

Nepal's Maoists in the Media

An analysis of the portrayal of the Maoist party in the CA elections
coverage in two Nepali newspapers



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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of the coverage of the Constituent Assembly elections in April 2008 in The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal, two English dailies published in Kathmandu, focusing on the coverage of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Combining quantitative content analysis and qualitative text analysis the thesis explores how the two newspapers portray the Maoist party in the days before the elections in news articles, editorials and op-eds. The analysis show significant difference between the news and views of the two newspapers and that the rhetoric used to describe the Maoist party, especially in the Kathmandu Post, contributes to portray the Maoist party as a threat to the Nepali state and its people.

Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven er en analyse av to Kathmandubaserte aviser, The Kathmandu Post og The Rising Nepals dekning av valget til ny grunnlovsgivende forsamling i april 2008. Analysen fokuserer på dekningen av Maoist partiet. Både kvantitativ innholdsanalyse og kvalitativ tekst analyse er brukt for vise hvordan de to avisene beskriver Maoistpartiet i nyhetsartikler, ledere og meninger. Analysen viser forskjeller mellom de to avisenes dekning, og at retorikken brukt til å beskrive Maoistpartiet , spesielt i Kathmandu Post bidrar til å portrettere Maoistpartiet som en trussel mot Nepal og det nepalske folk.

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Preface

On the day of the historical Constituent Assembly elections in Nepal 10 April 2008, I was enjoying the stunning mountain views in the Annapurna region. In the days before I had shared the trail with numerous Nepalis from all over the country who was returning to their villages to finally cast their vote. The CA elections had been a main topic in conversations with Nepalis from all levels of society ever since I first came to Dhulikhel in July 2007 to work in the Department of Languages and Mass Communication of Kathmandu University. I instantly took an interest in the country's political history and recent conflict where the Maoists played a pivotal role. The insights gained through interacting with colleagues and students at the university are beyond value. I am also extremely thankful to the students who allowed me to tag along on their trip to Rolpa in October 2007. Meeting with local people and Maoists there have broadened my understanding of the conflict. I left Nepal both wiser and less wise about the politics in the country, but definitely richer than before in many many ways. I cheer for the people of Nepal, hoping that they soon will get the democracy they deserve.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1 Background: Politics and Press in Nepal	4
1.1 Political development in Nepal	4
1.1.1 First democratic experiment and Nepali Congress dominance	4
1.1.2 The fragmentation of the political left	6
1.1.3 The People's movement and democracy years 1990-1996	8
1.1.4 Civil War	12
1.1.5 The course to CA election	15
1.1.6 The Young Communist League	18
1.2 The media in Nepal	19
1.2.1 The Nepali press before the civil war	20
1.2.2 The press during civil war	22
1.2.3 The Media and the Maoists	23
1.2.4 The CA media monitoring campaign	24
1.3 Concluding remarks	26
2 Theory: Media in democracy, conflict and the in-between	27
2.1 Media and political power – the western perspective	27
2.1.1 A Propaganda model	28
2.2 Media and power – development and democratic transition	30
2.3 Media and conflict	32
2.3.1 Characteristics of media in conflict	33
2.3.1.1 Sources and control over media	33
2.3.1.2 Propaganda	34
2.3.1.3 Violence focus and enemy images	35
2.3.2 The journalist in conflict	36
3 Selection and Method	38
3.1 The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal	38
3.2 Material selection	38
3.3 Validity and reliability	39
3.3.1 Triangulation	40
3.4 Quantitative content analysis	40
3.4.2 Topics	40
3.4.2.1 Definitions and criteria used in coding all the news articles:	41

3.4.2.2 Definitions and criteria used in coding the article in topic category ‘violence’	42
3.4.3 Sources	43
3.4.4 Framing	44
3.5 Qualitative Text Analysis	44
3.5.1 Rhetorical analysis	45
3.6 Qualitative interview	46
3.7 Source critic	46
4 Quantitative analysis: topics and sources	47
4.1 Total selection	47
4.2 Thematic priorities	48
4.2.1 Violence	48
4.2.1.1 Thematic distribution within ‘violence’	49
4.2.1.2 Violent Actions	49
4.2.1.3 Concern over credibility	51
4.2.1.4 Security	51
4.2.2 Juridical	51
4.2.3 Campaign	52
4.2.4 Media	53
4.3 Sources	53
4.3.1 Use of single and multiple sources	53
4.3.2 Distribution of sources according to type	54
4.3.3 Political party sources	55
5 Views and Opinions: Fear, loathing and call for civility	56
5.1 Editorials	56
5.1.1 Call for civility and need for security	56
5.1.2 Inking yet another deal to end violence	59
5.1.3 Neutrality and credibility in monitoring	60
5.1.4 Election for Peace	61
5.2 Op-eds	63
5.2.1 Kathmandu Post: Maoists and Democracy not picture perfect	63

5.2.2 The Rising Nepal: Don't just blame the Maoists	70
5.3 Concluding remarks	73
Chapter 6 Violent News	76
6.1 A controversy over who started it	76
6.2 Counting casualties	78
6.3 The violent Maoists are a threat to credible elections	79
6.4 Concluding remarks	81
7 Conclusion	82
7.1 The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal show the Maoists as a threat to democracy and enemy of the state.	82
7.2 The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal underestimated the Maoists potential for winning votes in the election	82
7.3 Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal show the Maoists as aggressors of violence	83
7.4 The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal focused their pre election coverage on violence	83
7.5 The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal used demonizing language in describing the Maoists and their actions	84
7.6 There are significant differences in the election coverage of between The Rising Nepal and The Kathmandu Post	84
7.7 Other remarks	85
References	86

Introduction

On April 11, 2008, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), or CPN(M), became the first democratically elected Maoist party in world History. (Cailmail 2008:2) Nepal in the election year ranked 21 on Foreign Policy's infamous Failed States Index, scoring a 8,5 in delegitimization of the state out of a maximum failure score of 10 points.

In this thesis I focus on how the two major English dailies in Nepal, the Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal, covered the Constituent Assembly Election in the last period before the election. The objective is to show how the two news papers portray the situation in Nepal in the time immediately preceding election and how they deal with the Maoist party.

Research question: *Did The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal contribute to portray the Maoist party as a threat to the Nepali state and its people in the already tense situation before the election, and if so, how?*

Hypotheses

The hypotheses to be tested in order to give answers to the above research question, take base in the actual election result of the CA polls April 10 2008 that left the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) the largest party in Nepal, looking back on the coverage and the forecasts in the news papers in the days before, taking into notion the surprise that was expressed in international and Nepali media in the aftermath.

The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal underestimated the Maoists potential for winning votes in the election: 'Nobody' thought the Maoists would do very well in the CA election, or that they would come in first, as the biggest party in Nepal. 'The Maoists triumph: The former rebels surprise everyone with a stunning electoral success' said The Economist on April 17 2008, in line with numerous others expressing in retrospect that this was not an expected result.

The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal show the Maoists as aggressors of violence: This hypothesis is based on the history of the Maoist as insurgents and designers of the civil

war. The hypothesis under is based on the same assumption – that the media still treat the Maoist party as insurgents threatening peace and stability in Nepal:

The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal show the Maoists as a threat to democracy and enemy of the state.

The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal focused their pre election coverage on violence: Traditional war journalism is marked by an overt focus on violent actions. (chapter 2 Theory) I want to test if this type of journalism is evident in the newspapers even when actors officially have laid down arms and are preparing for democratic elections.

The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal used demonizing language in describing the Maoists and their actions.

There are significant differences in the election coverage between The Rising Nepal and The Kathmandu Post: Based on other studies I draw on further in the analysis, that show results that state media showed a more favorable image of the Maoist than the privately owned media.

Thesis Structure

The background chapter (chapter one) gives an overview of the political history of modern Nepal, focusing on the development of a political left from the establishing of the first Communist Party in 1949 to the Maoist insurgency from 1996 to 2006 and finally to the process that lead to the Constituent Assembly Elections in 2008 with the Maoist party as a democratic contestant.

In chapter two, Theory, I present theories on the role of media in democracy, conflicts and in transition. I discuss different approaches to media and political power, the issue of applicability of Western models in the context of developing countries and countries in a democratic transition phase, and content implications for media in conflict.

In chapter three I clarify my methodic approach, a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis, supplemented with (one) qualitative interview.

The results from the quantitative analysis are presented in chapter 4. The main purpose is to show the thematic priorities in the two newspapers, and the selection of news sources.

In chapter five all editorials and op eds about the election that in one way or another deal with political contestants (parties or persons) are analyzed focusing on how they portray the Maoists and speculate on election results and prospects for New Nepal.

In chapter six the news articles about violent actions and concern about the credibility of the elections due to violence from the violence category will be analyzed to show to what extent the Maoist party is portrayed as something to fear. The main part of this chapter is a qualitative analysis of selected texts that show the rhetorical tools used in labeling the Maoist party as the enemy of the Nepali state and its people.

In chapter seven I discuss the findings and discuss the hypotheses and research question, I will however discuss some of the findings throughout the thesis.

1 Background: Politics and Press in Nepal

The aim of this chapter is to put the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections, the Maoist's participation in it and the media's role, in a context of historical political change in the state of Nepal.

1.1 Political development in Nepal

The CA election marked the end of a 240-year-old monarchy in Nepal. Starting in the 18th century the little state Gorkha¹ expanded under the leadership of king Prithvi Narayan Shah leading to the conquering of Kathmandu in 1768. King Shah established the supremacy of the higher castes, a system that was further enforced in 1854² (Cailmail 2008). In 1846 the Shah rule was challenged. A clash between followers of the king and opposition, an event later known as the Kot massacre, followed. The result of the Kot massacre was that the power shifted from the king to the post of prime minister, a post made hereditary and monopolized by the Rana family. This change of leadership, however, did not bring about substantial change in Nepali society (Bragtvedt 2007:24). The Rana-family ruled the country politically until 1951.

1.1.1 First democratic experiment and Nepali Congress dominance

The last years of Rana rule had been characterized by factionalism and instability and a growth of democratic opposition. The Nepali Congress Party (NC) was established in 1947 and the Communist party of Nepal (CPN) in 1949. Supported by India, NC sympathizers launched armed attacks against the ruling Ranas, and managed to throw them out of power. King Tribhuvan (of the Shah family), who had been in exile in India, returned to Nepal and took hold of the throne, while a cabinet of Ranas, that also included NC leaders (B.P. Koirala and others), and '*representatives of the people*' was set up (Whelpton 2005:72). The interim constitution of 1951 however, guaranteed the king's sovereignty.

¹ The state changed name from Gorkha to Nepal first in 1930 (Whelpton 2008)

² Following India, Nepal officially abolished the caste system in 1963, but for most Nepalis caste and status continue to have impact on their professional and social life.

CPN, having initially supported the NCs armed struggle against the Ranas, adopted a strong anti-Congress position in the immediate post-Rana period, thus forming a National People's United Front to fight NC whom they described as the Nehru governments toy and stooge of the Indian government. (Thapa 2004a:23) CPN also denounced the New Dehli agreement of 1951 (Upreti 2008:16), the King Tribbhuvan, NC and Rana tripartite power sharing agreement following the overthrow of Rana-regime. (Nickson 1992:4) King Tribbhuvan announced in 1951 that there would be held elections to a constituent assembly with a mandate to frame a democratic constitution, but this did not come in to effect. The CPN agreed in 1954, on their first convention, that CA elections and a republic set up werw their most important political goals. (Nickson 1992) Two years later, CPN leadership accepted the constitutional monarchy in order to get recognition from the king. The monarchy issue divided the political left in Nepal until 2006. (Bragtvedt 2007)

King Mahendra, who succeeded king Tribbhuvan after his death in 1955, announced general elections to parliament, which were held in 1959. Both NC and CPN protested, but eventually decided to participate in the elections, and NC won a majority. But barely a year after the election, Mahendra used his constitutional power to stage '*what was in effect a constitutionally sanctioned coup d'état, under the pretext that the government could not maintain social order.*' (Wilmore 2008:72).

The three decades that followed Mahendra's coup were a time during which the monarchy and the state sought to construct an ideology that would sustain a viable national coalition of interests. As such it consisted of elements that would often appear in theory, if not in practice, to be contradictory. This ideology had three main components – the benevolent dictatorship of the King underwritten by the state's promotion of a policy of Hinduization, modernization and development of the country as the guiding principle of government policy, and the adoption of a political system based on partyless Panchayat 'democracy' (Wilmore 2008:73)

At the local level, there were 4,000 village assemblies electing nine members of the village panchayat, who in turn elected a mayor. Each village panchayat sent a member to sit on one of seventy-five district panchayat, representing from forty to seventy villages; one-third of the members of these assemblies were chosen by the town panchayat. Members of the district panchayat elected representatives to fourteen zone assemblies functioning as electoral colleges for the National Panchayat, or Rashtriya Panchayat, in Kathmandu. In addition, there were class organizations at village, district, and zonal levels for peasants, youths, women,

elders, laborers, and ex-soldiers, which elected their own representatives to assemblies. The National Panchayat of about ninety members could not criticize the royal government, debate the principles of partyless democracy, introduce budgetary bills, or enact bills without the approval of the king. Mahendra was supreme commander of the armed forces. He also appointed (and had the power to remove) members of the Supreme Court, appointed the Public Service Commission to oversee the civil service, and could change any judicial decision or amend the constitution at any time. To many of the unlettered citizens of the country, the king was a spiritual force as well, representing the god Vishnu upholding dharma on earth

During the Panchayat period many political leaders were imprisoned and many sought exile in India, while maintaining political action from there.

At the same time the communist movement was divided concerning attitudes towards both the monarchy and the relationship with the NC. Nickson (1992) highlights the issue of monarchy as the main divider, and Upreti (2008) focuses on the latter, but it must be noted that also he describes that the factions that saw NC as the main enemy also based this largely on feudal concerns.

1.1.2 The fragmentation of the political left

Nickson (1992) argues that the first 'big split' in Nepali Communism came after the royal coup when Keshar Jung Rayamajhi and his followers decided to collaborate with the Panchayat system. Upreti (2008) focuses on peasant protests against the Panchayat system (on land reform in 1964) that led to the emergence of many local units of the CPN. Ultimately Pushpa Lal, the founding father of Nepali communism, was the first to really break away from the party. He later formed his own party, CPN-Pushpa Lal. On the local level more groups were to follow his decision on breaking loose from the party in the near future. (Upreti 2008:18)

The second major split was closely connected to the Sino-Soviet split in the mid 1960s, for two main reasons: (1) The Nepali party leaders that mechanically applied popular international dogmas to Nepali reality, instead of developing an understanding of the peculiar post-feudal Nepali class structure. (2) The geographical buffer position of the Nepali state between Tibet (invaded by China in 1950) and India, the main ally of the Soviet Union in the

region. The communist movement split into a myriad of competing groups, some pro-Moscow, others pro-Beijing. (Nickson 1992:6)

In 1967 a radical communist rebellion in Naxal, West Bengal, inspired by the Cultural Revolution in China, also inspired the Koshi Regional Committee of the CPN in south eastern Nepal to launch an underground guerilla movement known as the Jhapa Movement³. Their activities were brought to a halt in 1971 by an effective counter-insurgency campaign by the Royal Nepal Army. Historically the Jhapa Movement will nevertheless hold the position as the first armed communist rebellion in Nepal. The long term impact, however, proved even more significant as within the remains of the faction an emphasis on constructing a Nepali road to socialism developed, one that eventually led to the formation of the largest communist party in Nepal, CPN (Marxist-Leninist), also known as Ma-Le. (Nickson 1992 and Thapa 2004b)

Parallel with the Jhapa uprising and the process of the making of Ma-Le, other communist groups of great importance for future events developed. CPN had been struggling for some time with divisions in its leadership⁴, and by the late 1960s, with many of the leaders being either in prison, or in India, local units had begun operating independently. The existence of the party was at stake, and jailed leaders Man Mohan Adhikary and Sambu Ram Shresta signed a statement in support of the king in exchange for freedom in 1968 in order to revive the party. When Nirmal Lama and Mohan Bikram Singh were also released, a central nucleus was formed to create a unified party apparatus I 1971.⁵ (Thapa 2004:25)

Differences soon arouse within the central nucleus, and in 1974 the faction of Mohan Bikram and Nirmal Lama held a so-called fourth party congress. The faction became known as the CPN (Forth Convention) and they were clearly supporting the idea of armed revolution. But when the king proposed in 1979 that a national referendum be hold the next year, the Fourth Convention with Nirmal Lama in the forefront chose before the people to support a reform of the Panchayat system.(Thapa 2004a:30 and Thapa 2004b:25)

³ Jhapa in Nepal lies just across the border river of Mechi from Naxalbari, India. One of the repercussions of the movement in Naxalbari, which in fact was put down within a short time, was the formation of the CPI (Marxists-Leninist) which did not only provide ideological inspiration across the border, but also loaned activists to the Nepalis. (Thapa 2004b)

⁴ Pushpa Lal left the party

⁵ The main aim was to bring various strands of the communist movement together, which they somehow managed. They did not, however, succeed in including Pushpa Lal and his party. (Thapa 2004b)

In 1983, Mohan Bikram Singh broke with Nirmal Lama and the CPN (Fourth Convention) to set up his own party together with Mohan Baidya called the CPN (Masal). Baburam Bhattarai, who in 1977 founded the All Nepalese Students Association, became active in the party. In 1984 Masal became one of the founding members of the world wide Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM)⁶. (Thapa 2004a and 2004b)

Masal split again in 1985, and Mohan Baidya founded a new party, naming it confusingly similar sounding CPN (Mashal)⁷. The latter adopted the doctrine of violent movement. Party secretary Baidya was succeeded, after the so-called sector incident in 1989⁸ by Maoist leader to-be Pushpa Kamal Dahal, better known by his nom de guerre; Prachanda. (Thapa 2004a, Thapa 2004b, Whelpton 2008).

1.1.3 The People's movement and democracy years 1990-1996

By the end of 1989 Winds of Change blew from Eastern Europe and a new struggle against the King's autocracy was in the making in Nepal. After the death of NC leader B.P. Koirala in 1982, the party struggled to find its direction. A number of NC leaders had already joined the Panchayat system, and there were rumors that more would follow suit.

It was clear by the end of the 1980s that neither NC nor the communists would succeed in leading a movement strong enough to overthrow the Panchayat system and the King on its own. At the same time the people of Nepal were suffering from India's closing of 13 out of 15 border crossings on expiry of a Trade and Transit Treaty from 1978. The economic blockade affected the common people who experienced rationing of essential supplies such as kerosene, petrol, diesel and food items. (Nickson 1992, Thapa 2004b)

The fragmented left overcame some of their differences in pursuit of democracy, and 7 groups/factions, including Ma-Le and CPN-Marxist, formed the United Left Front (ULF) in

⁶ Masal was expelled from RIM in 1996, making CPN (Maoist) the only current member of the organization (Thapa 2004a:35)

⁷ This is indeed confusing also when reading the various literatures on Nepal's political history. There is some incoherence, I view it as mistakes being overlooked in the editing process. For example Nickson (1992) says that one faction known as the Communist Party of Nepal (Mashal), and led by Mohan Bikram Singh '...denounced Chinese revisionism as early as 1981' quoting Baburam Bhattarai's *Nepal: A Marxist View* (Kathmandu: Jhilko Publications, 1990). Nickson (1992) continues to label Mashal as co founders of RIM in 1984. B.C. Upreti (2008) says that Prachanda became leader of Masal in 1989, whereas Thapa (2004a and 2004b) and Whelpton (2008) clearly states that Prachanda succeeded Mashal leader Baidya.

⁸ King Tribhuvan's statue at Tripureshwar was blackened and police posts attacked.

January 1990.⁹ A few days later NC announced that a national movement would be launched against the Panchayat system to restore multi party democracy beginning February 18.¹⁰ Neither Masal nor Mashal joined the ULF¹¹, but together (and with some other smaller groups) they set up the United National People's Movement (UNPM). Baburam Bhattarai of Masal was chosen to lead the group. UNPM launched their own anti-Panchayat agitation, and despite lack of common strategy all the factions would eventually confront the government simultaneously (Thapa 2004b and Whelpton 2008).

Come 18 February, the ULF/NC Movement for the Restoration of Democracy kicked off as planned, but because the government had rounded up and jailed leaders from both ULF and NC prior to the initiation, the activities were uncoordinated and the masses did not seem to tag along. It was when the local population of Kathmandu Valley came out in support of change, starting demonstrations and raising slogans against the Panchayat system and the monarchy that the ball started to roll.

After more than a month of protests, and with cracks appearing within the Panchayat system which led king Birendra to change prime minister, people started taking to the streets of Kathmandu to show their disapproval of the king and his lack of willingness to make dialogue with the opposition. On that same day, April 6, UNPM had also called for a general strike, 'and by late afternoon the streets around Thundikel¹² were full in what was perhaps the largest-ever gathering in Nepal's history (Thapa 2004b:32). The agitation turned violent as police started firing when the statue of King Mahendra in Durbar Marg was vandalized. But in the aftermath of the events negotiations started between the Panchayat side and the opposition that resulted in an agreement presented to the King for his approval on April 8. On April 9, celebrated as 'Democracy Day', political parties were again allowed to operate, after a gap of 30 years. (Thapa 2004b)

Short thereafter, ULF joined an interim government headed by the NC, tasked to run the government until elections in the following spring. However, once democracy was finally

⁹ The CPN (Marxist) was a result of merger in 1987 involving followers of Pushpa Lal Shrestha and Man Mohan Adhikary. Other groups in the ULF included the Rohit's Nepalese Workers and Peasants' Party and the Fourth Convention. The Fourth Convention had lost the position as the major communist force to Ma-Le because of the splits in 1983 and 1985. (Whelpton 2008)

¹⁰ The date was symbolic chosen for its historic significance, it was the same date 39 years previous that King Tribhuvan had declared end of Rana rule. (Thapa 2004b)

¹¹ Thapa (ed.)(2003) writes in the introduction chapter that whether Masal and Mashal opted out or was kept out of ULF depends on the version of events one accepts.

¹² Thundikel is an open space in central Kathmandu traditionally used for military parades and national ceremonies.

reintroduced, political disagreements continued to hamper any governmental stability in the country. In addition to law and order continuing to be a problem, the process of writing a new constitution proved extremely difficult. Birendra, in an attempt to regain lost ground in the Movements aftermath, bypassed the new ministers and appointed a constitutional reform commission on his own. Birendra had to back down, but the decision to set up a Drafting Commission with representatives of Congress, the ULF and the King instead, was controversial *'since many on the left would have preferred to leave the task to the elected constituent assembly, as had been envisaged originally in 1951'*. (Whelpton 2008:116)

On June 10 interim Prime Minister Bhattraai from the NC, signed an agreement with India that lifted the yearlong trade embargo, and the following joint communiqué stated that India and Nepal would henceforth consult each other before making any decisions regarding security matters. As a result Mashal, who demonstrated against this perceived political concession to India, generated considerable support from traditionally anti-India segments of the population. When the draft of the constitution was published by August 1990, it retained the religious basis of the monarchy reconfirming Nepal as the only Hindu-kingdom of the world. (Nickson 1992, Thapa 2004b)

When the approved draft finally was sent to the King for endorsement, he released his own amended draft, an act that provoked large scale protests, even from civil servants openly acting in defiance of the government for the first time. The Maoist Nepal Workers and Peasant Party (NWPP) organized major protests, following a Maoist and Mashal announced Nepal bandh¹³. The interim government, while rejecting most of the proposed amendments, agreed to the establishment of a Raj Parishad (State Council) headed by a royal appointee and a majority of members also appointed by the king. (Nickson 1992)

It should not come as a surprise that when the constitution was promulgated, Mashal came out denouncing it. Mashal pointed to the similarity with the situation in 1951 *'when by agreeing to the 'Dehli Compromise', the Nepali Congress had fudged the commitment to a Constituent Assembly'* (Nickson 1992:18). King Mahendra as a result was able to write his own constitution in a manner that preserved his emergency powers of which he invoked in 1960, thus postponing Nepal's transition to democracy for 3 decades. *'This persuasive argument now became the main justification used by Mashal to deny the legitimacy of elections held under a constitution which had not been passed by a constituent assembly.'* (ibid)

¹³ Bandh is the Nepali term for a general strike.

On this background, in addition to the inability of the interim government to tackle urgently needed social and economic reforms and bring to trial leaders from the Panchayat system, ULF could not hold it together.¹⁴ The two major parties CPN (Marxist) and Ma-Le united to form the CPN (Unified Marxist-Leninist), UML. Three Maoist parties, including CPN Fourth Congress and Mashal joined forces in a new party CPN (Unity Centre) with Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) as its leader. CPN-UC was later joined by Baburam Bhattarai, when his party Masal called for a boycott of the coming elections. (Whelpton 2008, Thapa 2004b¹⁵)

Even though the constituents of the Unity Centre were opposed to the constitution and the multi party elections, they decided to take part through the United People's Front (UPF) coordinated by Baburam Bhattarai. The UPF won nine seats in the 1991 election, and emerged as the third largest party in the parliament. (Thapa 2004a) NC and UML as expected reigned on top with 110 and 69 seats respectively. An opinion survey before polling day indicated that, although unaware of the finer points distinguishing all the different parties, the majority of voters could at least distinguish between the more traditional parties and the radical ones. In particular there was also a perception of NC as the party of the 'haves' and the various communist groups as representing the 'have-nots'. (Whelpton 2008)

The years of multiparty democracy in Nepal were characterized by the NC for the most part¹⁶ holding power, ruling by neo-liberal policies recommended by aid donors that lead to prices rising. (Thapa 2004b, Whelpton 2008) Large numbers of prominent persons from the Panchayat system joined the NC, thus keeping power. (Miksell (1993) argues that multiparty democracy in Nepal was characterized by lack of popular participation.

Before the 1994 election Unity Centre split into a Prachanda faction and a Nirmal Lama faction. The UPF also split accordingly, with Baburam Bhattarai heading the one allied to Prachanda. The differences leading to the split between Prachanda and Lama is said to be over whether the time had come for armed uprising, Prachanda insisting that this had already been agreed upon at the Unity Congress in December 1991. (Thapa 2004a, Thapa 2004b) In March 1995, Prachanda's Unity Centre held its 'Third Plenum', in which it foreswore elections and decided to take up arms. It was at this point that the CPN (Unity Centre) was renamed the CPN (Maoist). (Thapa 2004a)

¹⁴ According to Nickson (1992) ULF initially wanted to go into the election together with NC, but was rebuffed by the latter. The president of United States (G. Bush) also made it clear in meeting with Ganesh Man Singh in Washinton that US support of NC would be conditional on a break with ULF.

¹⁵ Note that Nickson (1992) seem to confuse the two Mashal and Masal

¹⁶ Except for a nine-month period with CPN (UML) in cabinet In 1994-95 (Bragtvedt 2007)

1.1.4 Civil War

Baburam Bhattarai, on behalf of UPF, presented a 40 point demand to the prime minister 4 February 1996. The demands remained unanswered and on 13 February the CPN Maoist struck in six districts which marked the start of eleven years of civil war in Nepal.

The insurgency started in the mid-western hills of Nepal, in the districts of Rolpa and Rukum, which have a long history of isolation, neglect, and mismanaged encounters with government authorities. The area is heavily forested, mountainous, thinly populated, and entirely without roads. (Gersony 2004)

The Maoist demands of land reform and rights for ethnic minorities gained them a large amount of support here. (Bragtvedt 2007) Lack of political participation for large parts of the population and a sense of disappointment with democracy, which saw political parties competing for resources in the center rather than striving to create development, is a likely explanation for Maoist support in the country side (Whelpton 2008)

Along with campaigning for the rights of the oppressed people, it is important to point that the Maoists have a history of using intimidation and fear to control the same people for whom they advocated. Whelpton (2008) and Thapa (2004b) also stresses that state brutality and human rights violations of the army and police may have helped create more support and sympathy for the Maoists.

Throughout 1996 the Maoists made sporadic raids, mostly in the western part of Nepal. In early 1997 the police attacked the Maoists in the Midwestern hills, but as many innocent suffered this also resulted in many new Maoist recruits. In May that same year Maoists boycotted local elections and the government formed a task force to deal with the 'Maoist problem' in the country. In March 1998 UML split and Girija Prasad Koirala of the NC launched Operation Kilo Sierra Two in an attempt to stop the Maoists. In October 1998, the Maoist spread out of the western hills and by the end of this year the death toll reached 500 people, most of them not Maoists.

Maoists called for a boycott of the May 1999 parliamentary elections and continued to attack police posts and government offices. In rural areas the police started pulling out, leaving the

villages under even stricter Maoist control. However, in October Deputy PM Ram Chandra Poudel met with Maoist leader Rabindra Shresta in Kathmandu to find a solution.

In February 2001, the Maoists announced the Prachanda Path doctrine. April 2001 saw a wave of violence in the mid-western districts of Rukum and Dailekh. In one week 70 policemen were killed and as a result the paramilitary Armed Police Force (APF) was set up by a government that realized that the non-combatant Nepal Police were not up to the task of fighting insurgency (Dixit 2003:301)¹⁷

Then, on 1 June 2001 the Royal Massacre put Nepal on the front stage all over the world. King Birendra and his wife, Queen Aiswarya, were killed supposedly by an alcohol and cocaine intoxicated crown prince Dipendra. After killing members of his family, Dipendra shot himself, falling into a coma. The comatose Dipendra was formally the king of Nepal until he also died a few days later. Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev Sarkar, Birendra's brother, who was out of town during the massacre, then took the throne. There are many conspiracy theories concerning this event, and even to this day many Nepalis refuse to acknowledge the official account.

On June 6 the Kantipur daily newspaper published a letter from Dr. Baburam Bhattarai of the Maoist party, 'Let's not Legitimize the New Kot Massacre'¹⁸, following the arrests of the publisher and the editors of the paper. In the article Bhattarai called on the army to refuse to accept Gyanendra as king. A statement from Prachanda similarly claimed that king Birendra had been killed because he had refused to fully deploy the army against the Maoists. (Whelpton 2008:216).

After the Royal massacre, Maoist infiltrated street protests in Kathmandu, but the Maoists never managed to fully spark an urban uprising in the massacre aftermath, but kept up pressure in the countryside.

In July 2001 the Maoists took police officers hostage in Holleri mid-western Nepal. PM Koirala (NC) ordered the army to attack the Maoists, but the army refused to do so, something that in turn led to Koirala's resignation. He was succeeded by fellow NC politician Sher

¹⁷ The background for this also being that the king denied deployment of the Royal Nepalese Army against the Maoists.

¹⁸ The article was published in Nepali, but was translated into English by the Monthly Review, New York, accompanied with a substantial editorial note explaining the context of the letter. This translation and the note are published in the book by Baburam Bhattarai: 'Monarchy vs. Democracy', a collection of his own texts about monarchy and democracy in Nepal.

Bahadur Deuba. Peace talks between the government and the Maoists ensued, but after three rounds of talks, on November 23, the Maoists broke the ceasefire and escalated the war when for the first time they targeted the army. (Thapa 2004b)

This was two days after Prachanda withdrew from the negotiations not willing to back down on the Maoist demand for a constituent assembly, having already compromised the demand of immediate end to the monarchy. Following successful attacks in Dang (western Terai) the Maoists announced the setting-up of the 'United Revolutionary People's Council of Nepal' under Baburam Bhattarai. The government responded by a declaring nationwide state of emergency and the full deployment of the army against the insurgents. (Thapa 2004b)

King Gyanendra promulgated the Terrorist and Disruptive Acts (Control and Punishment) Ordinance (TADA) 2058 v.s. (2001), and on the same day, declared as '*terrorists the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) group and any person, organization or group, who is directly or indirectly involved in, or renders assistance in, the activities carried out by that group*' (Onta 2005, citing Order from the Ministry of Home Affairs 26 November 2001)

Even though the combined strength of the army, police and armed police force, over 100 000 in number, by far exceeded the Maoist estimated force of 5-10 000 trained guerillas, the next fourteen months proved military indecisive. The Maoists army was also supported by a large 'militia' and even if the Army operations left many killed and wounded, it is not known how many were actually Maoists among the casualties, and how many were just innocent civilians. (Whelpton 2008:218).

In May the declaration of the state of emergency was up for extension in the parliament, but the majority was not in favor of extending the emergency, thus PM Deuba, going against his own party, dissolved the parliament and called for new elections to be held in November. In October however, Deuba met with the King to recommend that the elections be postponed due to high Maoist activity. The result of this meeting was in fact an effective suspension of multiparty democracy by the King:

As the people of the villages find themselves caught in crossfire, the political scene in Kathmandu is more chaotic by the day. When PM Deuba proposes that the election scheduled for November 2002 should be postponed because of the deteriorating security situation, King Gyanendra sacks him, assumes executive authority and sets up a government of technocrats headed by Lokendra Bahadur Chand. (Dixit 2008:213).

With the international community increasingly concerned over human rights violations in the country, violence continued in 2003 and 2004. In May 2003 a 'five party alliance' was formed when three smaller parties¹⁹ joined NC and CPN (UML) in criticizing the royal take over, and called for the restoration of democracy. The parties nominated Madhav Kumar Nepal from CPN (UML) to the post of PM, but this was rejected by the King, who instead chose a PM from his inner circle.

The Maoists also changed their war tactics in this period. After suffering heavy losses in attacks against the army, they shifted focus to guerrilla raids against police posts and more urban activity such as demonstrations and bandhs. The Maoists controlled large parts of the countryside, but were still unable to take administrative centers and challenge the state at a higher level.

In the same period the NC and the UML started considering holding a constituent election as a solution to the Maoist problem (Whelpton 2008:222) In April 2004 anti-monarchy pro-democracy demonstrations took place in Kathmandu.

February 1st 2005 king Gyanendra dissolved parliament, cut phones and internet, and sent the army to the newsrooms. (Dixit 2008:214) In practice the King already had control under the state of emergency, but now he set up a new cabinet filled with ministers from the Panchayat years. Hundreds of politicians and activists were arrested.

The coup brought the biggest political parties together with the five-party alliance developing into a seven-party alliance (SPA) for restoration of multi party democracy. Secret talks between the Maoist and the SPA started in the summer, and in September the Maoists declared ceasefire for the purpose of having official negotiations with the parties. The King and the army however continued the attacks on the Maoists. (Bragtvedt 2007)

1.1.5 The course to CA election

The negotiations between the Maoists and the political parties resulted in the signing of a twelve point agreement in Dehli in November. Interestingly India played an important mediating role in this process between the Maoists and the parties. After Baburam Bhattarai and Krishna Bahadur Mahra of the Maoist Central Committee had been sent to India in May

¹⁹ Nepal's Workers and Peasant Party, The People's Front and Nepal Sasbhawana Party (Anandi Devi)

for learning purposes, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) became a link between the Indian government and the Maoists in Nepal (Bragtvedt 2007:44 quoting a Maoist press release from 2005). India had been sceptical towards king Gyanendra since the coup in February 2005, and eventually decided to support SPA and the Maoists in Nepal.

With the signing of the twelve point agreement, the King was termed the main obstacle to peace in Nepal, and it was agreed that parliament should be restored with the purpose of forming an interim government that should prepare elections for a Constituent Assembly. The king in turn condemned the agreement and continued preparations for local elections in February. Fighting started again after Maoists ended the ceasefire on 2 February 2006. At the same time the parties mobilized boycott of the elections called for by the king, with the result that turnout was down to 20% when elections were held on 8 February. New negotiations between the Maoists and the SPA took place again in March in Delhi, following an agreement to start demonstrations on the 6 of April. These demonstrations were to become known as the Jana Andolan 2 (The second people's movement).

Over the course of the next two weeks, street protest in Kathmandu snowballed into mass demonstrations. (Dixit 2008) The King clung to power until midnight April 24, when he reinstated the House of Representatives. The Maoist announced a 3 month long ceasefire April 26 to facilitate the political process leading up to their ultimate goal – the new republic of Nepal. The reinstated House of Representatives made a unanimous declaration on 19 May 2006 announcing itself as the sovereign body of the nation. Thus, the king was deprived of all privileges enjoyed by the title for over 237 years, and Nepal was declared a secular state. It also proclaimed an election for a constituent assembly to draft the new constitution.

The Maoist and SPA signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 21 November 2006. Among other important issues, the CPA declared an end to the civilian conflict, provided for the establishment of an Interim Parliament, an Interim Government and the adoption of an Interim Constitution. Also, it included arms management and cantonment provisions monitored by the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN). (EU EOM Final Report 2008)

CPN Maoist formally joined the Interim Government in May 2007 and an original date for the Constituent Assembly elections was established for mid-June 2007. However, during the period before the scheduled election, large ethnically based groups expressed growing

dissatisfaction with the performance of the Interim Government. Madhesi political leaders from the southern Terai region were particularly vociferous in their claims that had resonance among a variety of other political and pressure groups (based mostly on ethnicity, caste and region) whose voices to a large extent had remained unheard in Nepal's democratic history and who also called for a greater role in the framing of Nepal's political future. In early 2007, their protest campaigns took a serious and violent turn. Coupled with the increasingly vocal calls, the logistical challenges, political disagreements in Kathmandu and the lack of adequate preparations the elections were postponed. (EU EOM Final Report 2008)

A new date, 22 November 2007, was chosen to hold the election. The Interim Government took gradual steps to address the mounting pressure but it was not until two major agreements were negotiated and subsequently signed in August 2007 that the agitating groups felt their demands were taken seriously. (ibid)

In the period preceding the November 2007 election date the parties to the peace process failed to make progress on their agreements that fostered new levels of mistrust and criticism. On one side there was growing frustration among the traditional political parties at the Maoist refusal to abide by democratic norms, while the Maoist, on their side, blamed the traditional elites for lack of commitment to fundamental socio-economic reforms and the restructuring of the state, particularly in relation to integration of Maoist members from the PLA into the Nepalese Army. Other stumbling blocks included a new set of demands by Maoists that Nepal be declared a republic and the adoption of a fully proportional representation election system. This increasingly acrimonious political situation led to a Maoist decision in September 2007 to leave the Interim Government. With the withdrawal of Maoist participation from the Interim Government, the planned November Constituent Assembly election would have gone ahead without one of the key parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Reflecting a growing political crisis the larger parties did not submit their lists of candidates before the deadline for registration, effectively forcing the second postponement of the elections. (ibid)

After lengthy negotiations, the political deadlock was broken on 23 December 2007 with leaders of the main political parties signing a 23-point agreement that led to the Maoists rejoining the government. The agreement included *inter alia* commitment to hold the Constituent Assembly election in mid-April 2008. On 28 December, the Interim Parliament approved a bill for the third amendment to the Interim Constitution, which increased the

number of seats to be elected by proportional representation and the total of appointed members of the Constituent Assembly. It also declared Nepal a republic, subject to ratification at the first meeting of the new Constituent Assembly and this met a central demand of the Maoists in return for their participation in the election. The Cabinet announced on 11 January 2008 a new date for the election for the third time, 10 April 2008. However, Madhesi leaders frustrated with lack of progress in granting them greater recognition in the political sphere and more representation in state structures in February 2008 called for strikes and blockades in the Terai region and threatened to boycott the election. Protest actions blocked main supply routes to Kathmandu and other parts of the country in protest actions. There was some initial resistance by the Interim Government to give in to new demands raised by the Madhesi groups; however, additional agreements were reached on 28 February and 1 March 2008 ending the threat of boycott. (ibid)

The backdrop to the election had therefore been one of almost constant disputes between rival political parties as well as disruptions created as a result of ethnic groups demanding increased rights and recognition. The final agreements both between the political parties and these parties and the mainstream Madhesi parties finally established the conditions for an inclusive election process with all major societal groups and political parties participating in the contest for seats in the Constituent Assembly. Armed militant groups opposing the election were, however, still active in the country. Given the overall lack of law and order, the security situation remained a central concern throughout the peace process, not least in the context of election preparations. This, coupled with a poor human rights record and a culture of impunity, were reasons to why the state still remained very weak in many parts of the country, and problems with security, with prosecuting criminal activities and protecting human rights persisted (ibid)

1.1.6 The Young Communist League

The Young Communist League (YCL) is the youth wing of the Maoist party that was formed at some point during the ‘people’s war’ to support the revolution. YCL was re-established in December 2006 by the Maoist Central Committee as a newly affiliated organization of the Maoist party and has a growing presence throughout the country, in all regions, districts and Village Development Committees (VDCs). 1 Many of the members of YCL Central

Committee are former People's Liberation Army (PLA) commanders and commissars who left the PLA and transferred to the YCL rather than assembling in the PLA cantonment sites subsequently set up as part of the peace agreement. In addition, YCL leaders at regional and district levels also include former PLA commanders or militia members. YCL representatives have informed OHCHR that their membership base is aged between 16 and 40 years old. Child protection agencies in one region have noted the presence of a small number of recruits to the YCL under 18, the youngest being 13 years old. Some of them said they had previously been PLA members and had subsequently been involved in the YCL's "law enforcement" activities (OCHA 2007)

South Asia Intelligence Review claims that even though YCL leaders claim that their cadres are unarmed young men without any formal military training, it is, widely known that YCL cadres receive extensive training in armed combat. Prashant Jah, a well known Nepali journalist, names the YCL the most controversial, but effective, instrument in the Maoist organization:

Led by former fighters, the YCL was a politico-military organization which behaved like a parallel legal machinery. To win popular support, it cleared traffic, cleaned garbage, expanded roads, and nabbed criminals including bank defaulters. But it evoked fear among rivals with its use of violence and threats. YCL was the final word on who would win government contracts and tenders at the local level. It was an agency for 'fund collection', which often translated into extortion; a de-facto mediator of conflicts in many cases; and a powerful instrument to expand the party's control through persuasion and coercion before the elections. (Jha 2010)

1.2 The media in Nepal

According to Onta (2005) there are several structural weaknesses of Nepali media that limit its potential as a vibrant force of the democratization of Nepali society: Kathmandu centric; ownership patterns (relevant to print media here is commercial interest compromising editorial imperatives); gender, ethnic and cast composition in editorial and managerial staff (few women, dalits and ethnic minorities), patriotism and self-censorship; cronyism in donor support. These are all relevant points to keep in mind when reading results from the quantitative and qualitative analysis in chapter four, five and six.

I will further in this chapter mainly focus on the state's media legislation, the status of print media, and the relationship between the media and the Maoists.

1.2.1 The Nepali press before the civil war

Gorkhapatra weekly was published on 6 May 1901, under the rule of the Ranas, although not the very first Nepali publication²⁰, it marks what is considered to be the beginning of newspaper tradition within Nepal. (Adhikari, 2008:323) Its operation was fully controlled by the Ranas and their functionaries. One other single publication, Sharada, was allowed to be published in Kathmandu from 1934, but its editors were careful not to upset the regime. (Onta 2005)

Radio sets were brought into Nepal from the late 1920s, but those in possession of such had to seek special permission. During WWII even the few permitted radios were seized, as the Ranas did not want the public listening to broadcasts that could have a detrimental impact on how they justified their support to the allied forces²¹. (ibid)

After the fall of the Ranas, came a new era for Nepali journalism. Immediately after the announcement of democracy the first daily newspaper of Nepal, Awaj, was published, and the real development of mass media in Nepal started with many publications following suit, not only in Kathmandu, but also in other parts of the country. Newspapers were published in Nepali, English, Hindi, Maithali, Newari etc, thus increasing the access of people to mass media (Adhikary 2008)

This period also saw growing numbers of libraries, schools, colleges, periodicals and books, as Nepalis started exercising their newly won freedom of speech and expression granted by the Interim Government of Nepal Act of 2007 (1951). But the Press and Publications Act 2008 and 2009²² also limited these freedoms, e.g. by listing 'crimes' that the printed matters had to avoid. (Onta 2005)

The first democratic period in Nepal, as shown above, did not last very long. After king Mahendra's take over, he set out to control the available means of communication and establish offices that could be used to disseminate government messages and censor items that could damage its interest. Editors who remained critical of the King's regime were punished, and several news papers were banned. (Onta 2005) And although statistics show significant development (literacy, infrastructure) during the Panchayat era, little is said about the quality.

²⁰ Which was the Saudhasagar published in 1898

²¹ Nepal committed large numbers of its own troops and Ghurka soldiers to the British during WWII

²² Press and Publication Registration Act 2008 and Press and Publication Act 2009

Control of the media during this time took the form of both direct and indirect censorship. All party newspapers were closed down in January 1960. In 1963 the Press and Publication Registration Act was passed. The Act imposed strict rules on publishers and the revision in 1966 allowed for an automatic ban on any publication which failed to fulfill the requirements. The revised act imposed expensive minimum levels of collateral that the publishers had to provide as guarantee. (Wilmore 2008)

In 1985 a committee of government appointees (selected from ranks of government and the Nepal Journalist Association) was formed to deal with distribution of state resources to publications. 'This measure, combined with the overwhelming dominance of the government's contribution to the advertising revenue that most publications relied upon, meant that even the supposedly private press in Nepal, never mind the newspapers published by the state-owned Gorkhapatra Corporation, were dominated by the Panchayat government' (Wilmore 2008:73)

Gorkhapatra was converted into a big sized daily from February 1961, and in December 1965 The Rising Nepal was published in English.

However, given the high illiteracy rate and difficulties with transport, Radio Nepal (the only radio station in Nepal, obviously state owned) was by far the more attractive among the media used by the Panchayat state. (Onta 2005)

The announcement of a national referendum regarding the question of multiparty system versus 'improved' Panchayat system, forced the regime to relax its control over freedom of speech and expression in order for the referendum to be seen as legitimate. Oppositional and private newspapers took advantage of this relatively open environment leading up to the referendum in May 1980. This, according to analysts, had a lasting impact on Nepali press, but after the referendum was passed in favor of the Panchayat system, the extra freedoms were yet again withdrawn. (ibid)

The Jana Andolan of 1990 put an end to the Panchayat system, and the Constitution of Nepal 1990 was a landmark document in the history of Nepal for the guarantees it provided as fundamental rights of the citizens. (ibid) Nepal saw a media boom in the 1990s. The most powerful media in Nepal were all state owned in the beginning of the decade, '*The Gokhapatra Sansthan*', a '*corporation*' under government control, produced the two most important daily newspapers, '*Gorkhapatra*' (in Nepali) and '*The Rising Nepal*' (in English)

(Ibid:1). But they soon faced stiff competition from private sector publications. In 1993 a new era in print journalism began with the launch of two private sector broadsheet dailies, *Kantipur* in Nepali, and *The Kathmandu Post* in English. (ibid)

1.2.2 The press during civil war

When a state of emergency was imposed 26 November 2001, following the Maoist attacks on army barracks in Dang, the articles 12(2)(a), (b) and (d) concerning freedom of thought and expression; freedom to assemble peacefully and without arms; and freedom to move and reside in any part of Nepal, article 13(1) concerning the right against pre-publication censorship, and article 16 concerning right to information, among others, were all suspended by the Terrorist and Disruptive Acts (Control and Punishment) Ordinance (TADA) 2058 v.s. (2001). (Onta 2006:152) Thus, the environment for press freedom deteriorated abruptly. Among the first moves by the government after the ceasefire broke was to raid the offices of pro Maoist publications. On 28 November the government also published a set of ‘guidelines’ detailing what the press could and could not report. (Bhattarai 2004:1)

By the time the state of emergency ended in August 2002 around 180 journalists had been arrested or detained by security forces. Reporters sans Frontiers said on August 13 that PM Deuba had turned Nepal into the ‘*world’s biggest prison for journalists*’. (Bhattarai 2004:3)

Binod Bhattarai’s (2004) analysis²³ of media during the first six months of emergency concluded that not only did it mirror the lapses in coverage during the specific period, ‘*but also the shortcomings of the printed press in general*’. (Bhattarai 2004:53) Most of the papers had taken the government’s side in the early days of the emergency, the bias being evident not only in op-eds and editorials, but also in news reports. (ibid) Bhattarai highlights the lack of balance due to reports being based on single sources. The papers relied heavily on official sources the first months, but gradually and over time started to use other sources (locals, eye-witnesses, opposition parties).

²³ Six Nepali-language dailies were reviewed, among them *Kantipur* and *Gorkhapatra* as mentioned sister publications of *The Kathmandu Post* and *The Rising Nepal*

1.2.3 The Media and the Maoists

As shown above, control over information and the media has been sought after by the Nepali state for years. But it's interesting also to look closer into the Maoists relationship with the media and the party's practice regarding freedom of expression.

Onta (2005) says when the Maoists began their campaign in 1996, the Nepali political establishment was quick to condemn their acts while offering little serious political analysis of the forty-point demand presented by Baburam Bhattarai. The Nepali media, however, began to report incidents of murder and other 'actions' by the Maoists.

As the insurgency grew, the Nepali media could not adequately cover ground-level events and instead, they began to criticize the government for allowing the Maoist problem to fester. The Nepali mainstream media consistently avoided any serious analysis of the links between socio-economic conditions and the rise of armed insurgency in the early days of the Maoist campaign and as advocates of what the Maoists would call the *sudharbadi* (reformist or gradualist) school of social change, the Nepali media deprecated the Maoists in the early days of war. (Onta 2005)

As the Maoist campaign grew, media persons began to be more directly affected by the violence and the simultaneous inefficacy of successive governments. The government's inability to deal with the Maoists and explicit and implicit threats the Maoist ideologues and cadres started to deliver to media persons who had written negatively about them, are some explanations to why more sympathetic reporting on the Maoists followed. (ibid)

The Maoists eventually started to invite members of the mainstream press to visit territories under their control. In terms of the tactics of information politics, this was a brilliant move. These Maoist-sponsored visits resulted in a new genre of 'travel reportage' by reporters of the mainstream press. Except for one or two write-ups, most of these reports of 'guided tours' were overtly sympathetic to the Maoists. These writings, often accompanied by photographs showing Maoist guerrillas posing with their weapons, peaked between mid 2000 and the mid 2001.

Reportage on the Maoists begun to change after most of the mainstream newspapers printed photographs of the Maoist-induced carnage at Naumule, Dailekh in early April 2001. In particular, the photo of the wife of a policeman killed in that attack weeping over her husband's body, taken by Chandrasekhar Karki (*Kantipur*, 8 April 2001, generated a mood in which tame travel reportage could no longer make good copy. Instead, the *swajanko bilap* ('Lamentation of the victims' relatives') genre of reporting, stories on the bereaved victims of Maoist violence, really took off.

1.2.4 The CA media monitoring campaign

The report Campaign 2008 assesses the nature and characteristics of the CA polls of April 10, 2008, built on the findings of the media monitoring program, a special undertaking by Press Council Nepal. The monitoring program began with the objective to assess the nature of media access to political parties and their candidates, balance in the coverage of their viewpoints, the range and adequacy of voters' education programs, the representation of Election Commission and communication of its messages, and the observance of Election Code of Conduct by the mass media. The time period of the study was 9 March – 13 April. Kathmandu Post and its Nepali counterpart Kantipur was part of the quantitative part of the analysis, but not The Rising Nepal, its sister publication Gorkhapatra was the only representative of state owned print daily.

Findings from Campaign 2008 include, as experienced in many past elections and as feared by some analysts, that media coverage focused on a few major political parties. According to the final report the tone of reporting, however, was largely neutral.

The quantitative and textual analysis showed, among other things, that:

- Of the 54 parties contesting the CA polls, only a few political parties got most of the air and print space
- Most news media gave prominent total time and space coverage to NC, followed by UML and CPN (M). They collectively got about three quarters of the total time and space in coverage

- Direct speech opportunities given by news media were, however, divided among NC, CPN (M) and UML, with NC maintaining a slight lead over those two
- NC, followed by UML, earned the largest total time coverage in government media, but CPN (M) gained the largest share of direct speech in those media
- NC led in news coverage, news headlines and EC-related election programs, the Maoists figured most prominently in news commentaries, interaction and interview programs in all media, and UML got the largest coverage in talk shows that involved multiple actors
- NC, UML, Maoist and RPP, in that order, got most of the print space in the coverage of main news
- The UML gained the largest share of paid advertisement airtime and free airtime and NC and Maoist, neck and neck, dominated others in photographic or visual coverage
- CPN (Maoist)'s Pushpa Kamal Dahal gained the highest coverage among all candidates in total time and direct speech in all media. The Election Commission and its commissioners earned the second largest time coverage and the fourth slot in space coverage among all relevant actors
- Region, ethnicity-based, and royalist parties, and independent candidates were given minimal broadcast and print coverage, both in total time and direct speech
- Most of the prominent coverage went to male candidates and candidates running for First Past the Post
- The tone of coverage was largely neutral for all parties, but most smaller and ethnicity-based parties gained more positive coverage
- Tarai-based and pro-king parties were more negatively covered than the major political parties

- The private media gave more prominence to the NC and the UML. The CPN (Maoist) got more quality time in the state media.
- Coverage was personality-driven and mainly focused on select leaders or candidates from the Seven Party Alliance.

1.3 Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have strived to make some sense of the complex political situation in Nepal. It is my firm belief that any efforts in analyzing media content and the coverage of the Maoists during the time of preparations for CA elections in Nepal would be useless without a thorough examination of the political history of the country. That said, this must not be seen as a total picture. I have focused on the history of state and political actors, mainly on the left, thus the ethnic, religious and cultural dimensions are only mentioned briefly. And I have, consciously, left out examining further the Madhes issue, another important political issue in the CA elections. For those who might be interested in this, the writings of Prasant Jah in The Nepali Times (www.nepalitimes.com) are a good place to start.

To sum up, I think it's fair to say that the instability in the government in Nepal over a long period, and the quite recent armed conflict, make for a political situation that is difficult to follow both for outsiders and insiders.

2 Theory: Media in democracy, conflict and the in-between

As shown in the background chapter (chapter one) , the situation in Nepal at the time of the last preparations to the Constituent Assembly Elections in 2008, is, at its best an over-complex state in democratic transition, at its worst still resembling a country at war.

Commonly used theories about the role of the media in society and politics are oriented towards the western experience, drawing largely upon the development of modern western democracies. Nepal being in transition, evolving from a long history of autocratic rule and feudal structures on one side, and a very recent history of civil war which the CA elections to come are hopefully going to end formally, is difficult to place in theoretical context. Not to mention that the country is poor, ethnically diverse and with an inherent peculiar caste and class structure closely connected to Hindu culture.

In an effort to theorize over the role of media in the somewhat fragmented Nepali context, I will further in this chapter draw on some widely accepted theories and models from a western perspective, before continuing to look into theories targeting the challenges of media in developing and transitional society specifically. Finally I look into theories on the role of media in conflict, focusing on content implications for media operating in conflict situation and violence reporting.

2.1 Media and political power – the western perspective

‘Content matters only because it has an effect,’ says John Street (Street 2001:80) about media’s influence on politics. The expectation that journalism has an important role to play in politics can be traced back in history to works of various scholars who independently studied the relationship between press, public opinion and politics. Zelitzer (2004) refers among others to the works of Walter Lippman (1922/60) on formation of public opinion, Gabriel Tarde (1898 1901/69) on journalism as fuelling the conversation that make democratic action possible, Ferdinand Tonnies (1923/71) on press as an instrument used by governments to shape public opinion and John Dewey (1927/54) on journalism as means to ensure autonomy and vitality of the public. (Zelitzer, 2004:146-147)

Explaining power of media in society, journalism is often described as a fourth estate of government understood as a check and balance mechanism on other powers of state (executive, judicial and legislative). (Zelitzer 2004, Allan 2004). This, according to Allan (2004), charges journalism with the '*mission of ensuring that members of the public are able to draw upon a diverse 'market place of ideas to both sustain and challenge their sense of the world around them'*', and place the journalist at the centre of public life. Thus the news media, as facilitators of the formation of public opinion, are said to '*make democratic control over governing relations possible*'. (Allan 2004:47).

Allan also stresses that this view of journalism as a democratic function is contingent upon the realization of 'press freedom' as a principle safeguarded from any impediments associated with power and privilege. (ibid)

Similarly Voltmer (2006) lists three primary functions that established the normative justification of the political role of the media in (Western) democracies; the media as a marketplace of ideas (that goes back centuries), a forum where voices compete for recognition without interference from the state; media as a provider of 'quality information', and; media as a watchdog (fourth estate of government). (Voltmer 2006:2-5).

2.1.1 A Propaganda model

In the following I discuss the Propaganda model as set as set out by Herman and Chomsky in *Manufacturing Consent* (1988), that argues against the, somewhat, elevated political role of media as independent actor in democracy. I will come back to definitions of propaganda and how it more specifically relates to media in conflict later in this chapter.

Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda model draws on Marxist ideology to explain the complex dynamics of the corporate world, media and politics. In this model, they argue (from an American viewpoint), that there exist an institutional bias in the commercial news media that guarantees the mobilization of certain 'propaganda campaigns' on behalf of elite consensus, thus this system is far more credible and effective in putting over a patriotic agenda than one based on official censorship. The propaganda model describes five editorially-distorting filters applied to news reporting in mass media:

(1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) "anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism. These elements interact with and reinforce one another. The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns. (Herman and Chomsky 1988)

When *Manufacturing Consent* was first published in 1988, the Cold War had marked the political scene in the USA for years, and revolutions in Cuba, China and The Soviet had scared the Western elites. '*Communism as the ultimate evil has always been the specter haunting property owners, as it threatens the very root of their class position and superior status.*' (Herman and Chomsky 1988:29)

In the post cold war period the anticommunism filter in the Propaganda model is thought to have lost relevance, but Herman and Chomsky suggest that even though anti-communism has receded as an ideological factor in the Western media, it is not dead, but:

'still used when needed to denigrate individuals who can be tied to Stalin or Mao or Soviet Russia more broadly (e.g. Milosevic), and the crimes of Stalin or Mao and the Black Book of Communism can be featured periodically to warn against socialism and wrong-headed state intervention. The 'war on terror' has provided a useful substitute for the Soviet Menace. Also, the antithesis of communism, the 'free market,' has been elevated to more prominent ideological status, and has proven to be a strong co-replacement for anti- communism and the basis for the new world order of neoliberalism now in some disarray but without an ideological rival resting on any kind of power base.' (Herman and Chomsky interviewed by Mullen 2009)

In the case of Nepal, however, this specific anticommunist point in the Propaganda model can still be very much relevant, at a point in the state history when a Maoist party has the possibility to gain state power through democratic elections, (which they will as we know now). In the background chapter it has been pointed out both that landowners traditionally have also been power holders in Nepal, and that most media staff in Nepal, both editorial and managerial, belong to the privileged elite.

Robert Entman (1993) also focuses on how framing of news influence political decisions and suggests that inherent power structures of society infiltrate the news content. Framing, according to Entman means '*to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the*

item described.' (Entman 1993:52). Framing means that some aspects of reality are highlighted, whereas some are made invisible. (ibid:53) Frames are of importance when it comes to how the receiver understand, evaluate and responds to a problem, thus framing is a significant power tool; *'the frame in a news text is really the imprint of power – it registers the identity of actors or interests that competed to dominate the text.* (ibid: 55)

The amount of research on this relationship between the media and the state indicate that the media has an effect on politics, but what the effects are, and how they manifest are not easy to analyze, in Streets words;

There would be no interest from so many to devout themselves to media research if media content was seen as unconnected to the real world of politics. But it is very difficult to state the direct cause and effect of media content on people's actions. For instance it is common to distinguish between mass media effects on voting and effects on perception, meaning it being perfectly possible for media to have an effect on how people think about politics, without being able to steer concrete actions. (Street 2001:84)

2.2 Media and power – development and democratic transition

The models presented above focus on, and came into existence in, a modern Western democratic context. The book *Four Theories of the Press* (Siebert et al 1956) gave an advanced and enormously influential geo-political view on the world's media system, dividing the world into three camps; the free world of liberal democracies; the Soviet-totalitarian sphere; and authoritarian societies (including most developing countries, the fascist experience and the West in pre-democratic phase). Following this model a dominant modernization theory developed which assumed that the developing world would imitate the West and that a free and modern mass media would contribute to this transition to modernity by extending the horizon of the public and making them a participating public essential for democracy. (Curran and Park 2000:4f)

This was not however how modernization took place in many developing countries, and the media system was more often directed toward maintaining control than educating people for democracy. (ibid)

Development journalism is often touted as more applicable to Asian countries than the western liberal approach, for historical and cultural reasons. Proponents see its premise of media–government partnership as necessary for securing economic development for the country. (Kokkeong 2004). Adhikary (2008) suggests that apart from dissemination of information, two functions of development journalism are particularly emphasized; the motivation to active cooperation of the people affected and the active advocacy of their interests vis a vis the planners, respectively the government. While in the ideal case, development journalism is to be oriented to the needs of the population and focus the reporting on local and grass root agenda, the notion that one primary function of the media is to promote development, and particularly government development plans, can also serve to gag the media thus depriving the public of information and obscure their fundament for decision making.

Balnaves et al. (2009) draws on case studies on China and India, suggesting that it is impossible to exclude the role of ethnicity and social class as an important structure in any analysis of global media and power. (Balnaves et al. 2009:296)

Voltmer (2006) argues however that, the function of media as provider of ‘information quality’ and the need for orientation as pointed to earlier, are possibly of even more significance in new democracies:

When in established democracies citizens acquire their political knowledge over a long period of time, usually without making a particular effort to learn about political issues, citizens in new democracies have to cope with a large range of hitherto unknown institutions and procedures. (Voltmer 2004:4).

Voltmer assumes in these situations that media is often the main source of reliable information to the public, as other actors might have lost credibility or even ceased to exist (ibid).

Voltmer (2006) also argues in the case of ‘new democracies’ that *‘in the context of transition into democracy, the watchdog role of the media cannot be overstated, as one of the main tasks of democratization is to establish mechanisms that hold political elites accountable and responsive to people’* (ibid: 5). She notes however, that the relationship between the media and state in new democracies is more complex, acknowledging the paradox that the media’s ability to safeguard democratic accountability eventually depends on the degree to which political institutions have adopted democratic structures and procedures.

2.3 Media and conflict

In the pre-election situation of Nepal in 2008, the conflict is still very much alive, in hearts or minds of people, but also in real life through occurring violence and clashes. As explained in the background chapter (chapter 1) Nepal's post-conflict situation is also marked by the somewhat limited provisions for arms control in the peace agreement where, though agreeing to locking down weapons in storage under UN monitoring, the Maoists still hold the keys to these containers. This, in addition to the fact that main actors (Maoists) in the election are the same actors prominent during the conflict itself and that media personnel still experienced hostile²⁴, even life threatening working conditions, gives reason to assume that also common theories of role of the media in conflict may be applicable.

Since the end of the cold war, Africa and Asia are the regions with the highest concentration of violent conflicts, with most conflicts today being internal conflicts comprised of a state and one (or more) non-state actor(s). Unlike the conventional understanding of war as a struggle for territory through battles, it is winning the hearts and minds of people that is the focus in these types of wars.

Blondel (2003) points to that the characteristics of modern wars are not usually that of two legitimate armies fighting against each other, *'but of predominantly asymmetric (meaning an important power imbalance between the primary actors) power relations.'* (Blondel, 2003:9) According to Blondel it is important to point out, particularly in relation to the role of the media that this asymmetry, in terms of material and military capabilities, also applies to, (...) *less tangible components such as legitimacy.* '(Zartman (1995) quoted in Blondel 2003:9)

Legitimacy is accordingly also a key word in the state of political affairs in Nepal, from the early challenges to autocratic rule (Shah and Rana) to the final overthrow of monarchy, and the civil war, labeled a Maoist people's war by the actors, indicating that it is democratically legitimate and based on 'people's' opposition against the state and ruling class. According to Blondel (2003) the media, particularly in a domestic setting, is a key factor in the struggle for credibility between conflicting actors and for legitimacy between conflicting causes. (Blondel 2003:15)

²⁴ Nepal ranking number 8 on Committee to Protect Journalists Impunity list of 13 countries in 2008 that show unsolved murder on journalist per capita <http://cpj.org/reports/2008/04/getting-away-with-murder.php#more>

In Nepal's over-complex political situation many actors on the political arena are still the same as during the conflict, but the roles have shifted. The earlier Maoist insurgents are contesting in a democratic election side by side with the historically significant parties the NC and the UML which are represented by many of the same leaders that fought for democracy in the 1960's and 1970's. The King is still in his palace, but stripped of political power and general support. The Nepal Army is under civil command in accordance with the 2006 peace agreement, with its future organization and the possible integration of the Maoist Army on the forefront of tense political issues.

Blondel (2003) concludes that media plays a pivotal role in conflicts – as an arena and actor in the political system, highlighting the media's role in communicating attitudes and perceptions influencing credibility and legitimacy which is particularly relevant in weak states and situations of democratic transition when transfer of power is happening from elite to mass.

2.3.1 Characteristics of media in conflict

In the above I have showed theories on how media has been argued to play a significant role in conflict and post-conflict transition situations. But what about the influence of conflict on the media itself? Further in this chapter I will focus on some commonly accepted features and possible pitfalls of the media when reporting conflict, also drawing on some analysis from the normative concept of peace journalism.

2.3.1.1 Sources and control over media

Knightley (2003) shows how governments in all times have tried to control media during conflict, among other things through censorship, propaganda and by controlling journalist's access to the battlefield. Also Ottosen and Loustarinen (2002) claim that controlling the media's access is a vital strategy in exercising control of the media's coverage.

Schudson (2003) describes news sources as '*the deep, dark secret of the power of the press.*' (Schudson 2003:134), further saying that this power is much exercised by the sources that feed the news institutions with information, more often so-called authorized knowers commonly representing government officials. (ibid) Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) argue that '*a bias in favor of official sources is probably still the single most widespread convention in*

global news.' (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005:204), and as shown above, the media's reliance on official sources is also highlighted in the Propaganda model (Herman and Chomsky 1988).

In a conflict situation, when information often is scarce, the sources play a vital role in the media coverage. (Nord, Shehata and Strömäck 2003). According to Wolfsfeld (1997) as quoted in Blondel (2003) political power in a given society can usually be translated into power over the media. This is the case for both consolidated and non-consolidated democracies, and generally authorities are given important advantages. In relation to this decision makers are often the most important sources of information, and because of that they have the ability also to control much of it. (Van Ginneken (1998) quoted in Blondel 2003)

2.3.1.2 Propaganda

Ottosen and Loustarinen (2001) specially points to the possibility that media is being used for propaganda purposes by political actors in conflict. Oliver Boyd-Barrett argues that even the genre of traditional war reporting as such serves a propaganda purpose and that it '(...)
obfuscates the reasons why the media focus on some wars rather than others, often fail to capture both the deep-level and proximate causes of wars or explain their actual durations and aftermaths, and hide the extent of media manipulation by official monopolization of information flows.' (Boyd-Berrett in Allan and Zelizer (eds.), 2004:25)

Numerous approaches to the term propaganda exist. The definition of Jowett and O'Donnell (1999) is widely used, among others by Nordsteth and Ottosen (2001): '*Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to change perspectives, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.*' (Jowett and O'Donnell 2006:7).

This definition contrasts with the definition of Ellul (1973)²⁵ that claims that '*Only action is of concern to modern propaganda*' (Ellul 1973:25) Romarheim (2005) argues that Ellul in this '*underestimates the passive and sedating effect propaganda may have*' (Romarheim 2005:8), but also points to a minor problem involved in Jowett and O'Donnell's definition. According to Romarheim this problem is that it might be too wide and should include

²⁵ Propaganda is a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated in an organization (Ellul, 1973:61)

additional criteria to decrease the population found in the propaganda universe, thus Romarheim suggests combining elements of the two above definitions to make for a narrowed definition;

Propaganda is systematic strategic mass communication conveyed by an organization to shape perceptions and manipulate the cognitions of a specific audience. Its ultimate goal is to direct the audience's behavior to achieve a response that furthers the political objectives of the propaganda organization. (Romarheim 2005:5)

2.3.1.3 Violence focus and enemy images

According to Knightley (2000) war journalism is characterized by an identification with one side or with the home side of the war; military triumphantist language; an action orientation; and a superficial narrative with little context, background, or historical perspective.

(Knightley (2000) quoted in Lee and Maslog 2005). Not very positive characteristics, they indicate that it is difficult for news media to maintain commonly accepted standards for balanced journalism when they operate in a conflict situation.

One of the mentioned characteristics, journalism in war time being action oriented, is supported by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) who claim that *'War journalism is performed through a focus on overt acts of violence and on the most prominent national sufferings. It waits for and follows events, particularly violent tragedies'* (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005:). Boyd-Berret (2004) serves one plausible explanation: *'Classic warfare is the epitome of a 'good story', high in tension and drama, with complex main-plots and sub-plots played out within traditional binary oppositions of aggressor and victim, winner and loser'*. (Boyd-Berrett in Allan and Zelizer (eds.), 2004:26)

In a report commissioned by United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Frohardt and Temin (2003) also points to that when highlighting the fact that violent conflict has occurred in the past, and that the same groups are suspected of planning them now, the potential for future conflict can appear much greater than it actually is, and the means and capacity for carrying out such atrocities more attainable. Media can be used to make the point that *'they did it before, they can do it again.'* (Frohardt and Temin 2003:6)

Johan Galtung, founder of Peace Studies advocate for focus on conflict analysis in reporting rather than the traditional violence orientation, and states that

In general, there seem to be two ways of looking at a conflict, the high road and the low road, depending on whether the focus is on the conflict and its peaceful transformation, or on the meta conflict that comes after the root conflict, created by violence and war, and the question of who wins. Media even confuse the two, and talk about conflict when they mean violence.’ (Galtung 2002:259)

Quoting Philip Knightly (1975) Ottosen (1995) describes how an important element in war reporting is to ‘demonize’ the enemy. Thus enemy images, according to Ottosen, can be linked to the journalistic process itself. (Ottosen 1995:99) Referring to Dixon (1996) Blondel describes that ‘*violence usually results in the need to allocate blame and once a perpetrator is identified the process of building an enemy image begins. This includes a process of dehumanisation of the enemy that amplifies the difficulties in trying to manage the conflict or resolve the incompatibility*’. (Blondel 2003:18). Both Blondel and Ottosen though points to the dynamics of enemy images as shown in earlier research, that they can, and tend, to change. (Blondel 2003, Ottosen 1995)

The relevance of above definitions of propaganda and enemy imaging in the context of this thesis is somewhat debatable. Propaganda and enemy images in the classic sense can’t necessarily be identified through such an analysis, but as the following chapters will show elements of both are recognizable and prominent in the polemic.

It would be interesting to take a closer look on how enemy images of Maoist has changed over time in Nepal taking into account recent development after the CA elections. This can’t be covered in this thesis, but as other analysis showed in the background chapter suggest, the media coverage of the Maoists in Nepal have varied much from the coverage of the Maoist rebels in the early phase of insurgency to that of the Maoist party in time of CA elections.

2.3.2 The journalist in conflict

The debate on the ideal of objectivity is an exercise well known for media students, but, at least in Western media discourse, objectivity retains as a marker of good journalism that journalists strive for, despite challenges to the theoretical concept of objectivity as such. (Campbell 2004)

The journalist is not disconnected from society at large: *'When considering media, and particularly news media in tension areas, media structures usually reflect the political structures existent in the society at large.'* (Blondel 2003:14). Blondel concludes that, as journalists themselves who shape and are active in this arena, are products of social context, the media is not neutral observers. However, Blondel underlines that this does not mean that impartial and honest reporting doesn't exist. (ibid)

In the case of Nepal, as shown above, when the journalists (and editors) are tested on their objectivity, balance and accuracy, the threats and physical violence directed towards them must also be taken into notion before passing the judgment on their professional ability and possible inadequate attainment of common journalistic norms.

3 Selection and Method

This chapter show how data was collected and registered, and what methods were used in the analysis.

3.1 The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal

The two newspapers that are analyzed in this thesis, The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal, are chosen on the basis of being English sister publications of respectively the largest newspaper in Nepal, *Kantipur*, and the oldest newspaper in Nepal, *Gorkhapatra*. These are both published in Nepali language. The other main point is that behind them are two different owners, the government of Nepal owns The Rising Nepal and Kantipur Publications Pvt. Ltd., a private media house, owns The Kathmandu Post.

Gorkhapatra was first published in 1901 and was for many years the only newspaper in Nepal. The Rising Nepal in English was published in 1965. (I could not find updated numbers on circulation)

The Kathmandu Post and *Kantipur* were both launched in 1993, but have now the largest circulation in the country (*Kantipur* about 250 000 and The Kathmandu Post about 50 000 daily according to Kantipur Publication's own webpage)

3.2 Material selection

The main demarcation of this thesis is to show the coverage in The Rising Nepal and The Kathmandu Post in the time immediately before the Constituent Assembly elections on 10 April 2008. I have looked at the total election coverage from 31 March to 10 April in Kathmandu Post, and the same period except 9 April in The Rising Nepal. TRN issue 9 April was not found in the archive at Kathmandu University that in 2008 when I collected the

articles. Since TRN does not have an updated archive online it was difficult to get hold of this particular issue, and as my trip to Nepal in 2010 coincided with a one week long bandh (general strike) in Kathmandu called by the Maoists, I did not succeed in retrieving it then either. However, I don't think this in any way will affect the final results of my analysis, as I have no reason to believe that this issue would differ substantially from the others.

As said, I collected the articles from the archive in the library at Kathmandu University in Dhulikhel, Kavre district, Nepal. I looked through all the papers myself and had all front pages, news pages and editorial pages photocopied on campus.

There are many ways of measuring the thematic priorities of a newspaper, what is put on the front page, what has the biggest headlines, what has biggest pictures or illustrations, what covers the biggest physical area of the paper. I have decided to count articles, thus not divide between shorter or longer texts.

I have read and singled out all news articles that are related to the election in any way, news articles here being defined as the articles that are printed on the news pages as defined by the newspapers themselves (References made to the CA elections in articles in the business section and sports section are thus not included). The total number of news articles is 330, 171 in The Kathmandu Post and 159 in The Rising Nepal.

All editorials and op-eds about the CA election that in one way or another refers to any of the big three's political actors (as party or individuals) are singled out, they number 11 editorials and 14 op-eds. These are handled separately in chapter 5.

3.3 Validity and reliability

The strength of quantitative analysis is high reliability, whereas qualitative analysis can have high validity. (Østbye et al. 1997:27) The reliability of an analysis is tested according to how the coding of the data leading to the numbers in the data matrix is executed, and refers to the precision of this process. Since I am the only one in charge of coding the data, intra subjectivity may be low, meaning that another person might get a different result from coding the same data. In order to meet this challenge, I have double coded the whole selection. As it is important that there is an adequate amount of time between the first and second coding, the period between have been six months. My reliability percentage is 97%.

3.3.1 Triangulation

The combination of different methods is called triangulation, which can enhance the validity of the analysis (Østbye et al. 1997:101). Quantitative analysis (content analysis) and qualitative analysis (text analysis) are traditionally thought as opposites. Hjarvard (1997) among others, however argue that the analysis can benefit from this method combination. While qualitative analysis focuses on one single situation, the quantitative analysis focuses on common features. Both methods however require that methodological procedures are accounted for. I tried to incorporate the concept of triangulation in the analysis and have used both quantitative content analysis and qualitative text analysis. As I only managed to conduct one qualitative interview (which I explain further in this chapter in point 3.6 Qualitative interview), however, I only partly succeeded in following the triangulation advice.

3.4 Quantitative content analysis

Kerlinger (1986) defines content analysis as a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables.

Systematicism is required not to leave the analysis random, thus rules for handling data are established beforehand. Objectivity is to avoid data collection being marked by the researchers own opinions and evaluations. That said, full objectivity is not possible, as all forms of content analysis require that the researchers use their own judgment in categorizing and processing the data variables. Thus there are inherent qualitative aspects also in quantitative content analysis.

3.4.2 Topics

The topic variable is coded on two stages, first overall thematic classification of all the news articles, then on the second stage the category Violence has been broken down into more

specific topics. The main purpose of this first classification is to give the broad picture of the two papers election coverage, in order to say something about their overall thematic priorities. The second classification goes more directly into the core of my research question.

Since an article often includes more than one topic, there has to be criteria for how to place an article into a category. According to van Dijk (1988) most readers remember only the topic in the headline, ingress and beginning of the article. (van Dijk 1988:14) Thus, when coding, if the article covers more than one thematic focus, I have placed it in a category based on a combined analysis of; heading, what is highlighted in the beginning of the article²⁶, and the overall content. The superior thematic categories are intentionally kept broad, and, as mentioned above, I have broken down one of the categories, violence, further using the same combination of headline and focus in the beginning of the article, but here stressed even more the overall topic as presented throughout the article. In doing so, the qualitative aspects of the quantitative method appear even more evident.

3.4.2.1 Definitions and criteria used in coding all the news articles

Election information: Contains practical information from the Election Commission (e.g. printing of ballots, election booths) and non-party election rallies not focusing on violence/ anti violence, I have also included general ‘good luck with the election’ statements from organizations and international actors. The category also covers news articles about how people are preparing for elections (e.g. foreign Nepalis returning home to vote).

Political process: Parties having meeting not addressing violence but more general, (like female politicians about gender), answering questions for voters, and direct co-op between parties. This category also include all ‘poll snippets’²⁷ and information related to candidates and parties in the different constituencies.

Juridical, rights oriented: Violations of election code of conduct, human rights, monitoring (not violence security oriented), issues of free and fair polls, not related specifically to violence and threat of violence.

²⁶ It would have been logic to use the content of ingress as a factor in this, but neither of the analyzed news papers structures the articles in that way that they contain ingresses.

²⁷ Articles that contain small election related updates from across the country – in the RN it is

Campaign: Party campaign about New Nepal, predicting poll results, and from other sources focusing on Nepal post-election and conspiracies related to polling (this has been singled out from the juridical category – because it is much more speculative expressions)

Violence: This category is kept very wide due to its significance for the research question, and is broken down further. I have included in this category all reported violent actions (including abductions, attack on property, seizing of weapons), stated anticipation of violence, and specific calls for non-violence including specific commitment to non-violence, and also statements and reports dealing with security issues including army/PLA issues that don't speak solely of future integration issues.

Why have I coded commitment to non-violence in this category? This is because the calls for non-violence in this context can be seen as drawing attention to the presence of violence. When such is reported in the press, it's implicit that a threat of violence is present. In a non-violent political environment the call for non-violence will not be covered by the media, as reporting the call presupposes an actual threat of violence.

Articles covering the security situation, call for strengthened security and reports of strengthened security are included for much the same reasons as mentioned above: A call for strengthened security implies that the security situation is not good enough in the first place and indicates an actual threat of violence.

Articles about (possible) PLA and army mobilization are included because also these could be interpreted as drawing attention to threats of violence and anticipation of more violence in the future.

3.4.2.2 Definitions and criteria used in coding the article in topic category 'violence'

Violent actions: this category includes all articles where violent actions are reported, be it clashes among parties or attacks. I have included terror acts here as well.

PLA/army: Where PLA or army mobilization, or the possibility of such, are the main story.

Concern over credibility: All articles about violence where the focus in the article is concern about the elections being held in a free fair manner.

Commitment to anti-violence: Where the main story is parties or representatives of parties committing to anti-violence.

Security issues: Articles that highlight security issues, both assurances that security is adequate and reports about how security is strengthened or when strengthened security is called for.

Mosques Blast: All articles that cover the Mosque blast in Biratnagar. (This is connected to the tense situation in the Terai, which I have decided to leave out of this analysis. See also concluding remarks in chapter one)

3.4.3 Sources

Although the study of sources is not necessarily relevant when it comes to answering the research question and test the hypothesis, I find it interesting in itself to give a brief account of what type of sources and how much of the coverage are based on single sources and how the distribution according to political party is. It says something about how the news articles that are analyzed further are produced and it also sheds light on some of the theories explained in chapter three.

Political scientist Leon Sigal describes news as not being what happens, but what someone says has happened or will happen (Sigal quoted in Schudson 2003:134). I have analyzed the use of sources in the news articles quantitatively to give an overview of what type of sources are used and how many articles are based on single sources. I have also divided the distribution of sources according to party when stated in the text. Here I have only named the NC, UML and Maoist and put all others in the category: Other.

Sources are divided in to these categories:

Elite in Nepal – army, police, government officials

Politicians

Common people – regular voters where no party affiliation is revealed

Foreign elite – officials and representatives of international organization

Civil society in Nepal – NGOs and professional organizations/federations

The articles have been analyzed also according to having used 1 source, 2 or more sources or no sources (where no source is revealed), and I also show the distribution of party affiliated sources divided into four categories: NC, UML, Maoist and other.

Sources are categorized as a type of source according to the above also when the source is revealed only by position or occupation (e.g. A UML leader said...)

3.4.4 Framing

All articles in the category ‘violent actions’ (after separating the articles about bombs and seized weapons) and ‘concern over credibility’ are analyzed using Entman’s term framing to test the hypothesis that Maoist are framed as main aggressors of violence. The articles are divided in two – Maoist aggressor and other (or unidentified) aggressor. Since the main focus of this thesis is on the Maoists I have not divided this into more than two categories, but looking more closely on the ‘other’ category would in a different case be interesting.

The articles in Concern over credibility are also divided into two categories over the same principle – Maoist as an identified main threat or other (or unidentified) as main threat.

Through his examples Entman (1993) identifies four locations of frames in the communication process; (1) When the communicator makes conscious or unconscious framing judgments in deciding what to say; (2) in the text where frames are manifested by the presence or absence of key words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts and judgments; (3) how the receiver reacts to what is communicated, guided by frames that might or might not reflect the frames in the text and the framing intentions; (4) The culture is the stock of commonly invoked frames.

3.5 Qualitative Text Analysis

Text analysis seeks to find the underlying meaning of a text. (Hellevik 1991:153) This method is applied both in chapter five when analyzing editorials and op-eds, and chapter six when analyzing selected news articles from the category ‘violence’ as explained earlier in this chapter.

3.5.1 Rhetorical analysis

Rhetoric defined is the ability in any particular case to see the available means of persuasion or simply; the art of persuasion. (Jor 2000:20) This definition is from Aristotle's classic work Rhetoric. Core terms in rhetoric are the three types of rhetorical appeals also named by Aristotle; ethos, pathos and logos. Logos appeals to reason, intellect and the strength of argument separated from emotion. Ethos's appeal is relates to the listener's (or reader's) faith in the speaker, whose influence often depends on this. Pathos (passion) appeals to emotions. (Roksvold 1989:16)

The two levels of semiotics are also relevant in rhetorical analysis: Denotation (lexical meaning of word) and connotation (figurative meaning of word). According to Engebretsen (2005) language influence the reader through conscious or unconscious utilization of the connotative value of the word.

Tveiten and Nohrstedt (2002) highlights that the use of rhetorical analysis is much relevant when analysing media content produced in a conflict situation because the role of the media in wartime is much more than senders, contents, structures, and effects. They describe this as an *'extraordinary situation, where participants in a given collective event are brought together in a process of heightened tension, that rhetorical analysis most clearly comes into question. These are situations where a few selected words might make all the difference.'* (Tveiten and Nohrstedt 2002: 135-36).

Drawing on points from chapter two, Theory, I will in chapter five, Views and Opinions, focus on the words that are used to describe the Maoists and the other relevant actors, taking into account the classic rhetorical appeals when considered relevant.

In chapter six, Violent News, however, I focus in particular on how blame is allocated, and how TRN and KP differ in their accounts of reported events.

I also want to make one clarification, similar to that of Linge (2003): When I analyse the texts and arguments, it is the expression's potential that is analysed, not their actual effect on public opinion of which I have no systematic knowledge. (Linge 2003:8)

3.6 Qualitative interview

I initially wanted to interview the editors of both The Rising Nepal and the Kathmandu Post in order to get their reflections on their own newspaper's pre-election coverage. This could give valuable information about the priorities that were made and the journalistic process. I was in Kathmandu in April/May 2010 planning to conduct these interviews. Unfortunately, after returning to Kathmandu after a few weeks travelling to other parts of Nepal, the Maoists staged big protests in Kathmandu with the result that travelling was limited to distance that could be covered on foot. I had to give up meeting the editors. I managed, however, to get some answers from Prateek Pradhan, editor of Kathmandu Post at the time of the election, via e-mail. As two years had gone by since the election, there has been much time for analysis, something that possibly has affected the answers about the coverage. I will draw on some of Pradhans points in the analysis.

3.7 Source critic

In this thesis, especially when writing the background chapter a critical view on the sources have been crucial. Accounts of history can vary greatly depending on who's telling the story. In the case of politics and conflict the different sides and parties will often hold competing views. The background chapter of the thesis is based on literature and reports published both in and outside of Nepal Especially when writing about the modern political history and the civil war, I have been careful to consult different sources and avoid politically biased sources to my best knowledge.

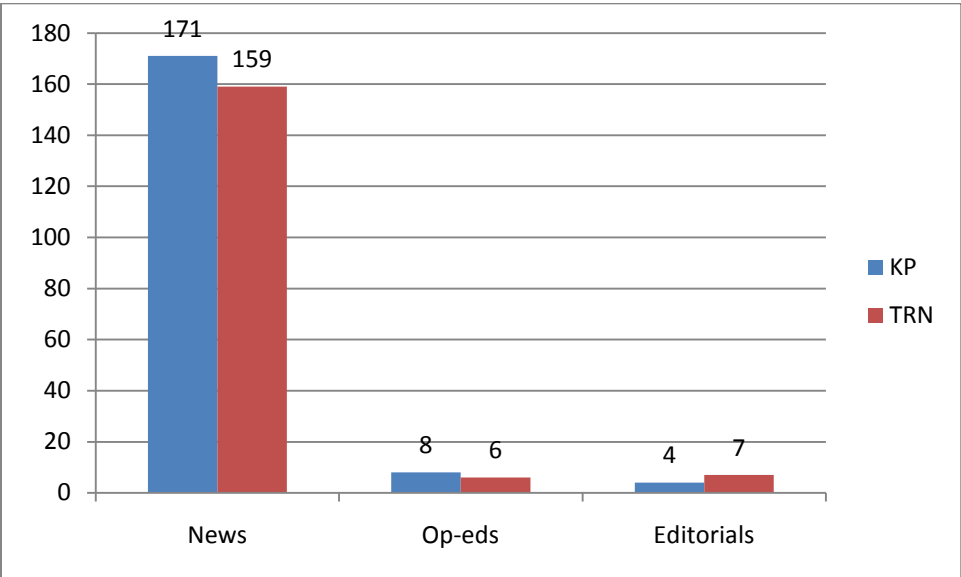
It should also be stated clearly that I as a Norwegian, when writing about the media and politics in Nepal, have possible shortcomings when it comes to understanding communication produced in a socio-cultural context that differs from my own.

4 Quantitative analysis: Topics and sources

The aim of this chapter is to give a general overview of what The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal wrote about the election. "

4.1 Total selection

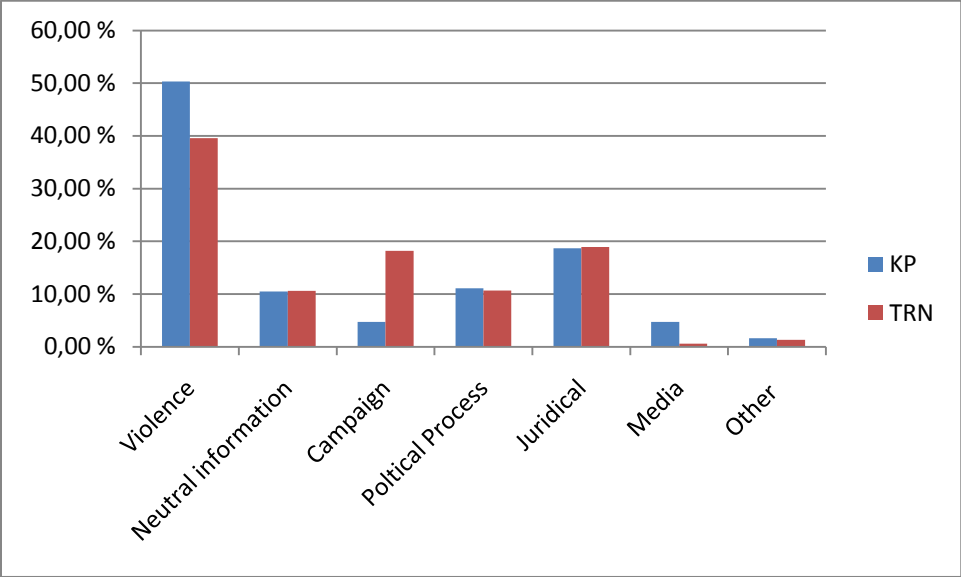
Table 1: The total selection of articles



As described in chapter 3 Method, this table show all the articles that have been analyzed either quantitatively or qualitatively. The total number of articles is 355.

4.2 Thematic priorities

Table 2 Thematic priorities in both newspapers:



N = 330 (Kathmandu Post 171, The Rising Nepal 159)

As the table shows ‘violence’ is clearly the largest category in both papers while ‘juridical and rights’ is the second largest category in both papers. The categories ‘political process’ and ‘neutral information’ is the third and fourth largest in KP. The ‘campaign’ category is the third largest in TRN, with ‘political process’ and ‘neutral information’ coming in the on fourth and fifth.

One conclusion can be drawn already from the results in this table. It shows that the raw thematic priorities of the two papers are quite similar in what they give thematic priority (violence, political process and neutral information), but with differences in two categories; TRN giving more priority to campaign content and KP more to media.

4.2.1 Violence

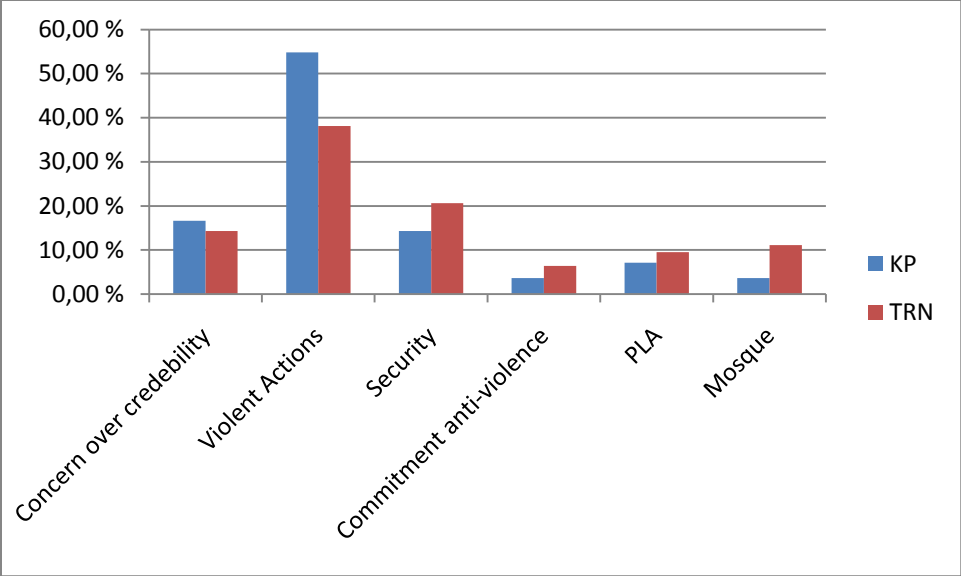
As shown the category violence is the biggest in both news papers, with Kathmandu Post giving it some higher priority than The Rising Nepal. Of all election related content 50,9% of Kathmandu Post and 43,4% of Rising Nepal fall under this thematic category, focusing on violent actions, anti-violence, army and security issues.

The quantitative analysis shows a great focus on violence. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that this is given highest priority, thus being the most important in the election coverage of both Kathmandu Post and the Rising Nepal in the time before the election.

4.2.1.1 Thematic distribution within ‘violence’

The following table shows the violence category broken down in more specific thematic categories. I will give further explanations of the three largest categories.

Table 3: Thematic distribution in the category ‘violence’:



N = 147 (Kathmandu Post 84, The Rising Nepal 63)

4.2.1.2 Violent Actions

The focus on violent actions places both the news papers in a common war reporting tradition. (Galtung 2002, Kightley 2002, Boyd-Barrett 2004). As shown in chapter one Background and chapter 2 Theory, the political situation in Nepal is a difficult one to define exactly. With the focus on violence both papers can be said to strengthen the depiction of the situation in the country as a situation of conflict and war still.

20 articles of 70 in the category reported violence and threats of violence describe bomb blasts and seizing of weapons. These are mostly with aggressor unknown, with exceptions; ‘2

killed in Jajarkot house blast’ (KP 31 March), is the story of the death of two brothers, one of them ‘said by locals to be a Maoist combatant: *‘It is also said that the police recovered a lot of weapons and ammunition on the blast side.’*

The story ‘2 bombs go off at Gaur’ (ibid) explain that the JTMM takes responsibility for the blast ‘that killed no one but “were merely to create terror” according to police’. ‘JTMM claims responsibility of blast’ (TRN 2. April), ‘Arm carrying group held by Maoists’ (ibid), and ‘NWPP cadres apprehend Maoists, hand to cops’ (TRN 4 April) also name the supposed responsible for the attacks.

However, most (71%) of the reported cases of violent actions describe attacks on political contestants or party affiliated persons or right out clashes between party people, party groups, security personnel.

In contrast to the articles describing bomb blasts, they show a targeted type of violence that is politically motivated. The guns and bombs represent threats to all, in the sense that even though some are specifically targeting party offices, they can also come to a bus park near you.

Looking at this in context, the amount of reporting of this type of violence is potent to install fear in the population making them lose faith in the political actors’ ability to lead the country into a peaceful transformation, and can be taken as a proof that the war is not over. It can also show people that they are capable of violence in the future. After all the forthcoming election is all about creating a ‘New Nepal’ and consolidating the peace process, thus marking a final end to the civil war.

It is therefore also reasonable to present the possible interpretation that the people are showed political contestants that might be fighting now on a different arena (the election), but still have not changed significantly. The focus on violent actions corresponds well with the depiction of traditional war reporting as being violence oriented as elaborated. (e.g. Lynch and McGoldrick 2005)

Another interesting point, not showed in the table, is that 50% of the articles in KP names the Maoists as the aggressors of violence, 38% in TRN do the same. Some of these articles, as mentioned before, are subjected to qualitative analysis in chapter six.

4.2.1.3 Concern over credibility

In the articles falling under this category concerns are raised from different people and organizations (e.g. UNMIN, '*UNMIN urges parties to work together*' KP 7 April, or voters in the countryside '*German delegates meet conflict victims*' KP 2 April) that threats of violence might scare people away from voting or voting in a different manner than they would had there been no threats of violence present.

An interesting point, that is not showed in the table, but worth taking into notion, is that Kathmandu Post highlights Maoist aggression as the main threat to the elections being held in a free and fair manner in 8 of 14 (57%) cases, whereas The Rising Nepal does the same in only 2 of 9 cases (22%). I have also analyzed some selected articles from this category in chapter six.

4.2.1.4 Security

This category has two dominant frames; (1) articles focusing on measures being taken to strengthen security for the election, thus communicating the need for strengthened security, (2) articles focusing on security measures as being adequate, ensuring that people should be able to cast their vote without fear. Kathmandu Post has 8 in the first category and 2 in the second; The Rising Nepal has correspondingly 7 and 6.

The numbers are interesting in the sense that this might be interpreted as a sign of TRN publishing information helpful to the government who has an interest in both showing that they are capable and that the election will be deemed credible both inside and outside of Nepal.

4.2.2 Juridical

This category counts for 19,3% in Kathmndu Post and 18,9% in The Rising Nepal and the second largest category in both news papers. Since all articles about violence and threats are singled out, I will just give a brief overview of this category.

16 out of 32 cases (50%) in Kathmandu Post deals with violations of election code of conduct and/or accusations of such, the numbers for TRN are 11 out of 30 (38%). Examples of this

are; concerns about using children in the campaigns: *'UML violated code: NHCR'* (KP 31. March) and *'Don't use kids as publicity tool: CWIN'*²⁸ (TRN 5. April); reports about disqualifications of candidates: *'EC to debar 66 underage PR candidates'* (KP 2. April) and *'EC starts action against ineligible candidates'* (TRN 2. April) and; calls for action against code violators: *'EC directs govt to take stern action'* (KP 3. April), *'Take action against code violators'* (TRN 3. April) and *'Preserve right to secret ballot: NC'* (7. April).

11 cases (34%) in KP speak of monitors being sent out in field or international monitoring support. For TRN the number is 10 (31%).

The remaining 5 articles in KP cover calls for participation in elections. These are coded under this category because they focus on participation as a core fundament for the success of polls, thus are connected to the legitimacy of the elections. 5 articles in TRN fall under this category.

4 articles in TRN also focus on women's participation, both as voters and candidates, *'Women should use conscience in voting'* (5 April), *'Parties flayed for not fielding women candidates'* (4 April), *'Women's participation in polls stressed'* and *'Guarantee 33% seats for women'* (1 April).

4.2.3 Campaign

This category is considerably larger in TRN than in KP, with 29 articles (18,2%) in TRN against 8 (4,7%) in KP. The category is interesting because the news articles where predictions about election results, the future of Nepal and speculations about conspiracies are set out by political candidates are coded here.

In Kathmandu Post 4 of the 8 articles are based on speeches by Prachanda (Maoist), in TRN 13 of 29 articles has Maoists as senders.

²⁸ Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre, national NGO

4.2.4 Media

This category is larger in KP, which have 8 articles dealing with media and the elections. TRN only has one, and that one is not very interesting at all in this context, as it refers to a message from the Prime Minister on the occasion of Radio Nepal's anniversary, and making just a brief and rather formal reference to the role of media in the CA elections.

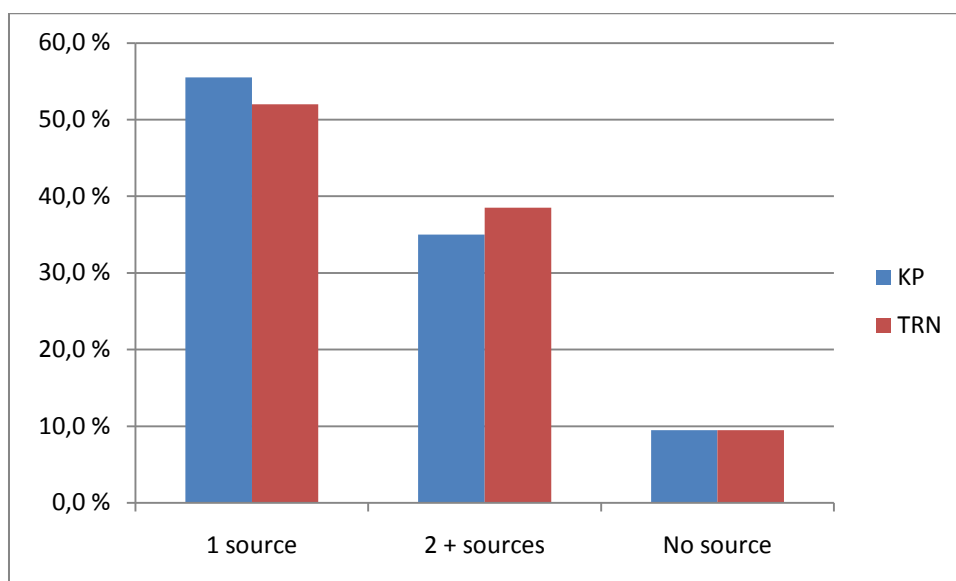
3 of the articles in KP are about Maoist targeting the media, 2 about media being biased (in favor of the Maoist), 1 about the Election Commission closing down a Maoist run radio station, 1 about international media's interest in the CA election in Nepal and the last one about working conditions for journalists on election day.

4.3 Sources

As described in chapter 2 Theory, news sources and how they are given access to the media are of great importance both in democratic situations and situations of conflict

4.3.1 Use of single and multiple sources

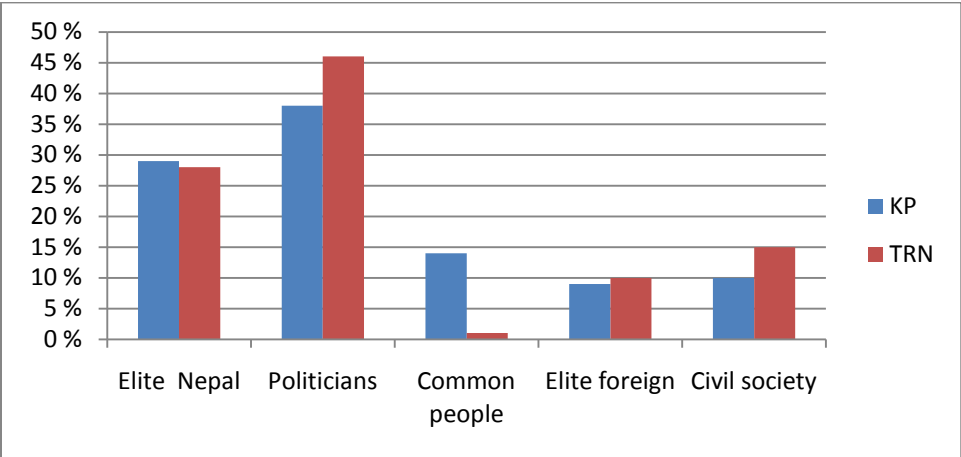
Table 4:



The above table shows the use of sources in all the material about the election in the two papers. A common test of balance in reporting is also subjected to analysis of whether one single or multiple sources are consulted in making a story. This table also shows similarities in TRN and KP, one-source journalism is widespread in both papers.

4.3.2 Distribution of sources according to type

Table 5:

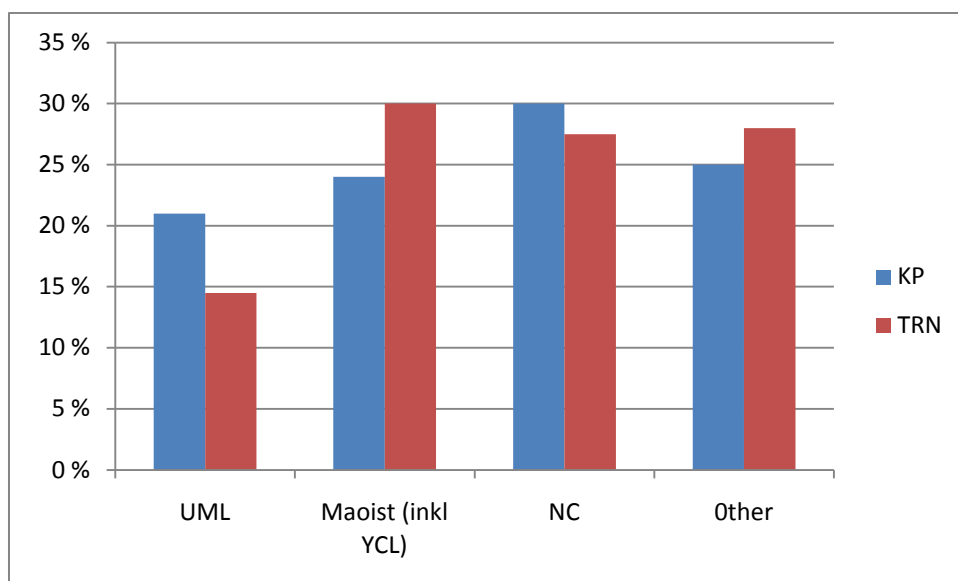


Earlier, in chapter 2 Theory it is described as a common tendency in both democratic context and when operating in a conflict situation, that media rely heavily on official and so-called elite sources for information. The common people rarely get a voice. It is therefore also difficult to know what that segment of the population actually think.

Government and politicians being the most quoted sources in the time of an election is not at all surprising. That the so-called elite sources dominate in the election coverage is an expected result. It corresponds well with results from other research showing that mass media is highly dependent on powerful, institutional elite sources (Allern 1996). In conflict this tends to manifest itself even more. (Nord et al. 2003). Looking at the social context of Nepal (see chapter one Background), a very hierarchical society, where many factors play a role in explaining why it is like this; illiteracy, class and cast division, center orientation, autocratic history, it is even less surprising.

4.3.3 Political party sources

Table 6: Sources, distribution of cited sources according to party:



This table shows the distribution of sources cited according to party. This also shows only small variations between the Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal, but Maoist sources are quoted more in TRN and NC more in KP. More importantly it confirms the results from the media monitoring campaign of 2008 that the three big parties by far got the most coverage before the election, something that is explained by their role as the forefront of the coalition government and being in the center stage of the peace process. (Campaign 2008:65) Here the combined numbers of the big three used as sources are 72% in TRN and 75% in KP.

Another important result from this brief study of sources is that the selection corresponds to a large degree with more traditional war/conflict reporting (see chapter two). The combined numbers of the amount of one-source journalism and the amount of sources quoted from the big three parties also indicates that any criticism against the press for being too much of a mouthpiece for the biggest contestants is at least to some extent justified. This was also a finding from the CA media monitoring campaign.

5 Views and Opinions: Fear, loathing and call for civility

The purpose of this chapter is to show how The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal, through their editorials and op-eds, dealt with the prospects of the CA election, its main contestants and the future of the Nepali democracy focusing especially on how they portrayed the Maoist party in relation to these.

I seek mainly to give an in-depth analysis of the rhetoric used here in dealing with the Maoists and Maoist tactics and to find out to what extent the following points, that are operationalizations of hypotheses one, two and three, are evident; 1) The Maoist are violent aggressors 2) The Maoist party will not get many votes in the CA election, 3) the Maoist party is not a legitimate democratic party and will not rule democratically if they win, 4) There is a good chance that Nepal again be at war after the election due to Maoist aggression, 5) the Maoist leadership have no control of their cadres on the ground

5.1 Editorials

I have grouped the editorials according to thematic focus. This is done to make any differences between the two papers more visible in the analysis. It is also valuable to divide the material in this way to get a clearer picture of the newspapers take on pressing issues and concerns.

5.1.1 Call for civility and need for security

The editorial in Kathmandu Post 31 March, **Cordial Campaign**, raises concern over heightening conflict and violence leading again to serious concern over the election being free and fair and that the objective of CA might be threatened because of this. It further points to the bombing of the mosque in Biratnagar as an example of there being unsolved security issues and that there are actors in Nepal trying hard to obstruct the coming election.

The editorial starts with this; *'Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has rightly called for cordial campaigning among the parties'*.

GP Koirala is a NC leader – but the editorial here states his position as Prime Minister. This responsible political post can be used to establish a higher ethos. However, this can be modified tremendously by the person holding the position's 'own ethos'. In the editorial it is clearly stated that GPK has *rightly* called for (...), showing his call as logical and himself as being correct.

After condemning the '*cowardly*' acts of terrorism in Biratnagar, the editorial returns to the main political contestants (the big three), and the importance of *cordiality* amongst them. The Maoists are brought to the front stage. It is suggested that they are not comfortable with the elections, and need understanding and support from the others (NC and UML).

'Obviously, the Maoists have shown their displeasure in a wrong manner. Instead of beating other parties' leaders and cadres, they should have dealt with the issues properly and peacefully.' In contrast to the NC (represented by PM Koirala), who calls for cordiality, the Maoists are showed as *not* reasonable in their actions and responses.

'We hope the NC and UML will show empathy to the Maoists' conundrum'. *Conundrum* is another word for a confusing/difficult problem. When using a word like this to describe the Maoist's response, it further supports the view of the Maoists as behaving in an illogical manner.

Urging the other parties to show the Maoists compassion and empathy, when at the same time describing the Maoists as behaving illogically and in a wrong manner, is also a way of patronizing them. Framing the Maoists as uncontrolled, not smart, confused, violent, someone that needs other parties' leniency, adds further to the argument that the Maoists are politically incompetent.

In comparison to the KP editorial the editorial in *The Rising Nepal* on the same day, **The Litmus Test**, makes no reference directly to any specific party, though it somehow covers the same topic. As the KP editorial it starts out with Prime Minister G. P. Koirala's call for making the CA polls in a disciplined and peaceful manner – bearing in mind recent events (the bombing in Biratnagar and the overall violent situation in various parts of the country).

The only group/region specific reference is 'Prime Minister Koirala took a swipe at the acts of some political groups, *including those operating in Madhes*, as they tended to create obstructions (...)'

On 2 April, The Rising Nepal's, **EC Ups Vigilance**, further addresses the security situation in the country, highlighting the Election Commission's efforts to take control of the violent situation. Describing a meeting between the big three party leaders held at the 'behest' of the EC, as a '*significant step towards seeking the commitment and pledge of the apex leaders for the smooth holding of the polls (...)*', The Rising Nepal continues to praise Chief Election Commissioner Bhoj Raj Pokharel for his '*candid observations*' and timely mitigation. Although all big three party leaders are mentioned in positive terms for their joint commitment not to breach the code of conduct, Prachanda's expressed commitment to instruct his cadres to behave in a disciplined manner is highlighted as '*very timely and significant.*' This allows for different potential interpretations, for example; 1) highlighting Prachanda's commitment as more significant meaning that it is in fact the Maoists that are the real threat to peace and the election being free and fair, and at the same time expressing the concern that the Maoist leadership has a hard time controlling its cadres, or 2) Prachanda featured especially for making a positive move being something that adds to framing Prachanda's persona as reasonable and responsible.

On 7 April, in **Poll Security**, The Rising Nepal assures its readers that '*The government has made all the necessary security arrangements for the Constituent Assembly polls by deploying the Nepal Police and Armed Police Force (APF) across the country.*' It also attributes most of the clashes '*between cadres of the Maoists and other parties*' to the poor security situation, especially in remote parts. In this, despite indicating that the Maoists in fact do play a special crucial role in the violent situation, they are deprived (in a positive way) of the full responsibility for the violent clashes.

The Rising Nepal goes as far as saying that '*The new security arrangement will encourage more voters to cast their ballot*', indirectly saying that the government is the one to thank for this. This, and the above praise for the Election Commission, could possibly be inspired by the Rising Nepal being owned by the government.²⁹

²⁹ The Election Commissioners being appointed by the Prime Minister on recommendations made by Constitutional Council/Cabinet

5.1.2 Inking yet another deal to end violence

The editorial in Kathmandu Post 3 April, **Implement the Pact**, makes reference to the pact between the big three signed two days before; *'(...) the pact that will hopefully lead to an end to the daily madness we are made to witness (...)*. The Kathmandu Post applauds the pact but underlines that despite the signing of the pact *'(...) we have no reasons to rest easy.'* The Kathmandu Post warns against believing this pact will actually change the violent situation in Nepal, arguing that many similar pacts and deals have been signed before without having much impact on the situation. *'But really it boils down to just one thing: implementing the agreement (...). Else, the parties can go on signing more promises – all without any meaning – while the situation on the ground remains the same: fractious, divisive and bloody.'*

The Kathmandu Post is clearly not yet ready to give the leaders of the big three parties the benefit of the doubt in this matter – urging their readers not to get their hopes up that peace will be restored any moment, even though positive aspects with the agreement are underlined also.

Even though the Kathmandu Post is not sure about proper implementation, the necessity of the new deal is stated in the text. The argument for this being the constant clashes among cadres, that Maoist mostly are part of; *'The CPN(Maoist) – refusing to accept the writing on the wall, and egged on by motivated experts and analysts – has been involved in nearly all the clashes reported so far.'*

This implies that the Maoists do actually see the writings on the wall (a portent of doom) but willingly choose not to act accordingly. In that case it can also be said to imply that the Maoists are fooling themselves.

The Maoist leadership is urged to take responsibility, and the other UML and NC leaders are encouraged to 'help' the Maoists put an end to the cycle of violence, indicating that the Maoists are not very powerful. Kathmandu openly extends critique to named UML and NC leader for adding to the tension as; *'none have desisted from publicly criticizing and deriding the Maoists.'*

The same day The Rising Nepal has an editorial covering the agreement signing, **The New Deal for Polls**. TRN does not make reference to specific parties, but the angle is somehow similar to the one in the Kathmandu Post – this is yet another deal, what is important is to make it work, and it's a shared responsibility to make sure the cadres abide to it. TRN does,

despite also raising doubts to whether the parties really will abide by their pledge this time, take a little more positive stand than the Kathmandu Post; *‘Since the parties have agreed to subject themselves to the scrutiny and examination of the joint civil society and political monitoring mechanism to be created at the national level, the situation is expected to become normal soon.’*, (My underlining).

The Rising Nepal also highlights civil society’s role in making the deal happen, thanking civil society leaders for aiding the normative framework as the political parties are otherwise busy competing over voters.

5.1.3 Neutrality and credibility in monitoring

In The Rising Nepal 4 April, **Credibility of Monitors**, starts out with the issue of Prachanda having raised concern over election observers being biased against Maoists: *‘CPN (Maoist) Chairman Prachanda has spoken critically of the election observers and raised questions about their neutrality and impartiality while carrying out their role as poll monitors’*.

Interestingly, in the same paragraph, a reference to EC is made, saying: *‘Similar questions have been raised by the Election Commission itself, but in a different light as some monitors have been found abusing the prescribed ethics and the boundaries of election observation.’*

Using the phrase *similar questions*, (although it is pointed out that they are raised in a different light) adds value to Prachanda’s allegations, as it implies that the concern is shared by others. And it is not any random other either, but the *Election Commission itself*. Reading the two together one can argue that TRN lends Prachanda ethos from EC in this piece, an ethos that Prachanda alone possibly lacks. Andrew Dlugan in the article *‘15 tactics to establish ethos’*, notes that when you refer a reputable source, you boost your ethos by association. Prachanda’s concerns and demands are made more credible simply by being placed next to the EC concerns and demands – even though EC is portrayed as general and Prachanda as specific.

The Rising Nepal calls for the independence and impartiality of poll monitors (thus in some ways supporting Prachanda’s call, though not necessarily being so focused on the Maoist specifically : *‘(...) Prachanda made it a point that the poll monitors should not be biased against the Maoists (...)*’.

Three days later on 7 April the editorial in Kathmandu Post, **Neutral Monitors?**, opens with an answer to the headline question; *'Not quite'*, and continues to take quite a different turn from The Rising Nepal when dealing with the monitoring issue. Raising similar concerns over the impartiality of monitors and *'who will monitor them?'*, Kathmandu Post's villain of the story is a different one. Seriously questioning the neutrality of the election monitors, Kathmandu Post points to the Election Commission and its handling (or not handling) of the concerns; *'Though the NHRC³⁰ has already drawn the attention of the EC, the latter seems to be indifferent to this concern (complaints that people associated with a particular party had been permitted the observer role: my note) and has busied itself in issuing passes to such observers.'*

In the above mentioned case in the Rising Nepal's editorial, I suggest that Prachanda's ethos might be heightened by making association to the supposedly more credible EC. The Kathmandu Post in turn questions the credibility of the EC itself;

The question to ponder here is why did such election observation organizations employ people with a specific political party slant? Also, why did the EC give them permission to observe the elections despite some known pro-party faces gracing such bodies? Was it under pressure from the political parties? The EC needs to come clean on this.

The term *'come clean'*, normally refers to the case of someone doing something wrong, admitting to it and confess before those whom they have wronged. Using the phrase in this context can imply that the correct understanding is that the EC did this knowingly – either because it itself is corrupt or because it was pressured into doing so. Anyhow, it places the major responsibility for this harmful practice with the EC.

The Kathmandu Post also extends the critique to international organizations, which according to the Post *'have among them people with a specific political tilt'*, this more than implies that the monitors have a political bias.

5.1.4 Election for Peace

On 8 April the so called 'silent period' is in effect in Nepal. The 48 hours before the election will see no political campaigning, in a hope that people who have still not made up their mind about who to vote for, will be able to do so in more peace and quiet.

³⁰ The National Human Right Commission of Nepal

Kathmandu Post's editorial, **People's turn**, highlights that many voters, more than 50% new ones this time around, have not yet decided, and '*any last minute wave is likely to take an unexpected turn.*' The Kathmandu Post takes confidence in the youngsters who, '*will be coming to the polling booths without any politically [sic] baggage, and to make sure that peace and stability is restored in the country.*'

The Kathmandu Post also expresses that the Nepali voters are not stupid cowards and will punish the political contestants who try to intimidate them on the polling day. The following paragraph is quite a speech on its own, using a rhetoric that slams the Maoist party without even mentioning the word Maoist or YCL (or related words):

The people of Nepal will definitely utilize the poll opportunity to take their revenge against politicians and political parties that have failed them in the past, and they will be awarding a once-in-a-lifetime chance to the honest, competent, democratic and pacifist among poll contestants. Obviously, the political parties are up to all their old tricks to hoodwink the voters. They are out to pressure, intimidate, lure, threaten, and warn the voters. But Nepali voters are no cowards. These are people who have staked their lives time and again to root out dictatorship. They will not forego the vote just because they fear they would be beaten. Similarly, most voters will not fall for warnings that the way they vote would be monitored through binoculars or secretly embedded cameras. Those resorting to such cheap ploys will be punished mercilessly by the people. We wish our political parties had played a somewhat more mature role.

This paragraph sums up much of the Post's earlier objections against the Maoist party, not at all '*honest, competent, democratic and pacifist,*' It has on the contrary been portrayed as '*out to pressure, intimidate, lure, threaten and warn the voters.*' (As I have shown already the Post has focused more on Maoist (YCL) intimidation and aggression.) There is also clear reference to the binocular monitoring that was reported in the news before (see chapter six), the Maoists being the ones who have made such threats. The verdict in advance from the Post is very clear; the people will not, and should not, be moved to vote in favour of the Maoists by these cheap tricks.

The KP, however, show some insecurity when predicting an outcome not in favour of the Maoists in the following paragraph; '*If the parties and politicians in the fray behave, respect the voters and allow them to vote their minds, the results might come as a surprise to many.*' The anticipated surprise, as we now know, is to come true the following days.

Vote for Peace³¹, is the heading of The Rising Nepal's editorial the same day. This mostly is about the security situation aimed at ensuring people (voters) that security will be sufficient in place for voters to cast their votes freely; *'Allaying the fears and concerns of the ordinary electorate, the chief election commissioner made it clear that any complaints regarding acts to malign and disturb the polls and intimidate the voters would be taken up seriously and that the perpetrators would be booked to justice.'*

5.2 Op-eds

I have grouped the op-eds differently, as the two papers don't follow each other thematically in the same way here as is somehow the case with the editorials. Instead, I deal with the news papers separately. The selection here also include all the articles that deal with the elections political parties and party affiliated persons, thus articles like e.g. **Mixed polls: mixed outcome** (KP 4 April) about the election system are taken out.

5.2.1 Kathmandu Post: Maoists and Democracy not picture perfect

In **Plotting political** suicide, Kathmandu Post 3 April, Prateek Pradhan (news editor in chief) states that two political suicides are currently going on in the country. One by the Maoists, and one by the monarch and his followers. He explains how the nature of political suicides extends to affect the society, underscoring the dangerous implications that may follow; *'Those who commit political suicide hurt themselves, sometimes to the extent of being eliminated physically and/or politically. But in the process, they cause civil war, genocide, violence, murder, assassination and all.'*

According to Pradhan, the plots being connived by the Maoists and the palace are quite different in character, and *'the palace seem to be in a more sinister and violent mood than the Maoists.'* He says rumours in Kathmandu warn against *'serious bloody attacks'* that are being

³¹ The heading 'Vote for Peace' is a bit curious though, from my own experience before the election when talking to people around Kathmandu about what they were going to vote, many people said that they would vote for Maoist so that the Maoists would not have a reason to go back to the jungle – ergo a vote for peace. This is not to say that TRN actually in the editorial heading deliberately requested people to vote for the Maoists in order to keep peace, but it implies what in TRNs view, the election is really for – peace.

planned out by the regressive forces, *'like bombings at many places and or killing of major political leaders to abruptly halt the election (...).'*

His next kick goes to *'the so-called Nepal Defence Army'*, seen as the palaces' stooges, who have killed people and planted bombs (for example in Kantipur's printing facilities³²), and other groups causing sporadic violence supported by the palace. *'On the eve of the CA election, it is absolutely urgent for the king to understand his position and plan for the future. If he is still plotting a conspiracy, that would be political suicide'*

According to Pradhan in this article, the Maoists are heading for a similar political suicide. *'Though they have come a long way after laying down their arms, they have not shown any responsible attitude to respect the people's verdict.'* With the election only being days away, and even fewer days left for canvassing (due to the fortified 48 hour silent period), the Maoists are still obstructing the other candidates. This will in the end backfire on the Maoists as *'They can't figure out that when they beat up candidates, they get more votes and sympathy.'*

As Pradhan sees that there is still time, although it is running out, for the Maoists to make the necessary corrections, there is time for yet another suicide attempt nevertheless;

The other major political suicide for the Maoists will be seen after the results of the CA polls are released. If they become only the third largest party, which is the most they can hope for under the current scenario, they will have to accept the results. But the leaders don't look like they are going to do that. (My underlining). So here Pradhan both suggests that the Maoist party will come in no better than third in the election, indicating they might even come further down on the list when votes are counted. At the same time he suggests that the Maoists will not accept such results. One is left to wonder what kind of situation the country might be in then after the election.

Dr Ramesh Khatri, Christian Intellectual and a Maoist critic, is the transmitter of another opinion in Kathmandu Post 3 April, **Barking at the tree**. (Barking up the wrong tree means that you are looking for something in the wrong place).

Quoting Prakash Man Singh (VC of Nepali Congress), in a speech the other day, Khatri opens up with; *'Vote for the tree (the Nepali Congress) on April 10!'* The reason being simply, again according to Singh, that none of other major parties have the *'character'* to

³² Kantipur group also being the publishing house of Kathmandu Post

deliver. Using the example of United States and Britain, where the parties, despite political differences, agree on democratic principles to rule the state, Khattry argues that the situation in Nepal is completely different.

According to Khattry, the Maoists, if they win the election, will make Nepal a republic similar to *'the former Soviet Union, East Germany, the present China, Cuba, North Korea or even Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe. Such will not be too different from King Gyanendra's dictatorship or the thirty-year despotism of the Panchayat regime. As a king rules till death, Prachanda could be president for life.'*

Khattry says to expect from Maoists that they will *'suppress information'* and *'give lip-service to basic liberties in the constitution but; but rule with an iron fist.'* He says to expect more confiscation of private property; *'Even evacuees that returned to their ancestral homes face eviction if they don't vote for the Maoists on April 10.'* He also says to;

(...) expect more bloodshed. Perhaps, Nepal could again become the "Killing Fields" (name of a movie), as Pol Pot made Cambodia. Since the Maoists have not yet apologized for a single person killed during the ten-year-long rebellion and after, they are likely to continue "cleansing" their opponents. Vote for unrepentant killers, and the nation will have to brace itself for more murders.

Fear both the leaders, and the cadres, seems to be Khattry's message. One might wonder if this tactic to scare people *away* from voting for the Maoist is much better than the Maoist tactic to scare people into voting *for* them. It is also interesting to point back to Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (chapter two) especially the anticommunist filter. Also a general enemy image is clearly painted here.

The Maoist cadres are in Khattry's text reduced to plain puppet-on-a-string barbarians *'No Maoist involved has ever muttered an apology, nor can we expect it from brainwashed cadres that have no respect for human life other than their own.'*

However sadly, as Khattry puts it, the UML is not an adequate alternative, since *'It is just a matter of time before the Maoists make the UML their vassal.'* Not that NC is ideal either, *'It is just the lesser evil.'* With this he certainly adds to the hopelessness many Nepalis feel in the pre-CA election Nepal. Ballots full of the lesser evil, and in their future prospects a fair chance of being screwed once again by their own politicians.

'The lesser evil' has an historical ethos that Khattry reminds the reader of *'However, with all its faults, the NC leadership has a unique history of advocating democracy. The communists*

readily compromised and accepted lucrative jobs during the thirty-year-long Panchayat regime. The NC chose exile and jails instead.'

As he started Khattry also ends his article by quoting Singh; *"Vote for the tree," was Singh's consistent message. We Nepalis who want a truly democratic constitution don't have any other choice, do we?'*

Maoist half truths, is published 4 April by Dr Khagendra N Sharma, who states that *'There are some minor obstacles to the polls, but the major hurdle is still the Maoists.'*

He starts out, however, by saying that he has been pleading before for parts of the existing political situation. He agreed with the demands of the Maoists that there should be a CA and that the Maoists should be recognized as a political force and they should join hands with other parties, unarmed, to bring down the king. At this point only the latter has proved an undisputed success. CA might be a reality very soon, but according to Sharma the Maoists are still a possible obstacle;

The Maoists, however, have been behaving in an ambivalent manner. They have been praising the CA election claiming that it was their original idea; but in the same breath they are refusing to accept the verdict if it is not to their liking. They have been threatening that their agitation hasn't ended, and that it would go on. Many inferences can be drawn from this contradictory stand.'

It was expected, says Sharma, that after the Maoists locked their weapons down, agreed to supervision by the UN, agreed to work under the Interim Constitution and accepted to use a democratic system for the CA election, that the road to the polls would be smooth; *'But the recent electoral track of the Maoists has baffled analysts and frightened political rivals. The experts are mystified by the contradictory statements coming from their leaders. The Young Communist League (YCL) has been bullying opponents by using intimidation and physical violence.'*

It is especially the contradictory statements coming from leaders and cadres, and continued violent acts, that are leaving people mystified about the Maoists true agenda, says Sharma;

The Maoists are demonstrating half-truths in both thought and action. They should have put complete faith in the multiparty system and accepted the universal democratic principle of competition. This entails not only changing their final goal but also accepting the probability of other views gaining eminence. The acceptance of the CA election as a means of socio-political transformation cannot be interpreted in any other sense. But the Maoists have shown that they don't have any faith in this tool by stating that if the voting results were not in their favor, they would launch an agitation.'

According to Sharma, the Maoists will pay for this type of behaviour on the day of the elections:

The Maoists should realize that their bullying ways are driving away voters, and that the people they have displaced are growing into a force against them. Everybody is becoming familiar with Maoist half-truths through their pattern of intimidation. What they say is not what they mean. Such ways will not bring them votes. If the Maoists let the election take place without unleashing physical violence, the nation should be thankful for that much political civility.

So Sharma is in line with some of the comments shown above, predicting that people will turn against the Maoists based on their violent tactics. That the nation should be thankful if the Maoists '*let the election take place*' and refrain from using violence, both show the Maoists as holding some power over the nation's future when implying that it is up to them if elections are held or not, and also that there is not much to expect from them as a democratic party.

In Predicting the unpredictability 5 April, Narayan Mandahar, paints another future scenario for the Maoists in Nepal;

(...)many people are busy surmising on the possible outcomes of CA elections. Broadly, one can predict three possible scenarios. One, the Maoists may have a sweeping victory. Two, the Maoists may face a devastating defeat. Three, the on-going triangular classical equilibrium situation of frog, scorpion and snake will hardly change by outcomes of CA elections.' (...) But the dice is clearly loaded in favour of the Maoists.

Mandahar bases this on three factors; the voters' young age, prospects of greater voter turnout and the shrinking of the middle class in Nepal shrinking. Mandahar portrays the Maoists as strategic and calculative in their campaigning and in the selection of candidates. '*A party that had fought ten years to win a war will be bereft of a strategy to win elections. Traditional political parties are simply misjudging them.*' The Maoists in this story are portrayed as winners, political strategists, tactically unpredictable and the favourite of the young people. Young is often a positive description connoting ideas about the future, change, vision and energy, something that could go very well with the term the 'New Nepal'. The other parties, '*traditional parties*' here understood as the UML and the NC since these are the parties mentioned earlier in the text, are in contrast not very competent as they misjudge their opponent.

Mandahar reveals his personal political preference towards the end, expressing a wish for a power balance similar to the current situation, and regrets that the preparations for CA election in Nepal are too focused on the Maoist issue;

Though Mandahar prefers a current triangular situation to the Maoists winning a clear victory or defeat, unfortunately, the coming CA elections seems to be fought on a single agenda: The Maoists win or their defeat. Whatever may be the outcome of the CA elections, the sure things to happen, according to Mandahar, are: (1) The days of the monarchy are clearly over

and no amount of opinion polls, astrological readings or performing rituals is going to save it from falling. (2) The political parties that rejuvenated on the lines of ethnicity, caste, language, religion and region are going to remain even after the elections. (3) There will be a surprise for the people watching Nepal.

The idea of a power balance and asserting a view that the Maoist should (have to) play a role on the political stage in Nepal after the CA elections, is not surprising. This view was after all strongly asserted in the earlier stages of the peace process by different parties and other relevant actors (as shown in the background chapter).

The 8 April issue shows another Maoist headlined opinion in Kathmandu Post, **Drool Maoists** by Dhruva Joshy, describing holding a free and fair CA poll as '*A just cause going dangerously wrong*'. He also describes the Maoists self image as being far from the popular verdict that is one of distaste of their '*hubris and marauding behaviour*' and failure to control their cadres:

In spite of signing agreement after agreement by their leaders, the YCL is yet going berserk demonstrating the ambivalent perception of the Maoists regarding the free and fair CA poll. This is the same chestnut when the Maoist demagogues, playing to the gallery, whine if they lose in the CA poll, another revolution will ensue. Hello comrade! If that is the bottom line, your frills to the meretricious speeches and manifesto do not make any sense as people can see through your ravenous appetite for power incognito.

The choice of words here used to describe the Maoists portray them as unworthy of people's support: '*Hubris*' and '*marauding behaviour*' meaning that they are arrogant, out of touch with reality and actively looking for things to steal or kill: '*Demagogues*' meaning that they are not using rationale to stir support: '*Meretricious*' speeches meaning that what they say might sound attractive but it has little meaning.

Joshy also expresses great concern over the UN peacekeeping missions' inability to '*tame*' the Maoists in the cantonments. Thus showing the Maoists there as a flock of wild animals, in a cage one could argue, and that if let loose they will continue to be exactly that, wild animals. This inability is also leading people to question the UNMIN's own sincerity and is threatening the elections and the future of Nepal;

If the CA poll is to happen under such an adverse situation where coercion is the undeclared strategy of the Maoists in spite of their embellished manifesto, the Maoists' *New Nepal which they peddle round the country is nothing better than a "Republic of Fear"*. *The Maoists have failed to expunge that fear psychosis from the minds of common people.*'

The people of Nepal are not feeling safe and secure to cast their vote in the current situation, 'as YCL's intimidation is running amok', Joshy even says YCL 'is looking as enfant terrible by design.' 'Enfant terrible' I understand in this context as a negative label, though this also could be a positive term describing youthfulness, vigour and avant-garde quality. The Maoists are also following a conspiracy theory to explain a possible defeat in the election. The big Maoist 'drool', as referred to in the title, is that they 'see conspiracy only if they are defeated in the poll', showing the Maoist logic has serious defects. This is also Joshy's main argument in advocating anti-trust in the Maoist party, that and a dead ideology; 'There is a reason to repudiate the Maoists not because of their felony and ranting demeanor, but because the ideology they are trying to resurrect is ante-di-luvian [sic] and irrational in a pluralistic and free society.'

9 April's op-ed show a call for responsibility. Under the title **Act responsibly**, Dr Hari Bansha Dulal first addresses the Maoists' threats of not accepting defeat:

After the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections on 10th of April, Nepali politics will take a new direction. Hopefully, the Maoist party that has been sending conflicting signals about accepting the people's verdict will exhibit some political maturity and decency even if it fails to cruise to thumping victory.

He criticizes the Maoists for 'senseless acts of violence' that 'clearly shows that there is substantial difference between the kind of republic that the people want and the Maoists cherish for', stating that people for sure don't want a republic where political candidates 'are beaten black and blue by cadres of brainwashed, irrational and intolerant Young Communist League.'

But Dulal does not care too much for the Maoists' main opponents either it seems, as he ascribes some responsibility for the current state of affairs to other parties: 'The last one and half decades of the Maoist insurgency and the last one year of ethnic dissent are to some extent results of weak performances of the major political parties in terms of social and political integration.'

He also extends this to the lack of intra-party democracy, and, though not naming the parties, kicks at the NC and the UML, the older folks in politics for lacking competence and vision:

Due to lack of internal democracy within political parties, the leaders with vision and actual problem solving abilities never got a chance to come to the forefront. Hopefully, with the onset of a new dawn, intra-party democracy will take root, which is absolutely important for an emergence of competent leadership that can replace the older folks, who tend to have the years they spent in jail fighting for

democracy as the only credible credential, which in the real world of performance-based politics is not worth even a penny. For how long should one's actual potential to deliver tangible results be waived for the years s/he spent in prison fighting for democracy?'

5.2.2 The Rising Nepal: Don't just blame the Maoists

March On to CA: Are We On The Right Course?, asks Shyam Bhandari on 31 March, while raising concerns over violence, poll security and a possible escalation of violence post election:

The Nepalese people had constantly lived for well over a year in fear that the CA polls, upon which they had staked their dreams of building a New Nepal, would never materialize. (...) that fear has subsided only to give way to newer fears: Will the polls be peaceful? Will they be fair? (...) Won't the polls lead the country into another abyss of violence and bloodshed?

Here what is a positive notion, the elections finally being held, are giving way to a more prominent negatives view; a possible situation of violence and bloodshed. But Bhandari warns against letting the Maoists take all the blame:

Widespread voter intimidation is already underway. There have been daily clashes between the YCL and cadres of other political parties, especially the Communist party of Nepal (UML) and royalist parties. The Maoists aren't the only party responsible for the mayhem, as many would like to put it. The Nepali Congress and the UML are equally responsible for inciting electoral violence in many parts of the country.

The situation is here described as one of '*Mayhem*'; an uncontrolled situation, and Bhandari also extends critique to the government which does not seem to be well prepared and fail to provide security for voters and candidates. This serves also as an example on expressed criticism against the government in *The Rising Nepal*, despite the government's ownership.

In addition to, and also to some extent because of the violence, another worrying factor in pre-election Nepal is that people in many parts of the country are ignorant about the polls and even candidates themselves are not well informed about the election and its purpose. '*Another Farce?*' asks Bhandari in a subheading before he comes close to a conclusion:

We have made the grave mistake of accepting to have ignorant, clueless, defunct people to write the historic document that will give birth to a new Nepal, we have chosen to elect them from among "those who spent years in jail, instead of those who spent years at universities". We have already settled for "party people" instead of academicians, lawyers, social reformers, educationists, industrialists, and the likes. The best we can do now is to make the best of what we have, rather than wish for what we don't.

This can be seen partly as another attack on the traditional parties, the UML and especially the NC, as the term *'those who spent years in jail'* best describes these parties.

The Rising Nepal 1 April has the text, **Poll Alliances: For Peaceful Electioneering**, by Ambar Mainali, describing an alliance made between the CPN-Maoist and CPN (UML) calling it *'the right move at the right time'* and a *'Mutual Advantage'*. Mainali argues that this move will attract more voters to both parties:

(..) the UML has had a strong democratic image for nearly five decades vis-à-vis the Maoists (...) As the entire idea of alliance is hooked with the sharing of political credentials and vote banks for political mileage, the way people would begin looking at the Maoists would certainly be different. Thus the Maoist party would be able to win more seats through the alliance with the UML

Here UML's long democratic history is suggested to add to the Maoist party, but Mainali stresses that UML also can benefit from teaming up with the Maoists:

Similarly, the UML too would benefit proportionately from such a decision, as it still trails behind the Maoists as regards who has a stronger *'revolutionary image'*. (...) This image of Maoists would be shared by UML and in turn it would garner more votes in constituencies where it is weaker than the Nepali Congress; its only formidable contender.

The term *'Revolutionary image'* can here be understood as something positive, that the image of the Maoists is one of true change agents. Mainali suggests that this combination of democratic history and revolutionary ambition makes the UML and the Maoist a more credible unit, which can also be seen as something strengthening their ethos through association with each other.

Yuba Nath Lamsal's **Leaders Must Show Political Culture**, 2 April, thanks the Maoists for their contributions to make the CA elections finally happen:

The Nepalese people are creating new history by electing representatives to the Constituent Assembly, which will write a new constitution to formally institutionalize the mandate and achievements of Jana Andolan 2. This has been possible, thanks to the collective efforts of the seven-party alliance, including the Maoists, during the 19-day April movement in 2006. The credit also goes to the decade-long people's war of the Maoists that successfully persuaded the other parties to accept the agenda of Constituent Assembly elections.

Lamsal argues that it is extremely important that SPA keep their alliance intact also saying that G. P. Koirala already has said to expect coalition government at least for the next 10 years. After all this election is not about forming government, but writing a constitution. Other leader say similar things, but immediately after specifically naming G.P. Koirala, Lamsal says; *'However, their views have never been translated into action. What these parties*

and their workers have been doing in recent days do not match the rhetoric and the commitment made.' Lamsal here refers to the reports of physical and verbal confrontation and conflict among the cadres from different parties. So in the first quote the Maoist party is the only party referred to specifically in a very positive manner. In the latter, G.P. Koirala, prime minister and leader of NC is named specifically first in positive terms, but shortly afterwards Lamsal criticizes him and his likes of using many words but showing little action. In this way G. P. Koirala and NC are tied closer to a negative description just by being the only named example.

Note also that the first paragraph (where the first quote is taken from) gives credit specifically not only to the Maoist party – but the '*people's war*'. This term refers the political-military strategy of Mao Zedong, and although the term is a widely used to describe the civil war also among non-Maoists, Lamsal, by extending thanks to the *people's war* also justifies it as a method for democratization.

In The Rising Nepal on 4 April, **Peaceful Campaigning** by Prem N. Kakkar, it is described how leaders are signing deal after deal agreeing to put an end to election related and political violence, but fail to implement the pacts among their workers and cadres on the ground. '*(...) the top leaders might be committed, but are unable to dictate their terms to their cadres.*'

In all this, most have blamed the Maoists for the violent incidents. The Maoist leadership has also taken note of this. The Maoists should remember that when allegations are made against them, the truth must come out. For this a joint mechanism should be in place. When regular news of Maoist workers attacking cadres from other parties are reported, people are bound to be suspicious of Maoist intentions. With barely a week to go before the election, there is a mixture of celebrations on the one hand and anxiety and fear on the other.

In this article the Maoist party is the only named party referred to in relation to violent incidents and uncontrollable cadres.

In The Rising Nepal 4 April **Poll Violence – Joint Assurance To Follow Code Of Conduct** by Vijaya Chalise (Editor-in-chief, Gorkhapatra Daily) also focus on leaders committing to curb use of violence, but that there is a serious need for, especially the NC, UML and Maoist, to get control of their cadres:

However, the CA polls continue to face greater threats from inter-part conflicts, violence, misunderstandings and attempts by those forces out to foil the election. Inter-party violence, if not

checked as committed by the senior leaders in their recent meeting, will obviously encourage violent activities.

Not saying much new, there is one interesting point though in this article. Chalise highlights that many Maoists have been killed also in the violent clashes: *'Nine cadres, including eight from the Maoist side alone, have been killed in election-related violence, while many more from the other parties have been injured.'*

This piece of information balances the picture of Maoists, showing that they are also victims of violence from other parties.

The Rising Nepal 5 April has the article **Corrupt Leaders as CA Candidates – How could this happen?** by Manoj Rijal. It is revealed in the by-line that the writer is an anti-corruption researcher.

Rijal begins by quoting a blog post (the name of the writer is not revealed, but it is said he/she claims to be a supporter of the NC) published six months before, urging the NC not to give tickets to corrupt leaders that will try to get tickets at any cost. The writer names five politicians that are *'a disgrace to his party and the country, and that these corrupt leaders were one of the key reasons for the failure of democracy and the eventual take over by King Gyanendra'*.

Rijal states that the blog writer's fears have come true now. He focuses on policy level corruption as an explanation to how the five unpopular leaders, four contesting for the NC and one now having joined the Madhes party MJF, have managed to *'grasp tickets for themselves'* to contest in the elections.

5.3 Concluding remarks

Both the editorials and op-eds in Kathmandu Post mainly hold negative views about Maoist. There is a clear tendency in the editorials and even more in the op-eds to use a rhetoric that emphasize negative characteristics and reduce the ethos appeal of the Maoists by the use of words like *incivility, irrational, violent nature, brainwashed, barbaric, paranoid, unable to maintain control* to describe them. It is possible to say that there is also much pathos appeal in the words that are used by Kathmandu Post both when describing the Maoists and the

situation in the country. The pathos appeal is mostly recognized in the use of words and phrases that are likely to create fear, e.g: *fractious*, *divisive* and *bloody* (about the situation in the country), *civil war*, *genocide*, *violence*, *murder*, *assassination* (about the possible results of a political suicide which the Maoists are committing), brainwashed *cadres that have no respect for human life* (about the Maoists). Kathmandu Post and its scribes on occasions also question the credibility of EC and international organization,

There is also a clear stand in the Kathmandu Post that the Maoists prospect of winning the elections is not good. Although some of the articles show some insecurity on this point. According to Prateek Pradhan, editor of Kathmandu Post at the time, *'everybody thought that they (the Maoists) would not be winning more than 10% of the total seats, so many closed their eyes to the highhandedness during the election. But that proved to be a blunder.'* (Pradhan 2010)

At the same time Kathmandu Post on several occasions says that the situation in Nepal might deride because the Maoists say they might not accept the election results if they don't win and generally did paint a very dark picture of situation the country.

The Rising Nepal, in contrast, mostly praises the government and the EC. A general tendency to balance the picture of Maoist as main aggressor and generally framing Maoists in a positive way is evident. In The Rising Nepal the rhetoric is much more 'sober', comparing it to the more 'colourful' language in The Kathmandu Post. One of the reasons behind this positive attitude towards the Maoists could be that the Maoist party held the Ministry of Communications during the time of elections. The general positive attitude towards the government agencies is a given.

A point from Binod Bhattarai's analysis (2006) on the media coverage during the first six months of the state of emergency is interesting, then there was a tendency of all the newspapers to use difficult-than-normal language in the editorials, leaving one guessing as to who the target audience could be, and how many may have read and understood what was being implied. This does not seem to be the case now, but it is a point that The Rising Nepal reveals little about the paper's political stand in the editorials.

In general The Kathmandu Post articles are more outspoken in their anti-Maoist view, than The Rising Nepal are in open support of the Maoists. After all, as mentioned already, the Maoists are also part of the government that own the newspaper.

Looking back on the points set out in the beginning of this chapter: 1) The Maoist are violent aggressors 2) The Maoist party will not get many votes in the CA election, 3) the Maoist party is not a legitimate democratic party and will not rule democratically if they win, 4) There is a good chance that Nepal again be at war after the election due to Maoist aggression, 5) the Maoist leadership have no control of their cadres on the ground they all seem much relevant in the case of Kathmandu Post, but not so relevant in the case of The Rising Nepal.

Chapter 6 Violent News

In this chapter I will illustrate and explain some results from the quantitative analysis with examples. I have selected the articles for section based on what I find most relevant in shedding light on my hypotheses.

A short reminder about the results from the quantitative analysis: There are a total of 147 news articles in the category violence (84 in KP, and 63 in TRN). Of these, 70 fall under the category violent actions. 50% of the articles in KP names the Maoists as the aggressors of violence, 38% in TRN do the same. 23 articles fall under the category concern about credibility (14 in KP and 9 in TRN). Maoists are framed as the main threat to this in 8 of the articles in Kathmandu Post and in 2 in TRN.

From these two categories I have selected some articles for more in-depth analysis to exemplify these frames and that also reveal some significant differences in the coverage by the Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal.

6.1 A controversy over who started it:

The Kathmandu Post 1 April front page, has the heading, **UML, Maoists clash with NC men, 23 hurt (sub title: Curfew in Dadeldhura):**

‘UML and Maoist cadres vandalized the NC office and attacked NC activists blaming the latter for burning their flags the previous night. Young Communist League cadres combed through the area in search of NC men and severely trashed them’

Using the word ‘*combed through*’ when describing what the YCL did paints a picture of a purposeful group, actively seeking to harm and who will leave no stone unturned in their hunt for victims. They use a lot of effort in getting hold of the NC men and in this there is an implicit warning: you can run but never hide from these villains. Their violent behavior is utterly expressed in the phrase ‘*severely trashed them*’ – indicated that they did great physical damage and also describing a very deliberate destruction. This word trash also have connotations to waste material. In this context it paints a picture of a very messy result and indicates that the violence is sadistic and the damage extensive. It is further described that at least 12 NC men were seriously injured in the clash.

The cause for the clash is described being the burning of the YCL flag by NC cadres the night before, and as no physical damage is reported in relation to this incident, this can also be a way of showing the YCL attack as excessive. It is also stated that the flag burning is something the NC cadres are accused of by the UML and the Maoists, it is not presented as a fact.

‘Following the incident, NC cadres retaliated against YCL men (...)’. The word retaliate, being a more formal word to describe revenge, does not exist in a context where there is no incident to retaliate against. It is to some extent justified to retaliate when someone have harmed you. The NC can thus be seen as 1) being treated unjustly and 2) be vigorous (even brave?) to not let such unjust actions go by unretaliated. It is reported that ten Maoist cadres were injured in the retaliation, including the YCL district chairman, NC supporters are also said to have vandalized the Maoist office.

The NC district vice president is in the end of the article quoted saying *‘that it was a premeditated attack against NC cadres’* is the final sentence – describing the attack as carefully planned out, also takes focus away from the flag burning which was what set the whole thing in motion in the first place.

Interestingly TRN has an article about the same incident the same day on their front page, under the headline: **Party workers clash in Dadeldhura**. This story deals with the same incident – but describe it completely different.

‘The local administration Monday clamped a curfew (...) following the clashes among the workers of three major parties – CPN-UML, CPN-Maoist and the Nepali Congress that left 25 people injured.’ Contrary to the KP article it is not the Maoists and UML clashing with NC (indicating that it is an uneven two against one) but clash among workers from three parties indicating that they all have parts to play in the clash

This is how TRN describe the background for the clash:

The clash ensued with the UML and the Maoist poll campaigners charging the Nepali Congress (NC) of burning down their flags. They accused that the NC burned down nearly 500 flags of both the parties UML and Maoist cadres declared a closure of the district headquarters as a show of protest against what they claimed burning of their party flags. The clash was started after NC workers went against the closure

Even if KP also mentions the flag burning as a possible cause, there it is described as minor and the clash starts with YCL taking the NC office. KP also doesn’t reveal the number of

flags allegedly burned, (there is quite a difference between 500 and 10). 500 flags burned would indicate a deliberate planned operation by NC men. TRN uses the word, *ensue*, this can be used to indicate a cause and effect relation between the the allegations of flag burning and the clash. TRN also say that the clash *started* when the NC went against the YCL/UML's counter reactive closure of an office building, thus naming the NC the 'ones who started it'.

Both papers have follow-ups on Dadeldhura the next day KP: Curfew I Dadeldhura for 2nd consecutive day and TRN: Dadeldhura parties for suspension of officials

6.2 Counting casualties

There is some power in numbers. Here are therefore a few examples from Kathmandu Post where the number of violent actions that are reported and the words used to describe the violent behavior especially of the Maoists.

Kathmandu Post 2. April: Maoists step up attacks on poll campaigners.

This article describes 9 incidents of violent clashes, Maoists being the main aggressor and the ones starting the violence in 7 of the cases. One of the cases is about the Maoists attacking a police team, and phrases like '*savagely attacked*' is used to describe the Maoists behavior.

A sub article here has the title **Hundreds of NC men flee villages** – Maoists are '*chasing*' them from their homes as they started '*arresting*' them after '*Maoist candidate Khagaraj Bhatta said that his party would not spare those with different ideology*'. An NC politician is also quoted as saying that the Maoists threatened to '*break the limbs of NC cadres if they were found in the village.*'

This article also describes an incident where 30 NC members that had been held '*captive*' by Maoists came into contact again with their party, one was seriously injured and had to be taken to hospital.

The article in Kathmandu Post April 7, **No let up in anti-poll activities**, describe 6 violent incidents, 5 involving Maoists, the other CPN (Unified). Maoists accused of '*manhandling*', '*abducting*', '*detaining*', '*trashing*' their victims – leaving them '*seriously injured*'. It is also reported that six NC men was attacked by '*about 100 Maoists*'.

In Kathmandu Post 6 April the frontpage reads **‘YCL rampage unrelenting’**. When people *rampage* through a place, they rush about there in a wild or violent way causing damage or destruction.

The subheadings in this article are: (1) *‘YCL cadres trash, injure 5 UML cadres’*. (2) *‘UML, YCL clash, over 16 injured’*. (3) *‘YCL abduct UML man’*.

The Young Communist League cadres are described as *‘in no mood to cease their attacks on candidates and activists of rival parties.’*, and it is also stated that the UML cadres *‘was badly beaten up by the former rebels.’*

The NC however is described as being somewhat brave: *‘Amid a tense situation the NC organized its program at Kawasoti despite YCL attempts to foil it.’*

That there is a controversy over who actually started it is revealed *after* a statement about the Maoist (YCL) starting it. That goes for all the reported cases that talk about abductions, beatings, and vandalism of private property. This article can be seen as something of a ‘YCL headcount of the day’. News worthy as the violence might be, with so many conflicting statements about the causes of violence, naming the aggressor may seem a bit biased.

The YCL are also not only showed as a violent aggressor, but also as behaving in a direct inhumane manner: *‘Issuing a press statement, NEMA said that the YCL cadres even prohibited family members from taking him to hospital for treatment. Worse still, according to the statement, the former rebels warned local health workers against offering any type of treatment.’*

6.3 The violent Maoists are a threat to credible elections

The piece **‘German delegates meet conflict victims’** (KP 2. April) about a team of German Parliamentarians visiting Nepal, addresses the issue of Maoists are spreading fear in the villages, and possibly frightening them into voting in their favor:

Talking to the delegation, Hariram Sapkota, chairman of Panchkhal VDC, said that those victimized by Maoists during the insurgency have been compelled to vote for them in the CA out of fear. “Many such people think that they will no more be targeted if they cast votes for the Maoists”, he said, quoting the Maoist threat of checking the voting process through mobile phones and computers.

It is reported however, that the German team also heard a mother complaining that no actions were taken against army officials that had killed and tortured her son inside the army barracks. The German team is said to have expressed belief after meeting with the locals, that the CA poll would end the conflict formally.

The Rising Nepal also has an article about the visit from the German Parliament delegation. But when KP focuses on meetings with locals, TRN's article, '**Parties urged to ensure violence-free elections**' (TRN 4 April) focus on the delegation's meeting with party leaders, especially those of Maoist and YCL. It is said that the delegation '*asked the political parties, especially Young Communist League (YCL), to stop intimidating and manhandling the voters of the April-10 Constituent Assembly (CA) elections.*' The main focus in the article is on what the Maoist leader, Prachanda, has communicated in the talks with the delegation. It is reported that that the team asked Prachanda to make sure the YCL would not repeat intimidation and manhandling of voters, and that Prachanda in turn assured the delegation that 'his party would not let the repetition of such activities.' Further on it is reported that Prachanda assured the delegation that the Maoist party would accept poll results, but that the party's victory was certain if the elections were held free and fair. The delegation is reported saying that '*Full respect of democratic values and human rights by the government to be formed after the election are the major preconditions for Germany's help in the future.*' Team leader of the delegation, Thilo Hoppe, is in the extension of this quoted saying that Prachanda was in favor of a coalition government even after the polls.

Looking at the two articles Kathmandu Post is highlighting the message given to the German team from villagers about Maoists threats and intimidation, whereas The Rising Nepal highlights Prachandas assurances about how the Maoists are committed to the free and fair elections and will keep restraint from violence. Even though the Maoists are addressed specifically as a potential problem in both articles, the choices of sources and situation are totally different. The Kathmandu Post also balances the accusations against Maoists by also reporting the accusations made against the army which was the Maoists adversary during the war.

Kathmandu Post 5 April '**People Doubtful about peaceful voting**': People in several districts are afraid that they will not be able to cast their vote without violence and intimidation. Locals have become a 'terrified lot' after UML and NC clash in Bajura. KP still

label Maoist intimidation as ‘more frightening’, quoting a Maoist leader saying YCL will be deployed with batons at polling booths on election day.

The article ‘**“Binocular terror” grips villagers**’ in Kathmandu Post 3 April, describes how the Maoists supposedly threaten people by saying that they will be supervising the polls and be able to know the villagers are voting. Til Kumari Khatri feels the dilemma of whether to cast her vote or not, as she fears for the Maoists – ‘*the former rebels*’. Khatri is reported to have said to poll observers ‘*it is being said that the Maoists will set up binoculars at all vantage points and punish those who do not cast votes in their favor.*’

The article in The Rising Nepal 8 April, ‘**Martin hopes Maoist cadres abide by leaders’ pledge**’, is the second article in TRN where Maoist violence is addressed specifically in the context of elections having credibility. Ian Martin, Chief of UNMIN is said to express confidence in Prachandas’ and YCLs commitment to stop beating cadres of other parties.

It is interesting to also note that all the articles here from Kathmandu Post uses locals as sources, something that exemplifies the results from the quantitative analysis in chapter four where Kathmandu Post to a greater extent than TRN use common people as sources of information in its news articles.

6.4 Concluding remarks

In the above some differences in the news reporting of violence and naming of aggressors between The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal are showed. However, it is not possible to conclude that this shows a general difference in reporting between the two based on this. The above analysis serves as an example of how, in some known cases, the reporting differs significantly. It is the findings of the quantitative analysis (in chapter four) that show general patterns and tendencies in the news reporting.

7 Conclusion

In this thesis I have analyzed the coverage of the Constituent Assembly elections in Nepal in two newspapers, The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal from 31 March to 10 April 2008. I have tested five hypotheses that together answer the superior research question: *Did The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal contribute to portray the Maoist party as a threat to the Nepali state and its people in the already tense situation before the election, and if so, how?*

In the following I will sum up the findings of the analysis and show to what extent the hypotheses have been weakened or strengthened.

7.1 The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal show the Maoists as a threat to democracy and enemy of the state.

The hypothesis is strengthened in the case of Kathmandu Post. The findings from the analysis of editorials and op-eds in chapter five especially show a rhetoric that at least partly aids in demonizing the Maoist party and question their democratic credibility. Speculations on a possible ‘bloodbath’ in the future if the Maoists are not feeling satisfied with the election results are also given way here, suggesting that they will lead the country into war again. The examples analyzed in chapter 6 that show the Maoist as aggressors of violence can further enhance the picture of them as potential enemies of the state.

In the case of The Rising Nepal this hypothesis is somewhat weakened. Both in the editorials and op-eds in chapter five, and in the news examples in chapter six, TRN show quite a positive attitude towards the Maoists. Also the TRN can be said to be less ‘outspoken’ in their views, so a very clear political stand is difficult to recognize in any direction.

7.2 The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal underestimated the Maoists potential for winning votes in the election

This hypothesis is strengthened in the case of Kathmandu Post, largely based on the findings in chapter five, even though there are some stated examples in the op-eds that show insecurity in relation to prospects of Maoist election results. The editor of the newspaper, Prateek

Pradhan, said, when asked by me whether it was right to blame the media for the unexpected election result (allegations that have been made in the aftermath), that the media did in fact underestimate the Maoists.

In the case of The Rising Nepal no clear underestimation is recognized, that said, it is difficult to recognize clear predictions on election results at all, thus the hypothesis is partly weakened and the results also somewhat inconclusive.

7.3 Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal show the Maoists as aggressors of violence

In Kathmandu Post the results of the quantitative analysis in chapter four that identify the Maoists as main aggressors of violence in 50% of the articles in the category ‘violent actions’ and in 8 out of 14 articles about ‘concern over credibility’ strengthens this hypothesis. This is also supported by the findings in chapter five and six.

In The Rising Nepal this hypothesis is to some extent strengthened by the results of the quantitative analysis in chapter four, where the Maoists are named the main aggressors of violence in 38% of the articles in ‘violent actions’. The findings from the analysis of editorials and op-eds in chapter five and the examples showed in chapter six, however, don’t give much support to this hypothesis. I conclude therefore, in the case of TRN, that there are both findings that strengthen this hypothesis, and findings that weaken it.

7.4 The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal focused their pre election coverage on violence

In chapter four it is found that both The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal focus a substantial part of their election coverage on violence. 50,9% in The Kathmandu Post and 43,4% in The Rising Nepal fall into this thematic category. This hypothesis is thus strengthened in the case of both The Rising Nepal and The Kathmandu Post.

7.5 The Kathmandu Post and The Rising Nepal used demonizing language in describing the Maoists and their actions

In the case of the editorials and op-eds in Kathmandu Post this hypothesis is strengthened. In the case of The Rising Nepal it is weakened. The Kathmandu Post use pathos appealing words extensively that are potent to create fear in the reader. The Rising Nepal on the other hand, seem to aim at assure the reader that things will be fine, not giving that much attention to the Maoists, as to the government agencies that are preparing for the elections. In some cases The Rising Nepal use very positive words to describe the Maoist, e.g. when extending thanks to them and the ‘people war’ for making the way for democratic elections, thus the hypothesis is weakened in the case of The Rising Nepal. (see 5.3 concluding remarks)

7.6 There are significant differences in the election coverage of between The Rising Nepal and The Kathmandu Post

Whereas the quantitative analysis show many similarities in the election coverage of the two newspapers, the results from the qualitative analysis in both chapter five and six show significant differences between The Rising Nepal and The Kathmandu Post. A general conclusion here is that the Kathmandu Post took a clear stand as critical of the Maoists. Prateek Pradhan openly stated in the interview that the Maoist criticism was deliberate from Kathmandu Post’s side, but that it was not always like that:

When the Maoists commenced their violent political movement, the newspaper did not know what importance to attach on the news of armed rebellion. At a time the newspaper romanticized the activities like attack on police stations, killings etc. Later on, when the newspaper realized its overstepping the democratic limitations, the Maoists were already too big to ignore. It was TKP, which took the first interview of the leader of the then underground insurgent party (I myself took the interview). The interview was published on the newspaper (8th Feb. 2006) mainly because he had shown sincere commitment to come to the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Maoists then joined the movement to overthrow the royal autocratic government, in association with the democratic political party. However, after coming into the mainstream, the Maoists did not abide by the commitments (mainly 12-point agreement reached between the Maoists and the democratic parties, reached in November 2005). The TKP then became quite critical of the Maoists moves, and they still are.

As I didn't manage to get a similar statement from The Rising Nepal, I don't know how the editor there reflects on this issue. But I find it relevant to again highlight the difference in owner situation as a plausible explanation to why The Rising Nepal seem to assert a more neutral, or should I rather say no, view.

The results of the quantitative analysis however show many similarities in the thematic priorities between the two newspapers. The Rising Nepal and The Kathmandu Post also show similar use of sources, with one main exception, that Kathmandu Post gives more priority to the voice of the common people.

7.7 Other remarks

There are many points that have surfaced in this thesis that I find interesting. The above show that The Kathmandu Post largely did contribute to portray the Maoist party as a threat to the Nepali state and its people in the already tense situation before the election. This is not to say that The Rising Nepal necessarily represent a 'higher road'. Both newspapers focus much on election related violence, something that has the potential of spreading fear no matter who is named the threat. The Kathmandu Post can also be seen as exercising their freedom of expression in a context where self-censorship often is the norm. One has to keep in mind that an overt focus on one single aggressor, in this case the Maoists, can also be the most accurate take on the situation. Prateek Pradhan in the interview even states that, when looking at the Kathmandu Posts' election coverage in retrospect: *'We should have reported all the excesses, extortions and violence meted out by the Maoists. We should not have been so naïve to believe that they had come into mainstream peaceful politics.'*

One thing that is not debatable however, is the actual results from the Constituent Elections in Nepal, the Maoists won a surprising 229 out of 601. The NC and the UML got 115 and 108 respectively.

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