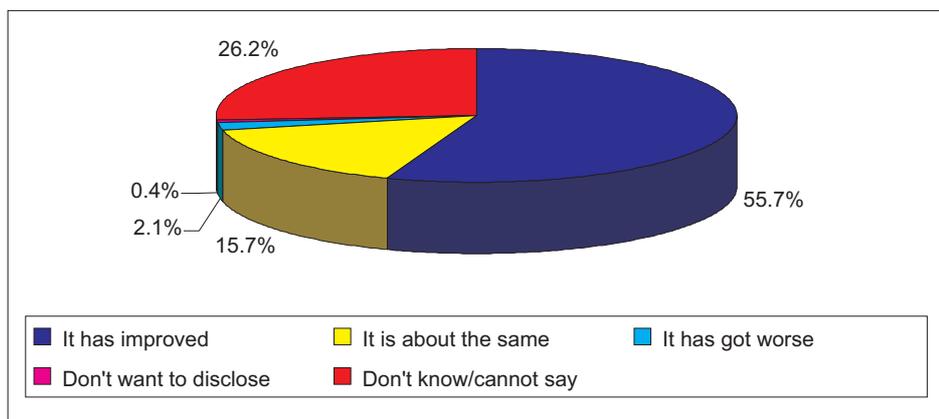
Among the ecological zones, only Kathmandu Valley differs from the general trend. A majority there (41 per cent) think it is about the same; the percentage who think 'it has improved' (40 per cent) is a close second. Also, a sizable proportion (18 per cent) of Valley residents were unable to respond.

Public views on this matter do not significantly differ from the general trend when data is disaggregated by caste/ethnicity. However, sizable proportions of hill ethnic groups (44 per cent) and Newars (42 per cent) think their lives are about the same since the ceasefire. Along educational lines, illiterate people are equally divided among those who say 'it has improved' and those who say 'it is about the same' (39 per cent each) and the majority of people with a Master's degree or higher (52 per cent) think their lives are about the same. People with other levels of educational achievement follow the general trend.

The poll attempted to understand how people view the quality of life in the rest of Nepal since the ceasefire. More than half of the respondents (56 per cent) said that the quality of life has improved while a sizable proportion (26 per cent) declined to answer.

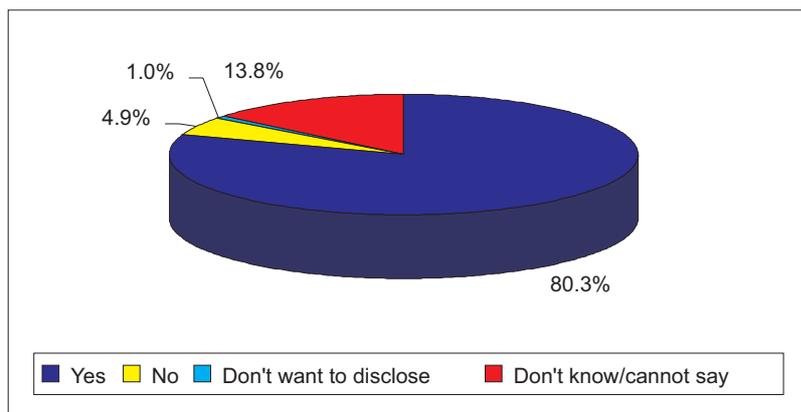
Public views on this matter do not significantly differ from the general trend when data is disaggregated by sex, development region, ecological zone, urban-rural settlement pattern, age group or caste/ethnicity. However, sizable proportions of Valley residents (31 per cent), Newars (33 per cent), Tarai Vaishyas (44 per cent) and Tarai Dalits (43 per cent) did not express an opinion.

¹⁷ The questions pertaining to the effect of the ceasefire were asked only to respondents who answered the Set B questionnaire. Hence, the total number of respondents to these questions is limited to 1,500.

Chart 3.32: What is your opinion about the quality of life in the rest of Nepal since the ceasefire?

In terms of education, people at all levels mirror the general trend except illiterate respondents, the majority of whom (47 per cent) could not answer.

The poll tried to uncover the public's view on whether the government should also have declared a ceasefire in response to the Maoist's unilateral declaration. A vast majority (80 per cent) thought that the government should have.

Chart 3.33: Do you think that the government also should have declared a ceasefire?

Public views on this matter do not significantly differ from the general trend when data is disaggregated by sex, development region, ecological zone, urban-rural settlement pattern, age group, caste/ethnicity or education status. However, a sizable proportions of hill Dalit (23 per cent), Tarai Vaishyas (28 per cent), Tarai Dalits (25.3 per cent) and illiterate people (39 per cent) did not offer an opinion.

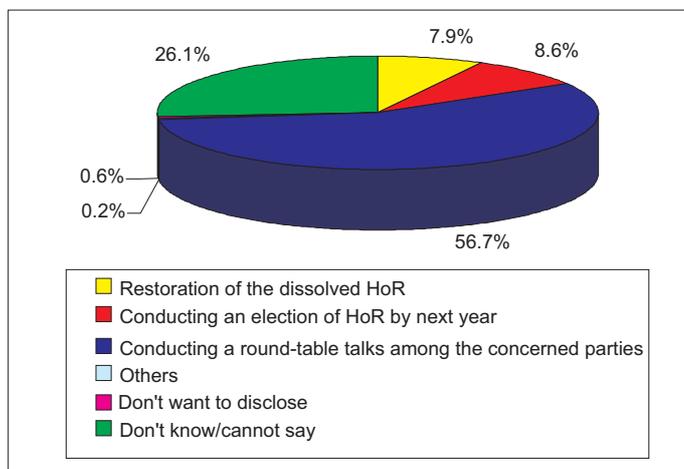
3.13 Solution to the Current Political Stalemate

In order to understand the public's views with regard to what steps should be taken to rescue the country from the current political stalemate, the poll asked respondents to express their views in three stages. In each stage, several possible options were given and respondents were asked to select one.

In the first stage, during which people were asked what ought to be done, most people (57 per cent) answered that round-table talks should be held among the discerned parties. A significant proportion of people (26 per cent) were not in a position to express their views definitively. About

nine per cent of the people think that a fresh election to the House of Representatives (HoR) should be conducted by next year. Eight per cent believe that the dissolved HoR should be restored.

Chart 3.34: What should be done to rescue the country from the state of current political turmoil? (Sage I)

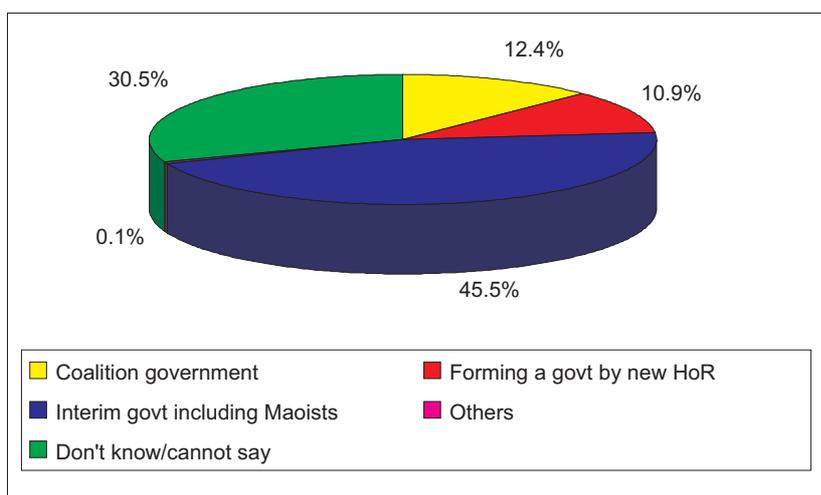


Sex has no significant impact on this matter though a large proportion of women (37 per cent) have no clear opinion in this regard. Variation across the development regions includes the fact that a significant proportion of people in the far western region supported restoration of the dissolved HoR (33 per cent). Also, a sizeable number of people in the eastern and western regions expressed no clear opinion (35 percent and 32 percent respectively).

Most caste/ethnic groups follow the general trend, although most hill Dalit (48 per cent) percent) and Tarai ethnic groups (45 percent) have no clear opinion. By educational status, almost all groups follow the general trend apart from the illiterate, a majority of whom have no clear opinion (57 per cent). A high proportion of the informally literate also have no clear opinion on this matter (39 per cent).

In the second stage, in response to a question about what should be done to rescue the country from the current political turmoil, a simple majority (46 per cent) support the establishment of an interim government which includes the Maoists, while 31 per cent had no definitive answer. Only 12 per cent chose a coalition government of the mainstream political parties as their preferred option. A small percentage believes that a new government should be formed by the Parliament (11 per cent).

Chart 3.35: What should be done to save the country from its current state of political turmoil? (Stage II)

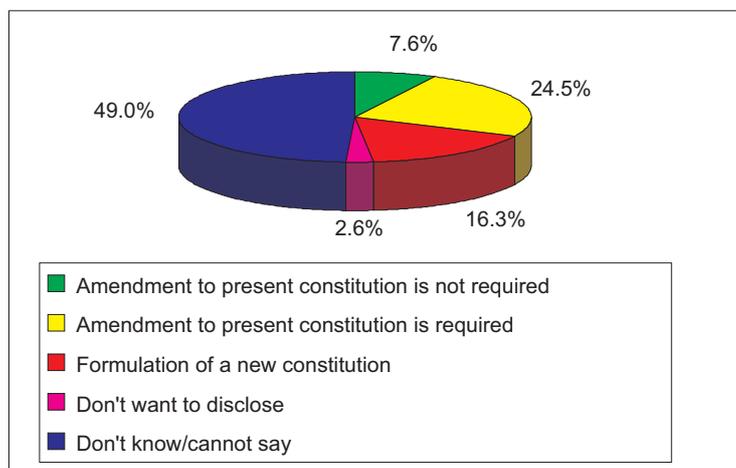


Responses differ by sex. While the majority of males think that an interim government which includes Maoists (50 per cent) is the solution, the majority of females have no clear opinion (43 per cent). All five development regions follow the general trend. However, it is worth mentioning that a significant number of people in the eastern and western regions gave no answer (38 and 35 per cent respectively). Many people in the far-western region are in favour of a coalition government (26 per cent). Examining results by ecological zone reveals no idiosyncrasies though a significant proportion of people in the hills and the Tarai have no clear opinion (34 and 33 per cent respectively). The young generation favours an interim government which includes Maoists as is the general trend, whereas most people older than 45 have no opinion on this matter.

Hill Dalits, Tarai ethnic groups and Tarai Dalits deviate from the general trend. The proportion of people with no clear opinion are in the majority among hill Dalits (52 per cent), Tarai ethnic groups (47.5 per cent) and Tarai Dalits (46 per cent). Level of education has a significant influence on people's beliefs: the higher a respondent's educational achievement, the more likely s/he is to favour the formation of an interim government. A clear majority of the illiterate (64 per cent) had no response to this question.

In the third stage, respondents were asked to express their views pertaining to the Constitution of 1990. A simple majority (49 per cent) do not have a clear idea on this matter, while about one-fourth (24.5 per cent) think that the present constitution should be amended and around 16 per cent are in favour of formulating a new constitution.

Chart 3.36: What should be done to rescue the country from the current political turmoil? (Stage III)



Response vary across the sex line. A clear majority of female respondents had no clear opinions on this matter (64 per cent), but a significant proportion of males (31 per cent) think that amendment of the present constitution is required. All development regions except the western region follow the general trend. Most people in the western region (43 per cent) say that the present constitution should be amended. Most respondents in the mountains (42.5 per cent) think that there should be an amendment while other ecological zones follow the general trend.

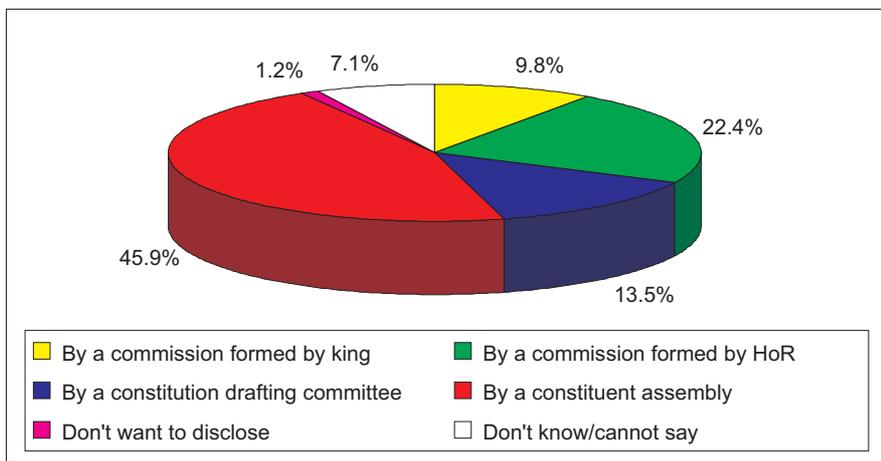
Age group has no significant influence on responses. However, sizable portion of young people favour amending the present constitution in addition to those with no opinion. Looking at the data by caste/ethnicity reveals that most caste/ethnic groups also follow the trend, i.e. have no clear opinion. However, the majority of Tarai caste groups (37 per cent) would like to see the present constitution amended. Education is a crucial variable: the higher a respondent's level of

education, the more support s/he shows for amending the present constitution. Among people who have obtained a Master’s degree or above, 37.3 percent are in favour of formulating a new constitution. Most of the illiterate and informally literate as well as people educated only up to the primary level have no opinion.

Overall, the poll reveals that a sizeable proportion of Nepalis support round-table talks among the Maoists, the government and other parties and would accept an interim government that includes the Maoists. The Nepali public is less unanimous about how to proceed regarding the constitution – sticking with or amending the present constitution or formulating a new one.

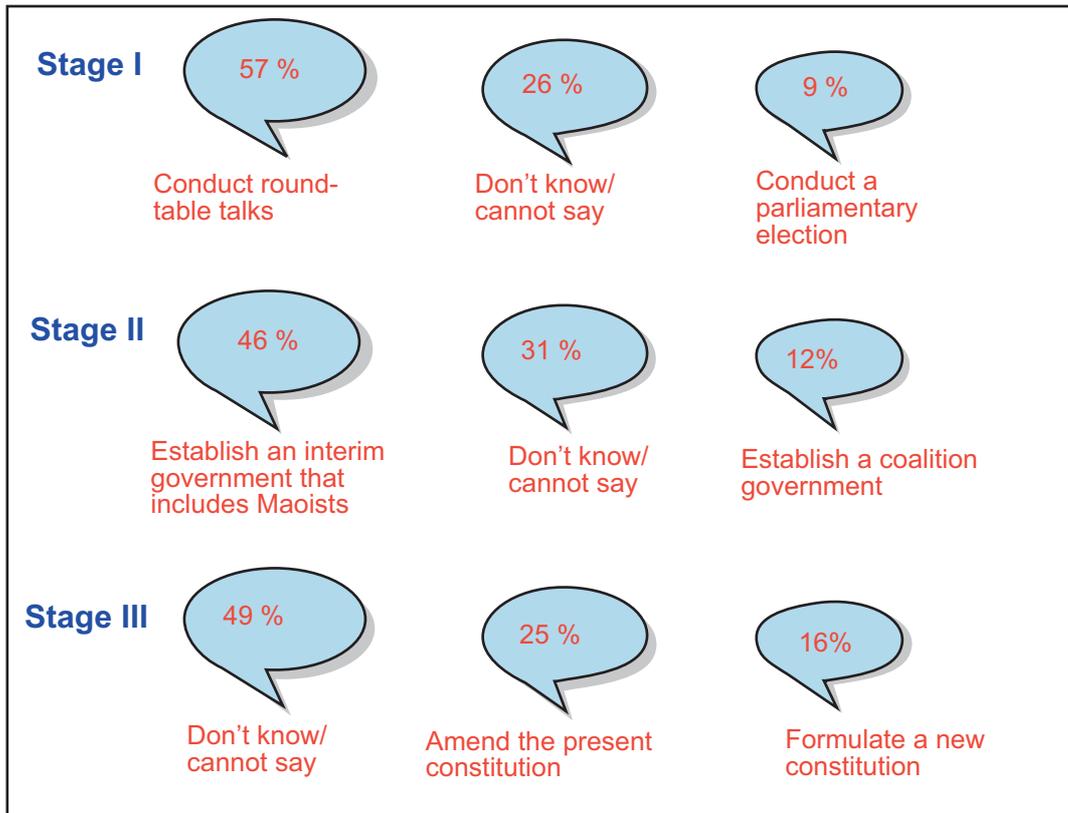
Among respondents who think that a new constitution should be formulated, a simple majority (46 per cent) believes a constituent assembly is the way forward. Those who favour action by a constituent assembly constitute 7.5 per cent of the total respondents.

Chart 3.37: Who should formulate a new constitution?



In terms of the development region variable, the proportion of mid-western people professing ignorance (50 per cent) is higher than the general trend, as is the proportion of far-western people favouring a constitution-drafting committee (35.5 per cent). All caste/ethnic groups follow the general trend except Muslims most of whom favour a commission formed by the HoR. When educational status is examined in isolation, it was noted that educated people tend to support a constituent assembly.

Chart 3.38: What should be done to rescue the country from the current state of political turmoil?

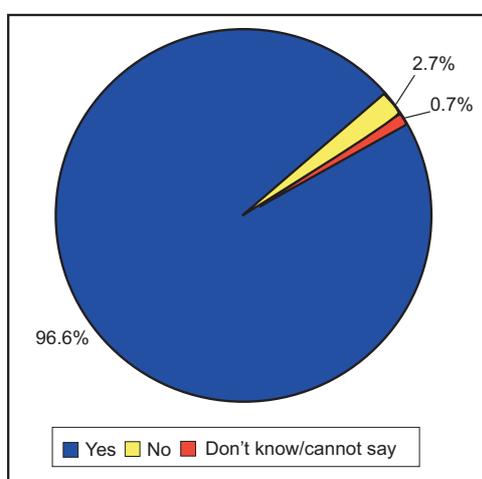


Municipal Elections

4

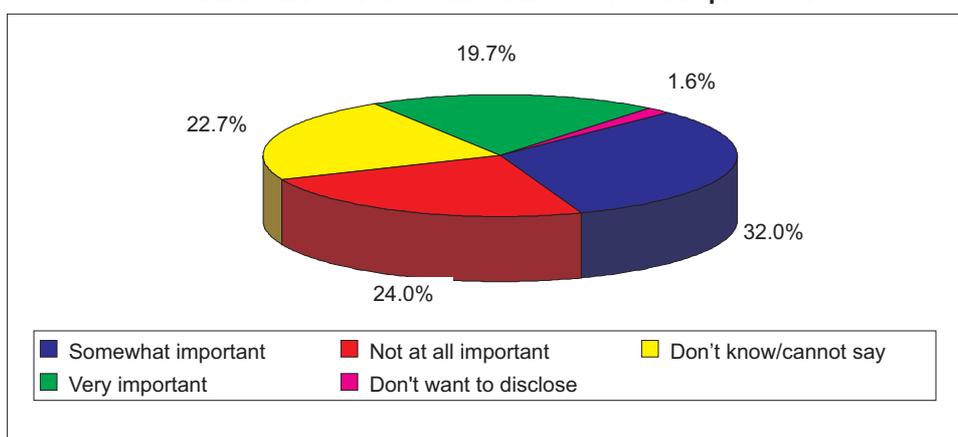
In addition to the topics discussed so far the poll aimed to document the public’s views on the forthcoming municipal elections scheduled for 8 February 2006 (26 Magh 2062)¹⁸. Urban respondents were asked several questions pertaining to the municipal elections. The first question that was asked was whether they knew that municipal elections were to be held on 26 Magh 2062. A vast majority of the urban respondents (96.5 per cent) said that they were aware of them.

Chart 4.1: Do you know that municipal elections are due to be held on 26 Magh 2062 (8 Feb 2006)?



The second question asked of all was ‘Do you think that municipal elections, in the present context, are important in the sense that they will be able to restore the stalled democratic process?’ Only about 20 per cent of urban respondents think the election are very important. Another 32 per cent think they are somewhat important. The proportion of those who think they are not important at all is also sizable (24 per cent). About 23 per cent of urban respondents profess ignorance on this matter.

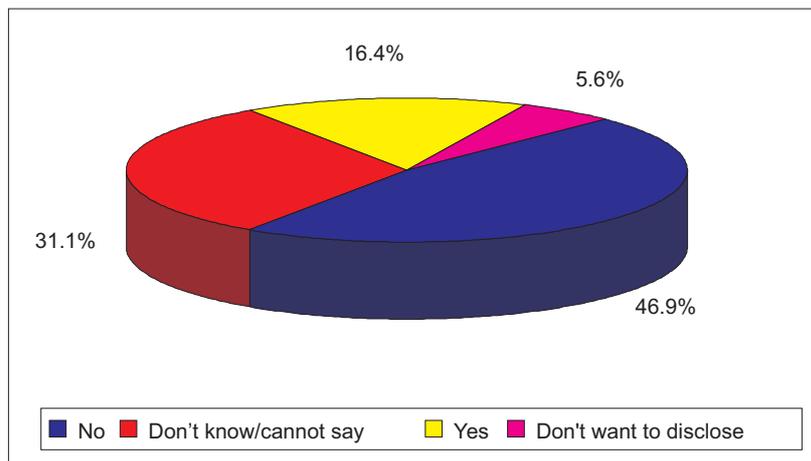
Chart 4.2: Do you think that municipal elections, in the present context, is important in the sense that they will be able to restore the stalled democratic process?



¹⁸ The word “forthcoming” is used here because at the time of the survey, the municipal elections had yet to take place. The survey was conducted between 5 and 25 January, 2006, while municipal elections took place as scheduled on 8 February, 2006.

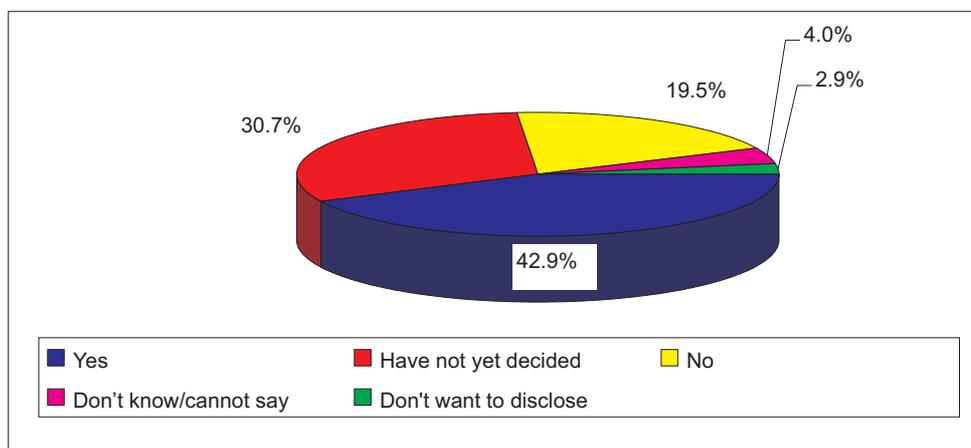
The poll also tried to understand the public's attitude towards the municipal elections. It asked if they thought that municipal elections would be held in a free and fair manner. About 47 per cent of urban respondents said that this was unlikely. A large proportion of urban residents (31.1 per cent) could not give a definitive answer. Only 16 per cent opined that the elections would be held in a free and fair manner.

Chart 4.3: Do you think that municipal elections will be held in a free and fair manner?



In response to the question 'Are you going to vote during the forthcoming municipal elections?' 43 per cent of urban respondents said they would vote. About 31 per cent mentioned that they had not yet decided and about 20 per cent said that they would not vote.

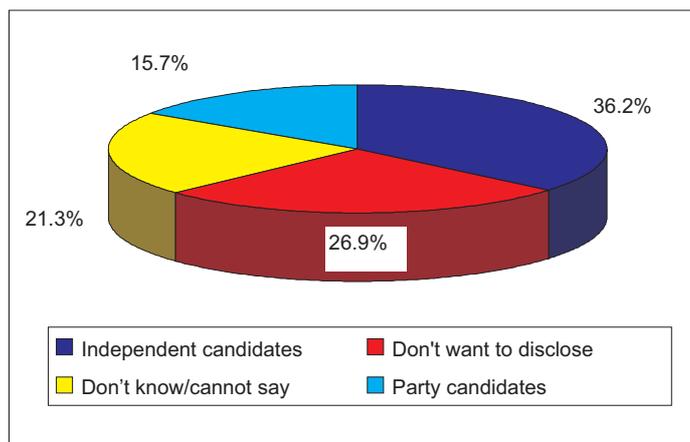
Chart 4.4: Are you going to vote during the forthcoming municipal elections?



Disaggregating the voting intentions of people by ecological-development region, it was observed that most people in the eastern Tarai (59 per cent), eastern hills (55 per cent) and central Tarai (52 per cent) said that they would vote in the upcoming municipal elections.

Those respondents who said that they intended to cast their votes in the upcoming municipal elections were asked two more questions. One of them was 'If you are going to vote, are you going to vote for candidate attached to a political party or for an independent candidate?' The proportions of respondents who said they would vote for independent and party candidates were 36 per cent and 16 per cent respectively. The proportion of those who do not want to disclose their answer (27 per cent) or who could not give a definitive answer (21 per cent) were also very high.

Chart 4.5: If you are going to vote, are you going to vote for a candidate attached to a political party or for an independent candidates?



The second additional question the poll asked of those urban respondents who said they would vote was about the qualities they would like to see in the candidate they intended to vote for. The people ranked honesty first and ability to bring about development second. The people identified person’s contribution to social work and educational level as the third and the fourth most important qualities in the candidate they would vote for

Table 4.1: The qualities voters would like to see in their candidaes

Response	Rank
Should be an honest person	1
Should be able to bring development	2
Should have made a significant contribution to social work	3
Should be an educated person	4

Those respondents who said that they did not intend to vote during the upcoming municipal election were asked a follow-up question ‘If you are not going to vote in this election, why?’ The top ranking reason for not voting was feeling that it was unsafe to go to the polling centre. The response ‘this election is unconstitutional’ stood second in rank. The responses ‘nothing is going to change after this election’ and ‘I do not trust any parties/politicians’ were ranked third and fourth respectively.

Table 4.2: Reasons for not voting

Response	Rank
It is unsafe to go to the polling centre	1
This election is unconstitutional	2
Nothing is going to change after this election	3
I don’t trust any parties/politicians	4

Comparison between the actual results of 1999 general election and the party the sample voted for during the last general election has been guided by concerns to ascertain how representative the sample is in terms of its voting pattern. A comparison between the two underscores that the sample is indeed representative and that we can therefore generalize the results obtained from the sample to the population as a whole. For instance, while Nepali Congress was the party that won the largest percentage of votes during the 1999

Table 4.3: Comparison between 1999 general election results and political parties the sample voted for in the last election

	1999 Election Result	Sample Poll Breakdown	Difference
Nepali Congress	36.3	39.5	+3.2
CPN UML	30.7	38.1	+7.4
RPP (Thapa)	10.1	6.0	-4.1
RPP (Chand)	3.4	6.0	+2.6
Independent candidate	2.7	5.6	+2.9
CPN ML	6.4	2.1	-4.3
Nepal Sadbhawana Party	3.2	0.4	-2.8
Other parties	7.2	2.2	-5.0
Total	100.0	100.0	-

general election; in the sample too, most of the respondents mentioned they had voted for the Nepali Congress in the last general election. Nepali Congress is followed by CPN UML and RPP(Thapa) in both the 1999 general election results and in the voting of the sample. However, there are some discrepancies and these are marked among smaller and regional parties. Table 4.3 illustrates this in detail.

4.1 Postscript

According to data made available by the National Election Commission, around 21 percent of voters cast their ballots during the municipal elections held on 8 February, 2006. As mentioned in the preceding section, in the opinion poll conducted between 5 and 25 January 2006 by Interdisciplinary Analysts with support from ACNielsen Nepal, 43 per cent of respondents said that they intend to vote during the upcoming municipal elections. This section discusses why the actual outcome may have differed so considerably from the figure given in the survey. This section argues that there are primarily two reasons for the lower than predicted turn out. The first is due to events which occurred in the interval between when the survey ended (25 January, 2006) and the municipal elections were held (8 February, 2006). The second reason is the influence the other questions in the survey had on the respondents' opinions about the municipal election, an influence which had not been properly identified earlier¹⁹.

This poll was conducted between 5 and 25 January 2006 during which time the security situation in the country was better than it became in the following days. As the election day drew nearer, the security condition deteriorated. The increased violence deterred many from casting their votes.

Opinion polls are conducted in environments that are secure. Enumerators visit respondents door to door and ask questions in a congenial setting. The respondents placed as they are in the safety and privacy of their homes, respond without fear or intimidation. It was obvious during the opinion poll survey that a sizeable proportion of Nepalis were excited about casting their ballots in an election that was to occur after an interval of six years. The subsequent deteriorating security situation in the country, however, had a drastic effect on their intentions to vote.

The primary reason people were deterred from going to the polling stations was the politics of fear generated by the Maoists. The chronology of events between the end of the survey and the election underscores how much terror existed. The Maoists attacked the security check posts located in Thankot and Dadhikot on the outskirts of Kathmandu Valley on 14 January (the poll in the Valley had been completed by 10 January). A candidate for mayor in Janakpur municipality was shot at and killed on 22 January. A candidate for mayor in Lalitpur sub-metropolis was shot at and seriously wounded on 30 January. The Maoists attacked Tansen municipality and abducted two dozen security persons and officials. Two days before the municipal elections, on 6 February, a taxi driver was shot at and killed in Gwarko in Lalitpur District. That night, rebels attacked Gaighat in Udayapur District and Panauti municipality in Kavre District. The day before the municipal elections, Maoists launched an attack in Dhankuta municipality. These violent activities planned and carried out in the days leading up to the municipal elections, and well publicised by the media, created a pervasive atmosphere of insecurity as the date for municipal

19 At the time of the press release on 31 January, 2006, only the data pertaining to the municipal election portion of the opinion poll had been analysed. Since the rest of the data had not yet been analysed, it was not possible to understand the bearing other questions had on the question about municipal elections then. The article published by the authors (Sudhindra Sharma and Pawan Kumar Sen) in *Gorkhapatra* on 1 March, 2006, likewise, analyses only the events occurring in the interim between the end of the survey and the actual municipal elections.

elections drew nearer. In addition to the well orchestrated violence, Nepal Bandh (closure) was called by the CPN Maoist and supported by the seven party political alliance.

At the time of the survey, people had become used to living in a relatively safe milieu thanks, ironically, to the ceasefire declared by the Maoists. Although the ceasefire was called off on 2 January 2006, people had lived in a relatively safe environment for over four months and may have assumed that such secure times would continue indefinitely into the future. In many locations the survey was completed before violent activities by the Maoists commenced.

Besides the direct influence of the violent actions of the Maoists, certain indirect consequences of the Maoist's actions also led to lower than anticipated turnout in the elections. The activities of the Maoists created a psychology of fear among the people who had filed their candidacy. Candidates in many municipalities subsequently withdrew their names. Eventually, executive positions in 22 municipalities were either filled unopposed or remained vacant because there were insufficient numbers of candidates. In many of these municipalities, people who, at the time of the survey, had decided to vote in the upcoming municipal elections eventually decided not to do so since so many of the candidates they had intended to vote for had withdrawn their names.

Elections are as much about mass mobilisation as they are about individuals expressing their preference through the ballot. It is through campaigns on the eve of an election that individuals are mobilised and motivated to vote. An election, in this sense, is the culmination of activities that include providing information about the polls, filing names, lively discussion in the media, door-to-door campaigns and activities on the election day itself. The crescendo builds up day by day until it reaches its climax in the election day.

In Nepal's municipal elections, however, since large well-known political parties had actively boycotted the elections and small, less known political parties feared for their security, there was no crescendo. Aside from what the government media published, there was little coverage of the scheduled municipal elections. Because the private media did not take up the campaign, little enthusiasm for the election was instilled among the people at large. The candidates of less well-known, small parties, for security and other reasons, were not able to go door-to-door and solicit votes during the run-up to the election. For the people at large, the festivities associated with electioneering were conspicuous in their absence. There was thus little motivation for individuals to go to the polling station on the day of the election. When better known small political parties and candidates withdrew their nominations and the only candidates remaining were those that people had not heard of or did not know, potential voters had little incentive to vote.

Intending to foil the elections, the Maoists declared a Nepal *Bandh* from 5 to 11 February. The seven agitating parties supported the *bandh* and decided to actively boycott the municipal elections; they instituted various measures to enervate their boycott.

In order to curb the active boycott of the agitating parties, the government issued a notice that its security forces could even shoot at somebody who tried to disturb the election programme. On the election day itself, taking into consideration the security situation, the government announced that only those vehicles that had prior approval would be allowed to ply on the road. In consequence, people did not have access to transportation on the day of election. The government's notices persuaded people that it would be unsafe to go to the polls and even those who had previously made up their minds to cast their votes, fearing for their safety, did not go to the polling station.

The behaviour of less well-known, small parties and their candidates and notices by the government are the indirect consequence of the Maoists' actions. They had the same effect on the outcome of the municipal elections as the direct actions of the Maoists did, in leading to lower than predicted outcome.²⁰

The second reason this poll's predictions of voter turnout were too high is due to insufficient interpretation of the entire set of questions and the bearing they had on respondents' decisions to cast their votes in the upcoming municipal elections. The survey results indicate that the majority of people had not experienced any difficulties due to the absence of elected local governments. Likewise, a sizeable proportion of people were not even aware that the government had nominated officials to run local government bodies. In these circumstances, one might assume that people would not take municipal elections seriously. Their indifference is further highlighted by their responses to the question that asked how important the municipal elections are, in the present context, in restoring the stalled democratic process. Only 20 percent felt that municipal elections were very important. In addition, only 16 percent felt that the elections would be held in a free and fair manner. By interpreting these questions together and inferring from their implications, it can be argued that only those who felt strongly about the municipal elections, in the sense that they thought the elections were a necessary first step in overcoming the political impasse, would have voted.

What these two reasons together suggest is that ultimately those who voted during the municipal elections were those who were not significantly affected by the Maoist's violence directly or indirectly and those who felt that it was important to vote in spite of the absence of the usual election-associated festivities.

20 With hindsight it would have been pertinent to ask respondents two additional questions: why they intend to vote and do they intend to vote even if the security situation may deteriorate. In particular, the latter question would be able to gauge people's commitment to vote during uncertain times.

Comparative Analysis

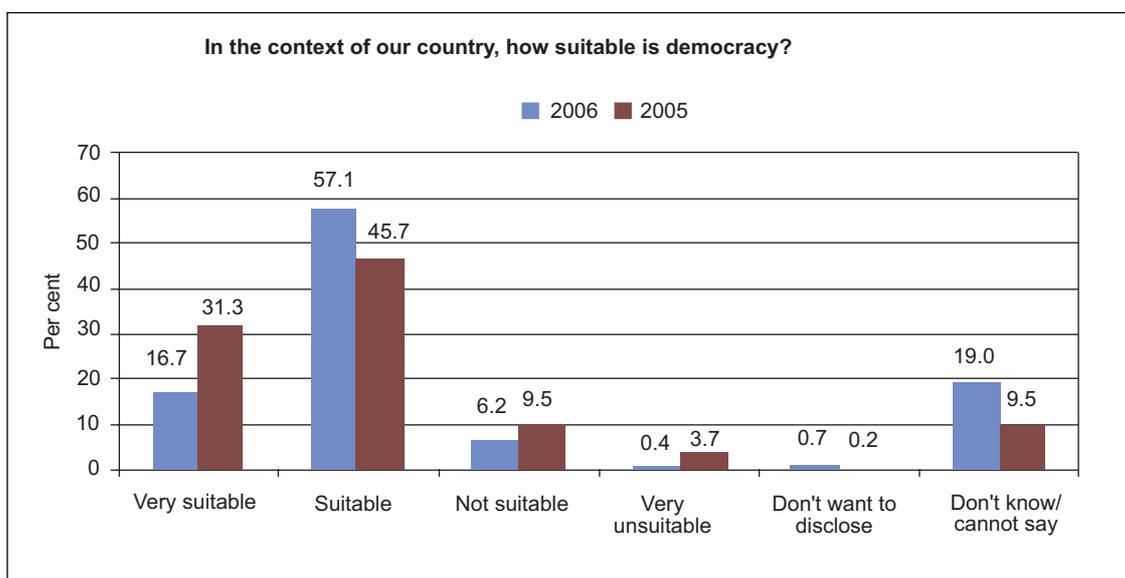
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This chapter compares the results of this opinion poll, Nepal Contemporary Political Situation II (NCPS-II), with the results of Nepal Contemporary Political Situation I (NCPS-I) that was conducted by the same team of Interdisciplinary Analysts with AC Nielsen Nepal Pvt. Ltd. Between 2004 and 2006 three other nation-wide opinion polls were conducted: 'State of Democracy in Nepal' conducted in 2004 (SDN 2004), 'Rising Concern about Maoist Strength' conducted in 2005 (RCMS 2005) and the poll that Himalmedia conducted in 2006, which featured as the cover story of *Himal Khabarpatrika*, 29 March-13 April 2006 (Himalmedia 2006). This chapter compares the results of NCPS-II with SDN 2004, RCMS 2005 and Himalmedia 2006. SDN 2004 was conducted by the State of Democracy in South Asia/Nepal Chapter in collaboration with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and RCMS 2005 was conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research Inc. RCMS 2005 has had a limited circulation while SDN 2004 and NCPS-I are available in the public domain. Through a comparative study of opinion polls, this report attempts to understand the emerging major trends in political opinion.

5.1 Democracy

The recently conducted NCPS-II indicates that 74 per cent of people think that democracy is a suitable political system in the context of Nepal. According to NCPS-I, too, 77 per cent of respondents believe that democracy is suitable in Nepal. SDN 2004, in contrast, reported that just 55 per cent of respondents think that democracy is suitable in Nepal. The SDN 2004 results include a large percentage in the category 'could not understand'²¹. If this category is excluded from the analysis and other categories are adjusted accordingly, those who say that democracy is suitable or very suitable becomes 79 per cent, which is very close to the pattern detected by NCPS-II and NCPS-I.

Chart 5.1: Comparing NCPS –II and NCPS – I response related to democracy



²¹ It is a common practice in analysing response to questions to acknowledge categories such as 'could not understand', 'don't know or cannot say' and 'don't want to disclose'. Once such responses are duly acknowledged, one can, however, exclude these categories, adjust the remaining categories and interpret the findings.

The trend indicates that democracy as a system enjoys wide support among the people at large.

NCPS-II asked respondents what the advantages of democracy are. The people stated that freedom of expression (including freedom of the press) and rule by representatives elected by people were the most important advantages. The same question was asked in the NCPS-I poll and the same order of responses was obtained. SDN 2004, too, asked what respondents like most about democracy. It found out that the freedom to speak and work is the most appreciated aspect of democracy.

What the trend suggests is that people, in general, seem to agree on the advantages of democracy.

According to NCPS-II, people believe that the misuse of authority (which includes an increase in corruption) is the

Table 5.4: Weaknesses of democracy (in order of rank)

Weakness	NCPS-II	NCPS-I
Misuse of authority/increase in corruption	1	1
Politicians don't go back to their villages after elections	2	2
Changes in administration when a new party sits in the government	3	3
Continuous protest by political parties on the opposition	4	4

most prominent negative aspect of democracy. NCPS-I also reported the same result. SDN 2004 also revealed that a perceived increase in corruption was the most disliked aspect of democracy.

This trend, too, suggests that people are largely in agreement with regard to the drawbacks of democracy.

Table 5.1: How suitable is democracy? (SDN 2004)

Response	Per cent
Suitable	43.9
Not suitable	12.0
Very suitable	10.6
Not at all suitable	2.7
Could not understand	22.3
Not reported	0.1
No opinion	8.4
Total	100.0 (N = 3,249)

Table 5.2: Advantages of democracy (in order of rank)

Advantage	NCPS-II	NCPS-I
Freedom of expression (including freedom of the press)	1	1
Rule by representatives elected by people	2	2
Rule of law	3	4
Religious freedom	4	3

Table 5.3: What do you like most about democracy? (SDN 2004)

	Per cent
Everyone has freedom to speak and work	41.5
Respect for the weak portions of the population	10.7
People control the ruling government	4.5
Protection of the rights of minorities	3.6
Others	0.7
Could not understand	33.4
Not reported	0.1
No opinion	5.6
Total	100.0 (N = 3,249)

Table 5.5: What do you dislike most about democracy? (SDN 2004)

	Per cent
Increase in corruption	36.1
People are divided because of multiparty democracy	13.5
Those who have more votes influence others	8.4
Government rulers changes more often	6.1
Others	0.5
Could not understand	31.7
Not reported	0.1
No opinion	3.7
Total	100.0 (N = 3,249)

5.2 Best Form of Government

The NCPS-II revealed that a majority of people (41 per cent) think that a prime minister responsible to an elected parliament should rule the country if the rule is to be legitimate. Similarly, NCPS-I found that most respondents (52 per cent) believe that a government is legitimate if a prime minister responsible to the Parliament rules the country.

Table 5.6: Who should rule the country for the rule to be legitimate? (per cent)

	NCPS-II	NCPS-I
PM responsible to Parliament	41.6	51.6
The king	25.7	22.2
PM responsible to king	8.9	8.2
None are legitimate	4.8	4.7
Maoists	1.9	2.2
Military	0.6	1.0
Others	0.1	0.1
Don't want to disclose	2.3	0.6
Don't know/cannot say	14.2	9.5
Total	100.0 (N = 3,000)	100.0 (N = 3,059)

These results once again indicates people's preference for a democratic system of government in which the ruler is the prime minister (and in which a king reigns).

5.3 Monarchy

The NCPS-II revealed that a clear majority of Nepali people (51 per cent) wants a fully constitutional monarchy. If those who did not have a definite answer are excluded, the proportion of people favouring a constitutional monarchy becomes 64 per cent. According to the results of NCPS-I, too, the majority of people (53 per cent) want a fully constitutional monarchy. If those who did not answer are excluded, the proportion of people who favour a constitutional monarchy becomes 62.5 per cent. SDN 2004 reveals that most people (40 per cent) favour a constitutional monarchy but 28.5 per cent of the respondents said that could not understand the question. Once other responses such as 'could not understand or no opinion' are excluded from the results, those in favour of a constitutional monarchy is as high as 63 per cent. This brings the SDN 2004, figure quite close to figures of NCPS-II and NCPS-I.

Himalmedia 2006 also asked people about the monarchy. Some 46 percent of respondents said they favour constitutional monarchy and another 5 percent said they favour ceremonial monarchy. Twenty five per cent opined that monarchy is indispensable. Less than one percent favour absolute monarchy while 14 per cent no monarchy at all. Some 8 percent had said they do not know or cannot say what

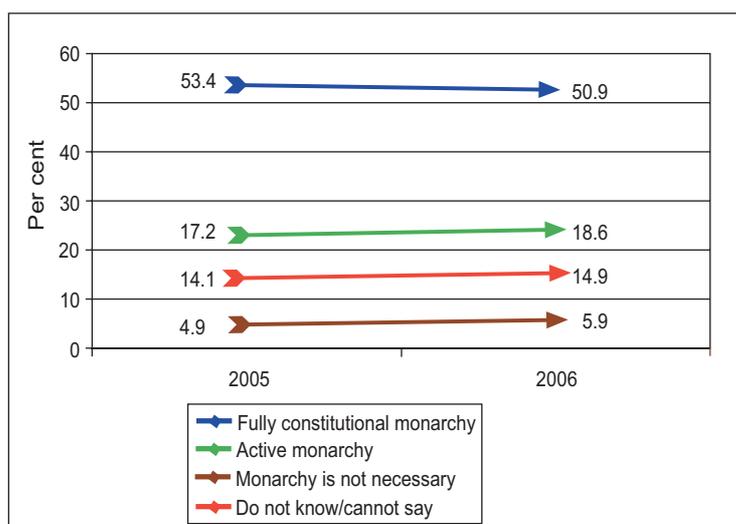
Table 5.7: What is your opinion about monarchy? (Himalmedia 2006)

	Per cent
Constitutional monarchy	46.1
Absolute monarchy	0.8
Monarchy is indispensable	25
Monarchy is not necessary	14
Ceremonial monarchy	6
Others	0.1
Don't know/cannot say	7.9
Total	100.0

their opinions about monarchy are. If those who said they do not know or cannot say are excluded, the percentage who favour constitutional monarchy would be around 55 per cent.

The trend with regard to monarchy is that people continue to prefer constitutional monarchy as the best form of monarchy. If preference for the type of monarchy is related with what the people regard as the most legitimate form of government namely a prime minister responsible to parliament, we note that the two responses complement one another. The fact that people prefer a constitutional monarchy over other types of monarchy and a prime minister responsible to the parliament as the best form of government underscores that people continue to favour constitutional monarchy with parliamentary democracy over other types of governance.

Chart 5.2: What should be type of monarchy in Nepal?



5.4 Assessment of the present government

NCPS-II and Himalmedia 2006 had both asked questions pertaining to the king's action on 1 February 2006.

Though both NCPS-II and Himalmedia 2006 had asked about the same thing – the king's action on 1 February 2005 - the responses appear to be different in that in NCPS-II those saying they disapprove is 30 per cent, while those in Himalmedia 2006 who say it is incorrect is 65 percent. This is a big difference and therefore could call into question reliability of both the polls. This conclusion, however, may not be warranted for the simple reason that the clue for the difference in the two polls lies in how the question has been framed. The question in Himalmedia 2006, compared to NCPS-II, has not been framed neutrally, thus pre-empting respondents to respond in a particular fashion²².

In spite of the apparent differences, responses to both the questions have a common thrust in that these show a broadly similar percentage of people supporting the king's action – 24 per cent in Himalmedia 2006 and 30 per cent in NCPS-II.

Table 5.8: In your opinion, which type of monarchy would be best? (SDN 2004)

	Per cent
The king's should be a constitutional monarch	39.6
The king should have more right and power	13.8
The country should be republic	9.8
Could not understand	28.5
Not reported	0.1
No opinion	8.2
Total	100.0
	(N = 1,669)

Table 5.9: 'What do you think about the king removing the political parties from government and ruling directly?' (Himalmedia, 2006)

S.No	Responses	Percent
1.	It is correct	24
2.	It is incorrect	65
3.	Don't know/cannot say	11

Table 5.10: 'Do you approve or disapprove of the king's action taken in Magh 19, 2061 (1 February 2005)?' (NCPS-II)

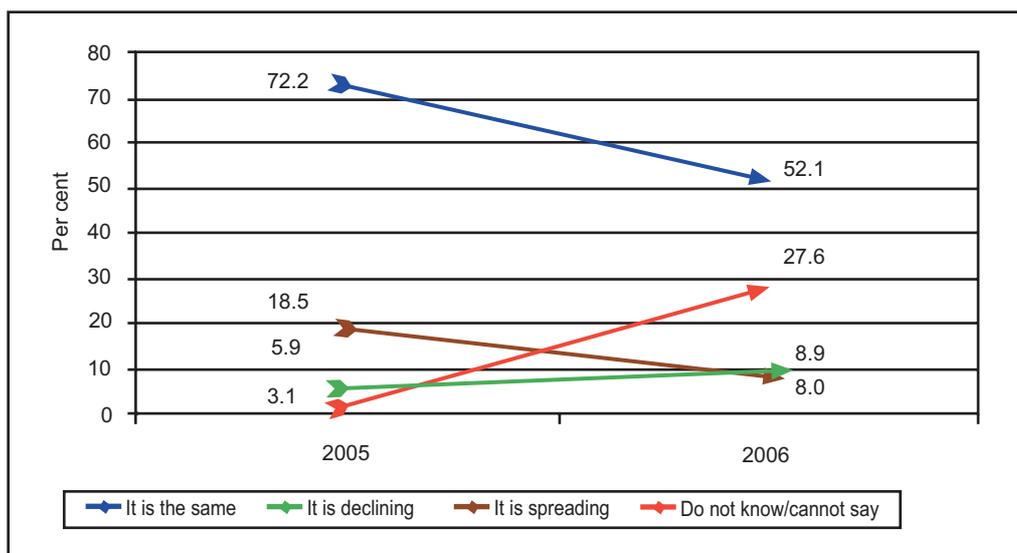
S.No	Responses	Percent
1.	Approve	30.9
2.	Disapprove	30.1
3.	Don't want to disclose	4.7
4.	Do not know / cannot say	34.3

²² Though it is natural for researchers (as individuals) to have political preferences, if a minimum criterion of scientific merit is to be maintained, it is important that each of the questions be framed neutrally and not motivate the respondents in responding in a particular direction.

5.5 The Maoist Movement and Peace Talks

NCPS-II revealed that 52 per cent of people think that the situation of the Maoist movement is the same as it was earlier in their local areas. The proportion of people surveyed in NCSP-I who think the situation is the same was 72 per cent. RCMS 2005, in contrast, reported that 44 per cent of respondents think that the Maoist insurgency has gotten stronger over the past few months.

Chart 5.3: What is the situation of the Maoist movement in your local area?



NCPS-II endeavoured to capture the public view about the solution to the Maoist movement. People gave first priority to peace talks among the concerned parties followed by, in decreasing rank, the declaration of a ceasefire by the concerned parties and the fulfillment of the Maoists’ demands. The public’s views when NCPS-I was administered were the same. RCMS 2005 also revealed that people’s first priority for resolving the Maoist situation is peace talks between the government and the Maoists.

Table 5.11: Strength of the Maoist Insurgency (RCMS 2005)

	Per cent
Stronger	44
Weaker	14

Table 5.12: What is the solution to the Maoist movement? (In order of rank)

	NCPS-II	NCPS-I
Holding peace talks among the concerned parties	1	1
The related parties declaring a ceasefire	2	2
Fulfilling the demands of the Maoists	3	3

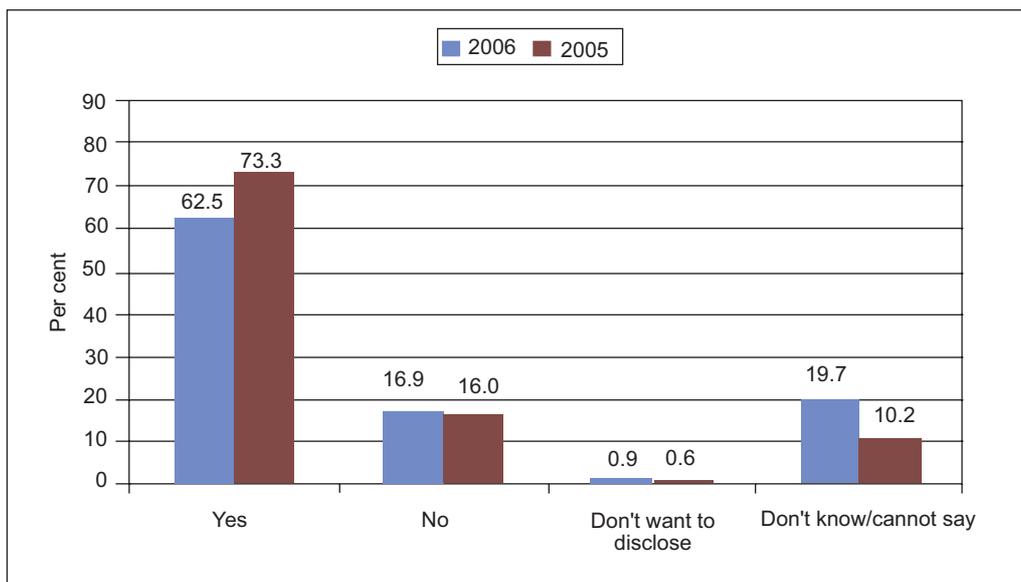
NCPS-II uncovers that the majority of people (62.5 per cent) think that the Maoist problem will eventually be settled through talks. According to NCPS-I, the proportion of people who believe that the Maoist movement will eventually be settled through talks was 73 per cent.

Table 5.13: Government solutions for the Maoist situation (RCMS 2005)

	Rank
Pursue peace talks	1
Remove red corner	2
Declare ceasefire	3
Commit to constitute assembly	4
Increase military efforts	5

The trend suggests that an overwhelming proportion of Nepalis continue to believe that the Maoist movement can ultimately be settled only through talks.

Chart 5.4: Do you think that the Maoist movement will eventually be settled through talks?



Himalmedia 2006 also asked how the insurgency could eventually be resolved. A vast majority said through talks among parties, Maoists and the king. The second most common response was talks between the parties and the king. These response largely tally with the findings of other polls.

Table 5.14: How can the Maoist insurgency be resolved

	Per cent
Talks among parties, Maoists and king	60.6
Talk between parties and king	22.2
Talks between parties and Maoists	7.2
Military suppression	1.1
Surrender by Maoists	3.4
Don't know/don't want to say	5.6
Total	100.1

NCPS-II reports that the majority of people (46 per cent) think that the government is not serious about restoring peace to the country. According to NCPS-I, the proportion of people who think that the government was not serious about restoring peace to the country was 51 per cent. It is important to note that the king was the chairperson of the government when NCPS-II was administered while Sher Bahadur Deuba was the head of the government when NCPS-I was administered. Similarly, RCMS 2005 also shows that there is limited public confidence in the government's ability to resolve the conflict. Only 8 per cent of people have a lot of confidence in the government's ability while 50 per cent have only a little confidence or no confidence in the government. When RCMS 2005 was administered, Deuba was heading the government.

Chart 5.5: Do you think that the government is serious about restoring peace to the country?

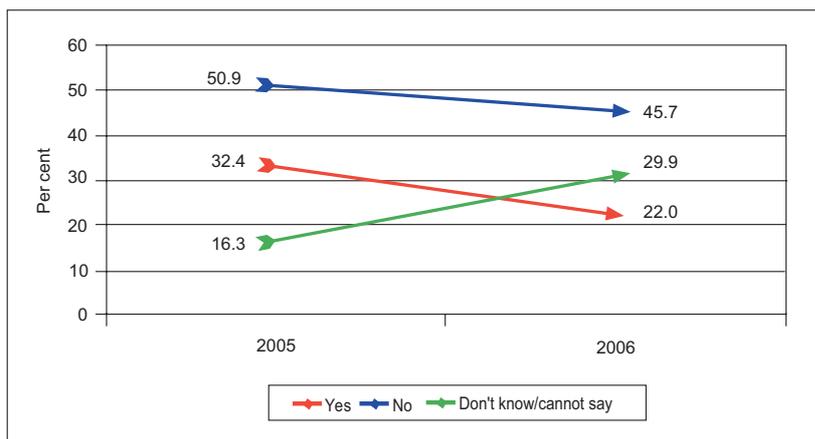


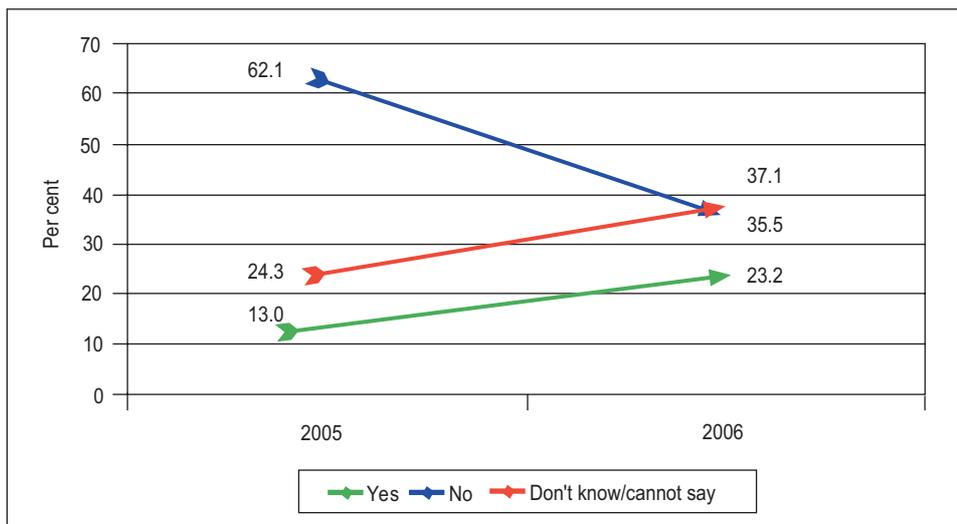
Table 5.15: Confidence in the government's ability to resolve the conflict (RCMS 2005)

	Per cent
A lot	8.0
Some	31.0
Just a little	18.0
None	32.0

The results seem to suggest that the public’s trust in the government’s commitment to restore peace to the country is declining.

NCPS-II found that most people (37 per cent) do not have a definitive answer about whether the Maoist leaders are serious about restoring peace to the country. According to NCPS-I, the majority of people (62 per cent) think that Maoist leaders are not serious about restoring peace to the country.

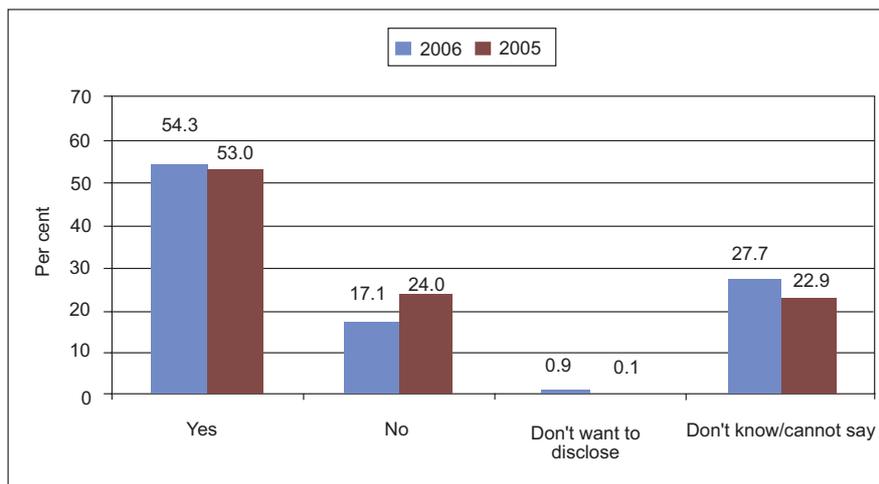
Chart 5.6: Do you think that Maoist leaders are serious about restoring peace to the country?



If one compares the trend, it is informative to note that while 62 percent did not believe that the Maoist leaders were serious about restoring peace in 2005, only 35 percent felt so in 2006. Similarly, there was an increase in the public’s faith in Maoist leaders’ seriousness about restoring peace in the country. The trend seems to indicate a decline in animosity towards the Maoists.

NCPS-II found that the majority of people (54 per cent) would like a third party/mediator to be involved in peace talk. This view underscores the public’s belief that neither the government nor the Maoists are interested in restoring peace to the country. The percentage was about the same (53 per cent) when NCPS-I was administered.

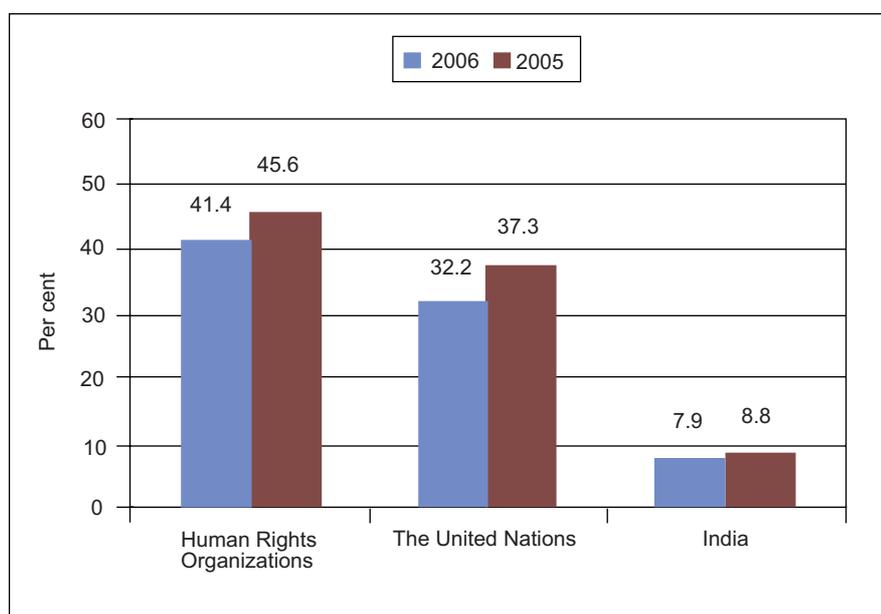
Chart 5.7: Would you like a third party/mediator to be involved in peace talks?



According to NCPS-II, most people (41 per cent) would like to see human rights organisations as the third party mediator. Their second choice (32 per cent) was the United Nations. NCPS-I in contrast, revealed that 46 per cent of people favoured third party mediation and that the United Nations was their second preference (37 per cent). In short, the trend in 2006 was similar to that of 2005.

This question was also asked in the poll Himalmedia conducted in 2006. Roughly 50 per cent favoured third party mediation.

Chart 5.8: If you do agree that third party mediation is a good idea who would you like to see involved?



The results of the Himalmedia 2006 poll in response to this question are different.

The reasons for the difference could be due to what respondents understand by the term mediator and multiple choice options of possible mediators. While NCPS-II included human rights organization within the country as a possible category of third party mediation, Himalmedia 2006 precluded it. Though United Nations and India both figure in the responses, their ranking is different and so are other possible choices.

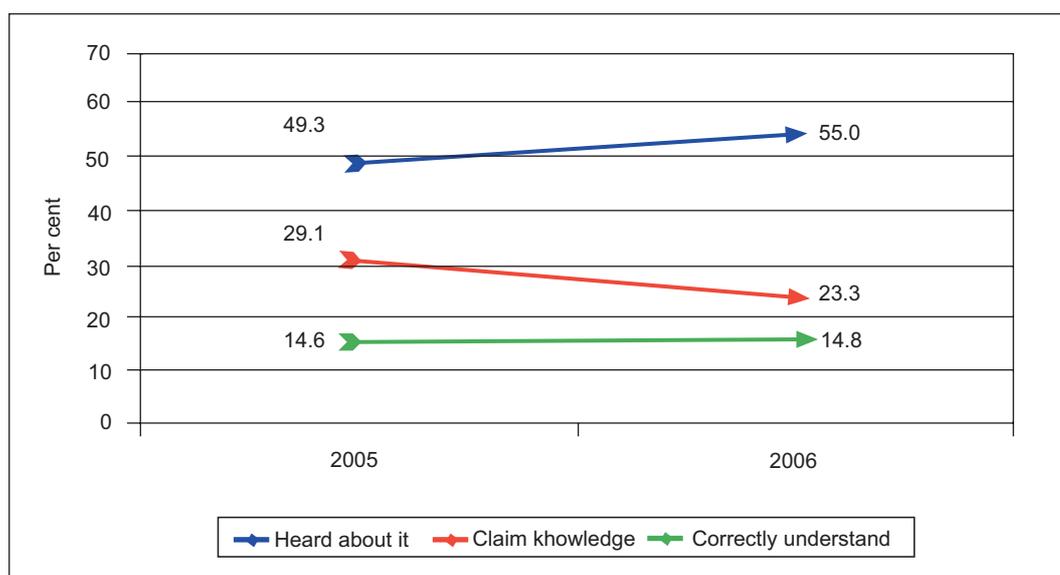
Table 5.16: If you think a mediator is required, who do you like to see involved?

	Per cent
India	35.6
The United Nations	23.5
USA	20.2
China	14.7
Total	94.0

Himalmedia 2006

5.6 Constituent Assembly

Both NCPS-II and NCPS-I attempted to find out how many respondents have heard about the constituent assembly; and, if they have heard about it, how many, in fact, feel that they understand what it is. NCPS-II reveals that 55 per cent of people have heard about the constituent assembly; when NCPS-I was administered this figure was just 49 per cent. This indicates that more people have now heard the term. The proportion of those who said that they have heard about the constituent assembly but do not know has risen to 57 per cent from just 40 per cent when NCPS-I was administered.

Chart 5.9: Public's understanding of constituent assembly

The trend suggests that not only have more people heard the term but also more people feel they understand the term.

NCPS ascertained that among those who think that they have some idea about what a constituent assembly is, 63 per cent understand the concept correctly. The proportion of people who understood was 50 per cent when NCPS-I was administered. The increase suggests that among those who feel they know what the constituent assembly means, the number of those who understand it correctly is increasing.

Table 5.17: If you think you have some idea about a constituent assembly what, exactly, do you think it is? (in per cent)

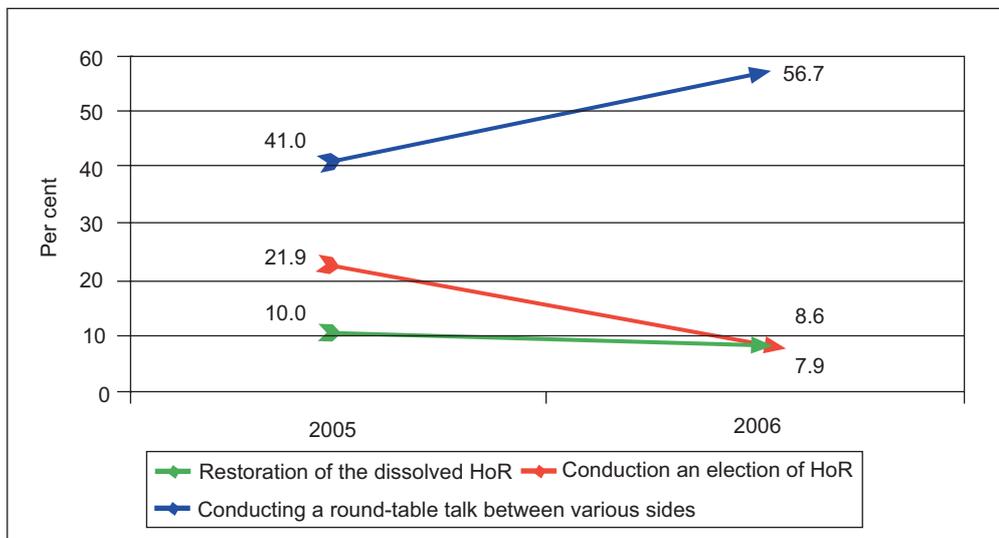
	NCPS-II	NCPS-I
Assembly of ER that will draft a new constitution	63.4	50.2
Assembly of ER that will amend the present constitution	26.0	20.5
Assembly of SR that will draft a new constitution	3.9	18.4
Assembly of SR that will amend the present constitution	2.0	7.9
Assembly of KAE that will draft a new constitution	1.3	1.1
Assembly of KAE that will amend the present constitution	2.1	0.9
Don't want to disclose	0.3	0.3
Don't know/cannot say	1.0	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0

The trend is similar in the study conducted by Himalmedia in 2006 in that some 57 percent claimed to have heard the term. Of those who have heard the term, some 59 percent feel that they understand it. In other words, 34 per cent feel that they understand the concept of a constituent assembly. Himalmedia 2006 did not try to ascertain whether or not people understood the term correctly.

5.7 Conflict Resolution

To gauge the public's view regarding conflict resolution, both NCPS-II and NCPS-I asked several questions. NCPS-II reveals that 57 per cent think that in the first stage there should be round-table talks among various concerned parties (the king, the political parties and the Maoists). Similarly, NCPS-

Chart 5.10: What should be done to rescue the country form the current political turmoil? (Stage I)



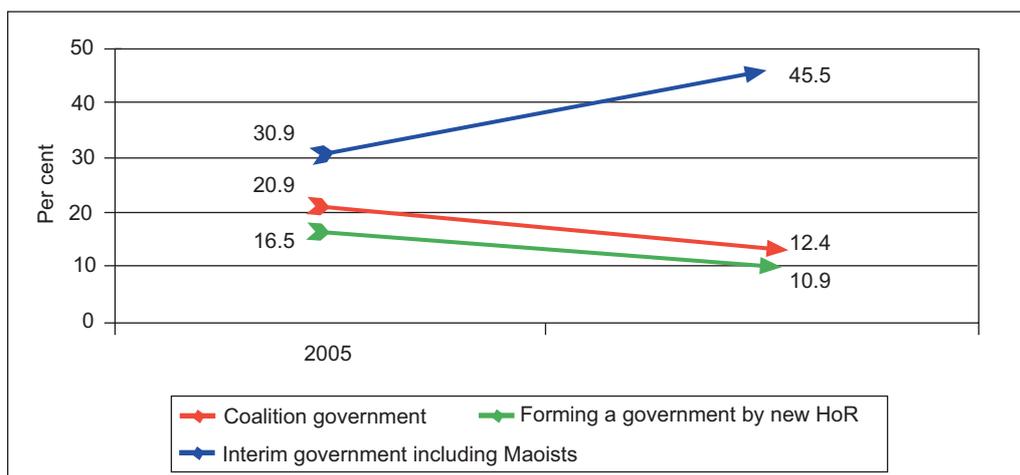
I found that 41 per cent want round-table talks in the first stage. SDN 2004 employed a different means of attempting to understand the public’s view. It asked respondents what they thought should be done to bring the Maoists to the negotiating table. Most respondents (44 per cent) did not understand the question but those who did, mentioned holding round-table conferences (32 per cent).

Table 5.18: What should be done to bring the Maoists to the negotiating table? (SDN 2004)

	Per cent
Reestablishment of the parliament	2.6
Parliamentary election	10.5
Round-table conference	32.3
Others	1.3
Could not understand	43.9
Not reported	0.1
No opinion	9.2
Total	100.0
	(N = 1,580)

NCPS-II highlights that, in the second stage of finding a solution to the conflict most people (45.5 per cent) want an interim government that includes the Maoists. When NCPS-I was administered, 31 per cent people wanted the same thing. According to SDN 2004, 45 per cent per cent could not understand the question posed about that government but those who understood (21 per cent) said they favoured an interim government which included the Maoists.

Chart 5.11: What should be done to rescue the country from the current political turmoil? (Stage II)



The Himalmedia 2006 poll shows similar results in that some 48 percent favour the constitution of an interim government that includes all political forces: the proportions of people who chose other responses are considerably less.

What the trend with regard to these questions suggests is that the people’s verdict regarding the ways and means of rescuing the country from the current impasse seems quite clear. It is moving towards conducting round-tables talks among the concerned parties (the king, the parliamentary parties and the Maoists) as a first step and, as a second step, forming an interim government that includes the Maoists. Other options such as a general election to the House of Representatives, restoration of the dissolved House of Representatives and the formation of a coalition government of the parliamentary parties trail considerably behind. The options that the Maoists have been advocating as short-term measures for ending the crisis seem to be the solutions the public prefer as well.

NCPS-II found that most people (49 per cent) have no clear idea about what should be done in the third stage to rescue the country, but that those who do are in favour of amending the Constitution of 1990. NCPS-I also showed similar results. SDN 2004 discovered that most people (48 per cent) are unable to understand the matter, but that those who do are in the favour of creating a new constitution (20 per cent).

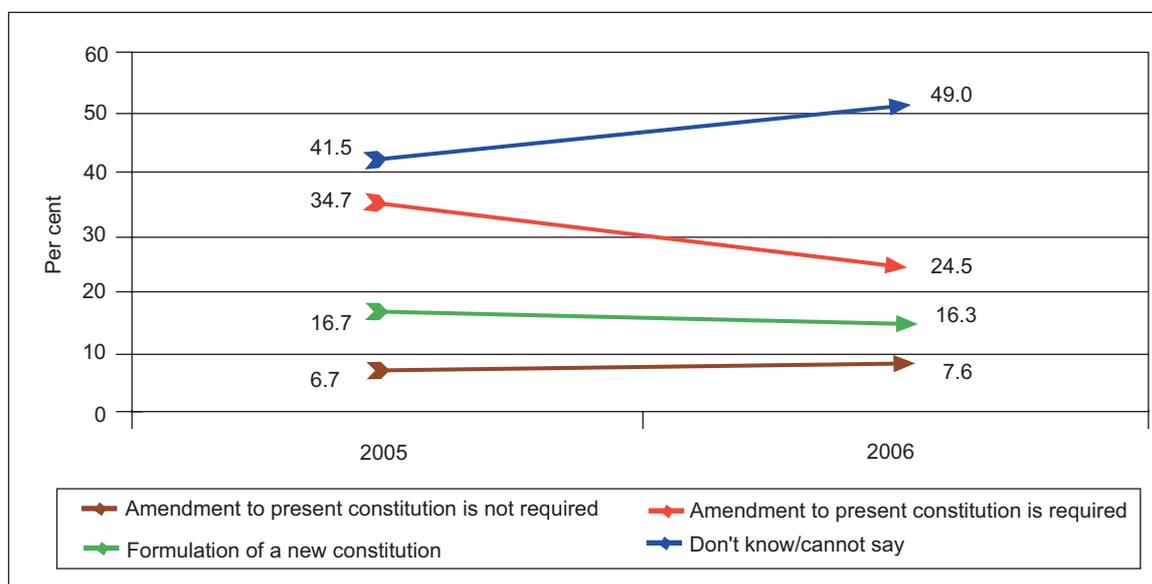
Table 5.19: What should be done to bring the Maoists to the negotiating table? (SDN 2004)

	Per cent
Multiparty government	8.9
Interim government which includes the Maoists	21.2
Elected government	12.8
Others	0.6
Could not understand	45.3
Not reported	0.1
No opinion	11.2
Total	100.0
	(N = 1,580)

Table 5.20: What is the way to resolve the current political impasse? (Himalmedia 2006)

	Per cent
Interim govt. of all political forces	47.8
Election for new house	15.1
Constituent assembly	10.9
Reinstatement of dissolved HoR	6.0
Don't know/don't want to say	19.7
Total	99.5

Chart 5.12: What should be done to rescue the country from the current political turmoil? (Stage III)



In the poll undertaken by Himalmedia 2006, as well, no clear answer to the question about the constitution was forthcoming.

Of those who say they want a new constitution, the proportion of those who want to do it through a constituent assembly is the highest in all polls (NCPS-II: 46 per cent, NCPS-I: 57 per cent and SDN 2004: 71 per cent).

Broadly speaking, the four polls show similar public responses to crucial national issues.

Table 5.21: What should be done to bring Maoists to the negotiating table? (SDN 2004)

	Per cent
No need for amendment of present constitution	3.4
Amendment of present constitution	15.8
Create new constitution	20.3
Others	0.2
Could not understand	47.9
Not reported	0.1
No opinion	12.3
Total	100.0 (N = 1,580)

Table 5.22: What is your opinion about constitution in present situation? (Himalmedia, 2006)

	Per cent
Write new constitution	19.6
Amend the present constitution	31.0
No need of amendment	20.4
Don't Know/don't want to say	29.0
Total	100.0

Conclusion

6

This opinion poll and the accompanying comparative analysis of other recently undertaken polls suggest that an overwhelming majority of Nepalis continue to favour the political system of democracy with a constitutional monarchy. People see both strengths and weaknesses in the way democracy has functioned in Nepal. The system of democracy is liked for its freedom of expression, including the freedom of the press, rule by elected representatives and the rule of law. Misuse of authority and the rise in corruption, the tendency among politicians not to go back to their constituencies and changes in administration when a new party forms the government are identified as major drawbacks of democracy²³. In spite of these shortcomings, democracy as a political system continues to enjoy wide support among the people.

For a majority of Nepalis, a prime minister responsible to the parliament is the most legitimate form of government. The preference for this type of government far outstrips that for other types. However, a small but sizeable proportion favours rule by the king as a legitimate form of government. That people's preference for a prime minister responsible to the parliament is further evidence of the majority's preference for a democratic system of government.

Likewise, a constitutional monarchy is the preferred type of monarchy though again a small but sizeable quantity would like to have an active monarchy. People do not favour either absolute monarchy or republicanism, the proportion of respondents who favour these options being in the fringes. The fact that people prefer a constitutional monarchy to other forms of monarchy can be construed as support for parliamentary democracy because a constitutional monarchy can be visualised only under this form of government.

If the people's preference for a particular type of monarchy is related with what they regard as the legitimate form of government, it becomes clear that the two responses complement one another. People's choice of constitutional monarchy as the best type of monarchy and of a prime minister responsible to the parliament as the most legitimate form of government underscores that people continue to prefer a constitutional monarchy with parliamentary democracy to other types of governance.

People's preference for a constitutional monarchy and a prime minister responsible to the parliament is reflected in their assessment of the performance of the government chaired by the king in the sense that people view the king's assuming an active role in politics with ambivalence.

With regard to the king's action on 1 February, 2005, the people are divided proportionately between those who 'approve', 'disapprove' and 'do not know/cannot say'. Similarly, in their assessment of the performance of the last government chaired by the king, people are roughly

²³ When people identify the strengths and weaknesses of democracy, they seem to do so in a contextualised way: the way democracy has functioned in Nepal shapes their assessment of democracy in the abstract. Democracy is judged not normatively but experientially. What these results reveal is that the people's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of democracy cannot be disentangled from their perception of the strengths and weaknesses of democracy as it has functioned in Nepal. Democracy is understood not in the abstract but in terms of what it has meant in their lives.

equally divided into those who feel that it is performing well, those who feel it is not performing well and those who do not know or cannot say. People do not, in general, see any positive features in the last government. Those who do see strengths identify a decrease in corruption and restrictions on the misconduct of political parties as the main positive features. People identify restrictions in political freedom, the abandonment of the Constitution of 1990 and the reduction in the possibility of peace talks as the negative features of the king-led government. A majority of people disagree with the government's claim that the Maoist movement has been checked and that the overall security has improved since the king's takeover.

Regarding the government's claim about the security situation, once responses to other questions are analysed, a slightly different picture from people's responses emerges. Compared to the 2005 opinion poll, the proportion of people who believe that the Maoist movement is spreading has declined. The percentage of those who believe that it is spreading and those who believe that it is diminishing is now roughly at around 8 per cent each. A large majority believe that the situation is about the same. The fact that fewer people than last year now feel that the Maoist movement is spreading, must be seen as the tacit acceptance of a sizeable proportion of respondents of the government's claim to have checked Maoist expansion²⁴.

One of the activities of the present government was the formation of the RCCC²⁵. The opinion poll asked people about the Commission. What the poll reveals is that among those who have heard of the RCCC, a high proportion was aware that it had found a former prime minister and minister guilty in a corruption case and had sentenced them. An overwhelming majority approved this action although the people also believe that the right authority to deal with such cases is not the RCCC but the CIAA. People's desire to punish the guilty does not come as a surprise, if one considers that the public identified the increase in corruption and the abuse of authority as the major drawback of democracy. This explains why they would like those charged with corruption be sentenced²⁶.

Not all people have heard about the 12-point MoU between the Maoists and the alliance of seven political parties but among those who have heard of it, a vast majority support it. In general, Nepalis are optimistic about the MoU. A high proportion of Nepalis continue to remain sceptical about the Maoists' commitment to democratic norms and values while a slightly smaller proportion has faith on the Maoists. Among those who have heard of the 12-point understanding, a sizeable majority agree to the arrangement for bringing the Maoist army and the RNA under international supervision. However, a clear majority does not view the fact that the alliance and Maoists reached an understanding in foreign territory positively. They think that it would have been better if the two parties had reached an accord within Nepal's territory. In other words, the fact that the seven-party alliance and Maoists have reached an understanding in a foreign territory is not viewed positively by a majority of Nepalis.

The poll asked the people what they thought the Maoist's main agenda was. Most people thought that the main Maoist demand was the abolition of the monarchy in Nepal. This was followed by

24 The poll was undertaken between 5 and 25 January, 2006. This was the period during which the ceasefire declared by the Maoists had just come to an end and the Maoists had yet to step up their violent activities on the eve of the municipal elections.

25 The Supreme Court in its verdict on the constitutionality of the RCCC on 13 February, 2006 proclaimed that the RCCC was unconstitutional. The RCCC was subsequently dissolved.

26 It may be argued that for people to continue believing in democracy, the democratic polity should demonstrate that those guilty of corruption or those that have abused authority, are sentenced.

those who believed that it was holding elections for a constituent assembly and establishing a one party dictatorship. Notwithstanding the changes in Maoist rhetoric over the last few years, a sizeable proportion continues to believe that the abolition of monarchy is the main Maoist agenda.

With regard to the solution to the ongoing conflict, having peace talks among the concerned parties is the first priority of respondents followed by the declaration of a ceasefire by the concerned parties. A significant majority believes that the Maoist movement will eventually be settled through peace talks but they repose their trust in none of the three main political players (the king-led government, the Maoist leaders and the parliamentary parties). They believe that none of the players is serious about restoring peace to the country. In each of the cases, only 22 to 24 per cent believes in that these political actors are serious about restoring peace.

Compared to the last poll, there has been a decline in the proportion of people who do not trust the Maoists. During the last poll 62 per cent felt that Maoist leaders are not serious about bringing peace to the country; in this poll around 35 per cent of the people felt this. This result is significant in that it indicates a shift in perception regarding the intentions of the Maoists. A vast majority of people think that the government should also have declared a ceasefire when the Maoists did so unilaterally.

The changing attitude towards the Maoists is revealed through the response to another question as well. Among the people who had heard about the 12-point understanding between the Maoists and the seven-party alliance, although 39 per cent didn't believe in Maoist's commitment to democratic norms and values, including the acceptance of human rights and multiparty democracy, another 36 per cent did. The fact that high proportion have faith in the Maoists' commitment speaks of the changing public perception towards the Maoists.

A majority of people continue to favour third-party involvement because they believe that the government and the Maoists are not serious about ending the conflict. The preferred third party is human rights organisations followed by the United Nations, India and any neutral western country in that order. This trend is similar to that of last year.

Compared to the last poll, the percentage of people who have a correct understanding of what a constituent assembly is, has increased only marginally. In the 2005 poll, 14.5 per cent understood what it was all about, while in the present poll, 15 per cent correctly understand it. However, those who favour the constituent assembly as the way out of the current impasse has not grown and hovers around 8 per cent (compared to 9 per cent last year).

With respect to possible solutions to rescuing the country from the current political turmoil, the people's verdict seems to be clearer than it was during 2005. As a first step, a majority prefer conducting round-table talks among the concerned parties (the king, the parliamentary parties and the Maoists) and, as a second step, a sizeable proportion prefer setting up an interim government which includes the Maoists. In the last poll those who preferred round-table talks as the first step and the formation of an interim government which includes Maoists as the second step were 41 per cent and 31 per cent respectively. This time the proportions had increased to 57 per cent and 46 per cent respectively. Other options trail considerably behind.

As the third stage to dealing with constitutional issues, the people's verdict is less clear. A majority of Nepalis are not in a position to express clear views about sticking to the present constitution, amending it or formulating a new one. Other options, such as a general election to the House of Representatives, restoration of the dissolved House of Representatives or the formation of a coalition government of parliamentary parties, are not popular among the people.

It needs to be born in mind that round-table talks among the concerned parties and the formation of an interim government which includes Maoists are the options that the Maoists have been advocating as short-term measures for ending the crisis.

In general, the results reveal changing public perceptions towards the Maoists. Animosity toward the Maoists, though still substantial, seems to be declining. Various factors might account for this. The Maoists' declaration of a unilateral ceasefire, seems to have struck a positive chord among the people and to have sent the message that the Maoists are serious about their commitment to peace. There is less news in the media about the Maoists directly harming or threatening civilians and this has helped in bettering the image of the Maoists among common people. The fact that the alliance of seven political parties is talking with the Maoists has given greater legitimacy to the Maoists in the eyes of the common folk. The fact that political leaders trusted the Maoists enough to do business with them may have been interpreted by common people as Maoists being trustworthy. One might argue that the shift in the public's perception of the Maoists has probably come about less because of successes in their military manoeuvres than because of their tactical political moves.

Changing public perceptions of the Maoists, in particular, decreasing animosity towards the Maoists, should not be construed, however, as public support for the Maoists' agenda. Support for a constituent assembly and for republicanism is low among the people. Most people continue to believe that the main Maoist agenda is the abolition of the monarchy and this demand is not popular among the people. Likewise, an overwhelming majority continues to prefer a democratic system in which a prime minister responsible to the parliament rules the country.

The trends suggest that the people believe that in order to overcome the present stalemate, the participation, if not the active involvement of Maoists is a must. They believe that the problems Nepal faces will not be solved without the involvement and consent of the Maoists. A majority of Nepalis want to see the constitutional actors – meaning the king and political parties - creating a space for the Maoists in the mainstream politics of Nepal.

The main message of this poll is that Nepali people favour the system of democracy with a constitutional monarchy, not a republic or an absolute monarchy. Though monarchy as an institution is popular among the people, the populace at large are not happy with the performance of the king-led government. They are more eager than ever to bring the Maoists into the mainstream of Nepali politics; they want the Maoists to come within the framework of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. People would like to see the king and the parliamentary parties sit together with the Maoists and begin talking to find ways and means to end the present conflict.

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