

Unitary State Vs. Federal State In Nepali Public's Opinion

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Abstract: This paper, based on longitudinal public opinion surveys conducted between September 2006 and April 2012, argues that though the majority of Nepali people still ignorant toward federalism, a significant number of the public prefer a federal form of governance in the country. This segment of the population transcends over those who prefer a unitary form of governance by a significant margin. In addition to it, the public's support toward federalism is growing while the support toward unitary system is diminishing. The surveys also reveal that the public's support for the federal state is larger than that for the unitary state in all ethnic groups. This paper also investigates the underlying relationship among public opinions on different state restructuring issues, and establishes that the public's support toward one new feature of the state considerably agrees with another new feature of the state, and vice-versa. The factor analyses confirm that the people who support a new structure of the state with regard to one issue also support a new structure with regard to another one. Supporters of republicanism, secularism, federalism and multilingualism form one group of people while those of monarchism, Hindu state, unitary state and mono-lingualism belong to another. Since Nepal is linguistically and ethnically diverse, the federal governing system is justified. This system stimulates to recognize the identity of all groups: both privileged and under-privileged. Despite the debate among the political parties on the type of federalism, there is a consensus among them about ending the political and cultural domination of the Hindu high caste hill group, and erecting new Nepali identity based on inclusion, pluralism, and multiculturalism. Nepal cannot turn away from new structures of the state based on multi-cultural values because the first sitting of the Constituent Assembly has already declared the country a federal democratic republic in May 2008, which is formalized by the new constitution in September 2015.

Keywords: Public's opinion, federal state, unitary state, multiculturalism, Nepali identity

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the stances of Nepal's political parties toward federalism and investigates the dynamic of the Nepali general public's view on whether Nepal should be a unitary state or a federal state, by using findings of eight longitudinal public opinion polls conducted between September 2006 and April 2012. It divulges what the Nepali general public (i.e. common Nepali populace above 18 years of age) thinks on the issue during this time, and how their opinions toward this issue undergo changes over time. Variations in the public's opinion by ethnicity, religion, development region, educational status, age group and political party preference have been examined too. These are the explanatory variables which significantly influence the public's view on the issue of federalism, and they are identified to be the statistically significant explanatory variables through multiple regression analyses (see the analytical section of this paper).¹

The opinion polls reveal that the majority of the Nepali public are still ignorant about federalism², but the proportion of those who prefer the federal form of governance is significantly larger than those who prefer a unitary form of governance. In the course of time, the public's support toward federalism is growing while the support toward unitary system is diminishing. The polls also confirm that supporters of republicanism, secularism and multi-lingualism are more likely to support a federal state, while supporters of monarchism, Hindu state and mono-lingualism are more likely to support a unitary state. Since the first sitting of the

¹ Multiple regression analysis helps to show the relationship of independent variables to a dependent variable and measures the strength and direction of the relationship among them.

² Public opinion researches suggest that most of the general citizens are not well informed about political system and complex political issues even in an old democratic country like USA. General public are relatively little interested to politics, which have no direct connection to their lives, compared to other daily concerns such as career, employment, schooling and child rearing etc. (Paul and Brown 2001: 871-872, Modak et al 2007: 34, Parker et al 2008: 412-413). Most of them lack sufficient knowledge about politics and are ill prepared to deal with complexities of politics (Dalton and Klingemann 2007, Hoffmann-Lange 2008). But detailed investigation on it is beyond the scope of this paper.

Constituent Assembly has already declared the country a federal democratic republic on 28 May 2008 (which is formalized by the new constitution of the country promulgated on 15 September 2017), Nepal cannot remain a unitary state. It is obliged to restructure the state based on multi-cultural values, which recognize the identity of all groups.

II. THE CONTEXT

Before the issue of federalism gained a momentum in Nepal, a regionally oriented party, Nepal Tarai Congress, first raised the issue of an autonomous Tarai region in 1951 under the leadership of Vedananda Jha (Gaije 1975: 109). But the issue fizzled out after sometime when the first parliamentary election held in 1959 turned to be disaster for this party.³ Bisheswor Prasad Koirala, the most charismatic political figure of the modern Nepal, has mentioned in his autobiography about Kirati people's demand for an ethnically autonomous region in the Majh-Kirat region (a region traditionally inhabited by Rai indigenous group in DudhKosi and Arun river basins) during his visit in Bhojpur in 1951 when he was the Home Minister (Koirala 2055 BS: 162-163). Ethnic and identity movements had been underway in an organized manner from the decade of 1980s when the *Panchayat* regime (1960-1990) became more open.⁴ Most of these movements were limited to preserve the ethnic and linguistic identities by forming cultural associations and publishing cultural magazines (Gurung 1997: 526, Gurung 2004: 435, Sharma 1997: 483). However, numerous ethnic organizations and political forums came into existence during the eighties, which advocated for ethnic identity and equal rights.⁵ But these movements were not strong enough to change the old structure of the Nepali state.

The issue of federalism explicitly surfaced in Nepal's political discourse only after the successful end of *Jan Andolan I* (which literally means the first wave of the mass movement) of April 1990. During the time when the Constitution of Nepal 1990 was being drafted to replace the 1962 Constitution promulgated under the *Panchayat* regime, some political leaders of hill *Janajati*⁶ and *Madhesi*⁷ groups questioned the unitary state structure of Nepal given the country's linguistic, ethnic and geographical heterogeneity, and demanded a federal state structure (Hoftun et al 1999: 327-333).⁸ An umbrella organization of indigenous associations called Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) demanded that Nepal be transformed from a unitary state into a multi-nation state since its establishment in July 1990. It referred to all indigenous groups as separate nations (Sharma 1997: 489). But the 1990 Constitution did not approve the federal state structure. However, the issue of federalism remained an essential topic in Nepal's political discourse since then. Politicians and scholars in favour of federalism argued that a federal system was suitable to Nepal because the country was linguistically and ethnically diverse and federalism would recognize the identity of all groups. They also claimed that federal system would bring development more efficiently because it decentralized the development procedure and ensured ownership to local end-users.

Thus, the identity movements after *Jan Andolan I*, too, could not bring significant reforms in the structure of the Nepali state. However, an open atmosphere (i.e. the freedom of expression and other rights) guaranteed by the 1990 Constitution provided ample opportunities for ethnicity- and identity-based movements within the established political structure. This compelled the state to recognize cultures, religions and languages

³ All 21 candidates who contested in the election on the party's ticket lost (Gaije 1975: 123).

⁴ *Panchayat* was the political system of Nepal from 1960 to 1990. The system was introduced by King Mahendra (reigned 1955-1972) after overthrowing the first democratically elected government of Nepali Congress under the premiership of Bisheswor Prasad Koirala and dissolving the parliament on 16 December 1960. The parliamentary system was immediately abrogated and then political parties were declared illegal. The system was formalized by promulgating a new constitution in December 1962, which introduced a party-less guided democracy giving all executive powers to the monarch. It outlawed all the political parties and their activities, and prohibited fundamental civil rights such as the right to express opinion and organize against the establishment. The *Panchayat* regime moulded Nepali national identity along the Nepali language, Hindu religion, loyalty to the monarchy and *daurasuruwal* (a typical kind of costume worn by hill men). The period of the *Panchayat* regime was the time during which the Nepali state made intensive efforts to evolve itself into a nation-state by creating a homogenous national identity with a common religion, culture and language (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1997: 423, Pradhan 2002: 11, Hangen 2010: 31).

⁵ A forum called *Shetamagurali* was formed during this time to bring together non-Hindu hill indigenous communities such as Sherpa, Tamang, Magar, Gurung, Rai and Limbu. Nepal Tarai Congress was reorganized under a new name Nepal Sadhwawana Party with a mission of ensuring equal rights of Madhesi people.

⁶ The term *Janajati* is used as synonym of indigenous groups in Nepal. Therefore, *Janajati* and indigenous groups are used as interchangeable terms in this research paper.

⁷ *Madhes* is the plain land situated in the southern part of Nepal spread from East to West, which is also commonly known as Tarai. People originally living there are known as Madhesi whose languages and cultures are similar to those of the Northern India.

⁸ Hoftun et al (1999) mentioned this by referring interviews with Gore Bahadur Khapangi (the then general secretary of the Nepal National People's Liberation Front), Khagendra Jung Gurung (the then president of the Nepal Rastriya Janajati Party), and Gajendra Narayan Singh (the then president of the Nepal Sadbhavana Party).

of all the marginalized groups. It allowed a space for the assertion of voices from the excluded, under-privileged and marginalized groups. The United Nations' 1994 declaration of the "International Decade of the World's Indigenous People" for the period between 1995 and 2005 also added to the debate on cultural recognition and minority rights in Nepal. They demanded a multi-linguistic policy with a right of using local languages at the local government level instead of only Nepali language. They also demanded news broadcast in all languages, Sanskrit as an optional subject in school level education instead of a compulsory subject, and state's support for promoting school level education in all mother tongues.⁹ The demands for the religious and linguistic rights were tied up with the demand for federalism. Indigenous and *Madhesi* groups had envisaged that they would achieve these rights if the demand for federalism were fulfilled.

The Maoist movement also amplified the issue of ethnic autonomy as it defied the cultural, religious and linguistic monopoly of the Hindu high caste hill group since the mid-nineties when UCPN (Maoist)¹⁰ started an insurgency against the Nepali state. It is believed that the dominance of Hindu high caste hill group across ethnic, religious, linguistic and regionalist lines was regarded as a salient cause for the Maoist struggle (Mishra 2007: 109). In the 40-point demand put forward by UCPN (Maoist) to the government just before they formally began armed conflict in Feb 1996, five demands were directly concerned to the indigenous and other oppressed groups: ethnic autonomy, regional devolution, secular state, end of ethnic oppression and equality of all languages (Gurung 2003: 8). During the course of the insurgency, the Maoists were able to create awareness among indigenous groups, Dalits, women and other oppressed groups regarding their ethnic and cultural identities (Baral 2009: 4). To secure the rights and autonomy of indigenous and *Madhesi* groups, UCPN (Maoist) formed nine autonomous regions on September 2001 under United Revolutionary People's Council. Among these nine autonomous regions, six were based on ethnicity and three based on regional basis.¹¹ UCPN (Maoist) did not, however, explicitly mention federalism during the insurgency period. They only talked about giving autonomy to local indigenous groups. However, it was UCPN (Maoist) who first raised a voice on creating autonomous regions for addressing the issues of ethnicity, language and religion, and for equal distribution of state's power and resources after 1951 (Baral 2009: 4).

These two movements - one organized by indigenous people's associations adopting a peaceful means of protest and another organized by UCPN (Maoist) adopting a means of armed insurgency against the state - had a cumulative effect on the formation of ethnicity- and regional-based identity. Scholars of Nepali society agree that the strongest opposition to the cultural domination of Hindu high caste hill group came from the Maoist and the *Janajati* movements (Toffin 2006: 233, Tamang 2006: 271-272). It was so because it was one of the areas where the agenda of indigenous people and that of UCPN (Maoist) converged (Gurung 2003: 12). So, these movements had significant contributions for making the Nepali state to accept multiculturalism and inclusive democracy.

In the meantime, the leaders of seven agitating political parties formed an alliance, commonly known as Seven-Party Alliance (SPA)¹², on 8 May 2005 to protest against the King Gyanendra's takeover of 1 February 2005. The SPA and UCPN (Maoist) entered into a 12-point Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in November 2005 in New Delhi, India. In accordance with the 12-point MoU, the SPA called a nationwide mass protest movement on 6 April 2006 - they called it *Jan Andolan II*, which literally means the second wave of the mass movement - against the autocratic monarchy to which the Maoists extended their support. The major political parties and the Maoists had a clear-cut plan about what to do with the old structures of the Nepali state

⁹ Demands of news broadcast and school level education in major ethnic and regional languages were fulfilled step-by-step in the 1990s. Also, the government withdrew from the decision of making *Sanskrit* as a compulsory subject in the school level education.

¹⁰ The UCPN (Maoist) was previously called CPN (Maoist) until it formally unified with the People's Front Nepal (*Janmorcha Nepal* in Nepali language) in October 2008 and with the CPN (Unity Centre - *Masal*) in January 2009. Not to be confused with other leftist parties with similar names like the CPN-Maoist (note the dash in between), and the CPN Maoist (without dash in between). By merging several Maoist parties in it in May 2016, UCPN (Maoist) has been renamed as CPN (Maoist Centre). After the unification with CPN (UML) on 17 May 2018, the party is now known as Communist Party of Nepal (CPN). But its old name UCPN (Maoist) has been used throughout this article.

¹¹ The ethnicity based six autonomous regions were Tharuwan autonomous region (for Tharu ethnic group), Magarant autonomous region (for Magar ethnic group), Tamuwana autonomous region (for Tamu or Gurung ethnic group), Tamsaling autonomous region (for Tamang ethnic group), Newa autonomous region (for Newar ethnic group) and Kirat autonomous region (for Kirati or Rai-Limbu ethnic group). The region based three autonomous regions were Seti-Mahakali autonomous region (for far-western hill people), Bheri-Karnali autonomous region (for mid-western hill people) and Madhes autonomous region (for *Madhesi* people).

¹² It was an alliance formed by the seven agitating parliamentary political parties on 8 May 2005 to protest against the King's take-over of 1 February 2005, when the incumbent King Gyanendra dismissed the appointed Deuba government, declared a state of emergency and took all executive powers. The seven parties included in the alliance were Nepali Congress, Nepali Congress (Democratic), CPN (UML), Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party, Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi), United Left Front and People's Front.

after the successful end of the *Jan Andolan II*. Most importantly, Nepali Congress and CPN (UML) already had a common consent with UCPN (Maoist) to first sideline the King, and abolish monarchy and transfer the country into a federal republican state after the *Jan Andolan II* (Toffin 2006: 220-221). Therefore, the discourse of republicanism and federalism along with linguistic and religious rights gained ground after *Jan Andolan II*. The country's major political parties discarded the single-cultural value based old structures of the Nepali state and stepped forward for multi-cultural value based new structures of the state.

The issue of federalism intensified after the endorsement of the "Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007" on 15 January 2007 by the Interim Legislature-Parliament, which had been established by the House of Representatives reinstated after the *Jan Andolan II*. The Interim Constitution 2007 did not satisfy the *Janajati* and *Madhesi* leaders as it did not explicitly mention about republicanism and federalism.¹³ After a few days of its endorsement, some *Madhes*-based¹⁴ regional political parties such as a non-violent political party *Madhesi Janadhikar Forum*, and a violent and underground group *Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha* demanded that it be amended by taking into account the concerns of the *Madhesi* people. They argued that aspirations of *Madhesi* people were not reflected in the Interim Constitution. One of the main demands of the *Madhes*-based regional political parties was the transformation of Nepal to a federal state from a unitary state. In line with this, they were demanding to create a separate federal province in the Tarai (i.e. *Madhes*) region. They had coined a popular slogan *Ek Madhes Ek Pradesh*, which literally means "one *Madhes*, one federal province". But the Interim Constitution did not explicitly say anything about the federalism. It only mentioned in the Article 4(1) that "Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive and fully democratic state" (Law Books Management Board 2007). So, it seemed that the Interim Constitution had deliberately avoided using the term "a federal democratic state" by using the term "a fully democratic state". To show their strong disagreement with the Interim Constitution, *Madhes*-based political parties called for agitation and closure in the Tarai region of the country in January/February 2007 (which is commonly known as *Madhes Movement 2007*). After the prime minister promised to adopt a federal structure after the CA elections, the *Madhesi* agitating groups stopped their protest programmes. In the meantime, indigenous organizations also held street demonstration in Kathmandu under the leadership of the NEFIN demanding several privileges including a federal state based on ethnicity-based identity (this is commonly known as *Janajati Movement 2007*). On 30 August 2007, the president of *Madhesi Janadhikar Forum* Upendra Yadav and the coordinator of the government's dialogue team Ram Chandra Poudel signed a 22-point agreement in which they expressed their commitments for establishing federal governing system with autonomous provinces. The event proved to be a remarkable departure of Nepal's major political parties to the federal system from the unitary system (Sharma 2010 BS: 263). This event, indeed, was a decisive turn in Nepali political history.

On 28 December 2007, the Interim Legislature-Parliament approved a bill that amended the Interim Constitution incorporating the issues, including the issue of federalism, raised by *Madhesi* and *Janajati* leaders and activists. This amendment declared Nepal "a federal democratic republic state", subject to be ratified by the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly (CA). This amendment was a milestone for Nepal going toward the federal structure. The first sitting of the elected CA held in May 2008 formally declared Nepal a federal democratic republican state. Leaders of *Janajati* and *Madhesi* protest movements had taken the declaration of the country a federal democratic republic as the first and primary step toward paving a way for institutionalizing new Nepali identity based on multiculturalism.

The May 2008 declaration made by the first meeting of the elected CA was a momentous event in Nepal, through which the process of the state's structural political transformation formally began. Among other things, the declaration included adaptation of a federal form of government replacing the current unitary form of government. Though the CA decided to make the country a federal state, there remained considerable divergence among the major political parties on the particular form of federalism. They have yet to reach at consensus on the basis on which the federal provinces should be demarcated and named, and on the divisions of responsibilities among the central unit, provincial unit and local unit. Due to lack of consensus among the political parties on the form of federalism, the CA was dissolved in 27 May 2012 without delivering a new constitution. Second elections of the CA were held on 19 November 2013. The Nepali Congress emerged as the largest party winning 196 seats out of the 601 seats followed by CPN (UML) with 175 and UCPN (Maoist) with 80. But, consensus of the major political parties on the form of federalism has still not been reached. But recently on 8 June 2015, the four major political parties represented in the CA - NC, UML, UCPN (Maoist) and *Madhesi Janadhikar Forum* (Democratic) - agreed to form eight provinces considering five bases of identity and 4 bases of capability, leaving the names of the provinces to be decided later by two-third majority of the respective provincial assemblies. Also, they agreed to form a federal commission to recommend the demarcation of the

¹³ The Article 4(1) of the "Interim Constitution on Nepal 2007" states that "Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive and fully democratic state" (Law Books Management Board 2007). There was no mention of republicanism and federalism (until it was amended in December 2007).

¹⁴ *Madhes* and *Tarai* are used as interchangeable terms in this research paper.

boundaries of the eight federal provinces within its six-month term.¹⁵ So, it seems that Nepal's political parties still have to do a big exercise to reach at the consensus.

Thus, federalism has been a major issue of the state restructuring agenda among Nepal's political parties at present. UCPN (Maoist)¹⁶, which was the largest political party in the first CA, and other regional and ethnicity-based political parties stood in the favour of an ethnicity-based federal system (they also call it identity-based federalism). They claimed that various indigenous groups of the country have a historical attachment to certain regions, and only an ethnicity-based federal system could ensure sufficient or maximum autonomy to local indigenous groups in the decision-making process, and preserve their identity, language, culture etc. and bring them into the political mainstream. In the beginning, these parties had demanded the 'priority rights' for the indigenous people on natural resources such as lands, forests and water in the respective provinces. Beside these, they had also asked to make sure that only indigenous people in the respective provinces could successively stand in elections for two terms (Sen 2013a: 41). But, they have now adjusted their demands and are asking only for creating federal provinces considering ethno-geographic history.

On the other side, Nepali Congress (NC),¹⁷ the second largest party in the CA, Communist Party of Nepal United Marxist Leninist (CPN UML),¹⁸ the third largest party, and other fringe political parties (both communist and rightist parties) said that federalism should be based on economic viability and geography, not based on ethnic identity because it is not practical since every district and region of Nepal is ethnically and culturally heterogeneous, and there are more than a hundred ethnic and linguistic groups in the country. They argued that an ethnicity-based federal system could bring communal disharmony and ultimately drive the country to disintegration. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that indigenous and *Madhesi* leaders of NC and CPN (UML) too were in favour of ethnicity-based federalism. In October 2012, dozens of indigenous leaders in NC resigned from the party due to differences with the party leadership on the issue of ethnicity-based federalism.¹⁹ In the same time, some of the leaders of CPN (UML) from indigenous background departed from the party accusing their parties of being against the ethnicity based federalism, and erected a new political party.²⁰ Some others with *Madhesi* background joined other political parties, which favoured ethnicity based federalism, such as UCPN (Maoist) in April 2013.²¹

In spite of the disagreements as regards the specific form of federalism, an overwhelming majority of the elected CA members (almost 91 percent) endorsed the new Constitution on 20 September 2015. The new Constitution defines the 'State of Nepal' in its Article 4(1) as 'an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive democratic, socialism-oriented federal democratic republican state' (Constituent Assembly Secretariat 2015). This clause of the Constitution unambiguously states that Nepal is a secular federal republican state and has paved the way to formalizing other basic structures related to federalism such as demarcation and naming of federal provinces, and divisions of responsibilities among the central unit, provincial unit and local unit etc.

Major political parties, however, still lack consensus on the basic structures of federalism. Broad-based political parties, particularly Nepali Congress, CPN (UML) and UCPN (Maoist), have big disputes with *Madhes*-based political parties on numerous issues of federalism including demarcation and naming of federal provinces. Apart of this, *Madhes*-based political parties have questioned on the provision of citizenship, the right to employment in state structures and the delimitation of constituencies. To show their anxiety, some *Madhes*-based political parties called for mass demonstration and declared a border blockade in Tarai immediately after the promulgation of the Constitution by the elected CA,²² which went on up to February 2016 until the new Constitution was amended as per the demands of *Madhes*-based political parties in respect of right to employment in state structures on the basis of the principle of proportional inclusion (Article 42 [1]), and in respect of delimitation of constituencies primarily based on population and secondarily based on geography (Article 285 [5]). But disagreement regarding to issues of federalism and citizenship still remained.

¹⁵ The agreement is known as 16-point Agreement (Setopati.com, 8 June 2015).

¹⁶ UCPN (Maoist) was the largest party in the Constituent Assembly (that was dissolved on 27 May 2012) with 238 seats out of 601.

¹⁷ Nepali Congress (NC) was the second largest party in the Constituent Assembly with 115 seats.

¹⁸ CPN (UML) was the third largest party in the Constituent Assembly with 109 seats.

¹⁹ On 3 October 2012, 36 district level indigenous leaders of NC quit the party accusing the party of not becoming serious toward the ethnicity based federalism (Nepalnews.com, 4 October 2012).

²⁰ The then party vice-chairmen of CPN (UML) Ashok Rai, who is from indigenous ethnic background, quit the party along with dozens of central level leaders and hundreds of cadres on 4 October 2012 (Nepalnews.com, 4 October 2012). After some days, he announced the formation of a new political party called Federal Socialist Party with the main objective to establish single ethnic identity based federalism.

²¹ An ex-politburo member of CPN (UML) Ram Chandra Jha, who belongs to *Madhesi* origin, joined UCPN (Maoist) on 6 April 2013 (Nepalnews.com, 8 April 2013).

²² It was believed that India, too, was soft-hearted toward the *Madhes*-based political parties. Hence, it put partial embargo on imports of essential commodities including fuel and medicines in Nepal during the border blockade. But analysis of India's role in the political unrest of Tarai is beyond the scope of this paper.

III. DATA AND METHOD

The years between 2002 and 2012 were very eventful in Nepal's politics. This was also the period in which longitudinal opinion polls based on random (probability) sampling, titled 'Nepal Contemporary Political Situation' or NCPS, began with the financial support from The Asia Foundation Nepal. The first poll was conducted in 2004.²³ In addition, another series of longitudinal opinion poll (also based on the random sampling) called 'People's Perception of Safety and Security' or PPSS was also conducted between 2007 and 2010 with the financial support from The Saferworld UK.²⁴ The author is one of the principal researchers in both the survey series. Data from eight collective waves of opinion polls from these two survey series, NCPS and PPSS, conducted between September 2006 and April 2012 have been used in this article (see Figure-1 below for the survey dates). These are the only surveys in the two survey series in which a question on public's choice on types of governing system (preference between federal system and unitary system) was asked to respondents.

Public opinion polls from the both NCPS and PPSS series had geographically represented every part of the country in their samples, and had employed random (probability) sampling techniques in all stages (from district level to respondent level). Every wave of these polls had a sample size of about 3,000 respondents and followed the same methodology, because of which their findings were comparable with each other and trend analysis was possible with their findings.²⁵

In the first stage, districts were selected using stratified random sampling, where stratification was based on five development regions and three ecological regions. Number of districts from a particular stratum in the sample was decided by employing proportional allocation. Also, total sample size of respondents was proportionally distributed across these sample districts. In the second stage, proportional numbers of village development committees (VDCs) and municipalities were selected from every sampled district through simple random sampling. The numbers of sampled VDCs and municipalities varied according to the size of the respective sampled districts. Subsequently, in the third stage, wards within the sampled VDCs and municipalities were selected through simple random sampling as well. Then in the fourth stage, households within the sampled wards were selected by employing the random-walk method.²⁶ Finally, in the fifth stage, a respondent of 18 and above from each of the sampled household was selected for interview using the Kish-grid (i.e. a table of random digits)²⁷. The interviews were conducted in the face-to-face mode.²⁸ In this way, the surveys had followed the random (probability) sampling techniques at every stage, so that findings of these surveys could be generalized in the context of the entire population under study.²⁹ The random (probability) sampling is the only scientific basis that allows drawing an inference from a sample to a population though there is always a small degree of deviation between a sample and a population (Kumar 1996, O'Muircheartaigh 2008).

The samples of these surveys had, indeed, truly represented the national population. The sample composition in terms of ethnicity, sex, age group, region, religion etc. was very much consistent with the population composition as per Nepal's 2001 national census (Sharma and Sen 2006: 9-10, Sharma and Sen 2008: 11-13, Sharma and Khadka 2011: 9-13). Therefore, the author claims that the findings of these surveys closely

²³ The main reason to initiate this work was that there was no parliament and elected local political units in Nepal after May 2002. The House of Representatives was dissolved by the then Prime Minister Deuba in May 2002, and the 5-year term of the local political units ended in May 2002. Elections for the both parliament and local political units were not held due to lack of security prevailing in the country. Media, too, was under the censorship of the state. Thus, the only option left for measuring the public's pulse in this fluid period was public opinion polling (Sharma and Sen 2005: 342-343).

²⁴ People's Perception on Safety and Security (PPSS) surveys were basically conducted to measure public opinion on community safety and armed violence. However, some questions related to the state restructuring were also included in the questionnaires of these surveys.

²⁵ Methodology of the surveys must be similar if findings of these surveys have to be compared with each other (Hellevik 2008).

²⁶ The starting points for the random-walk method were recognizable locations such as schools, crossroads, *chautaras*, bazaars etc. Interviewers had to walk in a random direction from a given starting point counting number of households along the route. A required number of households were selected randomly by employing systematic sampling technique with right-hand-rule. In other words, required numbers of households were selected by skipping a certain number of households in between based on number of households available in a sampled ward.

²⁷ The use of the Kish-grid ensures that each eligible member in a selected household has an equal chance of being selected.

²⁸ Though there are many ways to collect public opinion, the history of polling exercise has evinced that the best way to gauge public opinion is to ask them directly using a face-to-face interview mode (Weisberg et al 1996). This interview mode allows adopting more complicated selection methods like Kish-grid method excluding those who are younger than 18 years, and yields better cooperation from respondents than a telephone survey. In addition to it, visual aids such as show cards, 10-point scales, smiley scales and pictures etc. can be used effectively in the face-to-face interviews (Dykema et al 2008).

²⁹ A scientific quantitative survey conducted with some kinds of random (probability) sampling produces a generalizable set of findings (Patton 1990, Sayer 1992, Weisberg 2008).

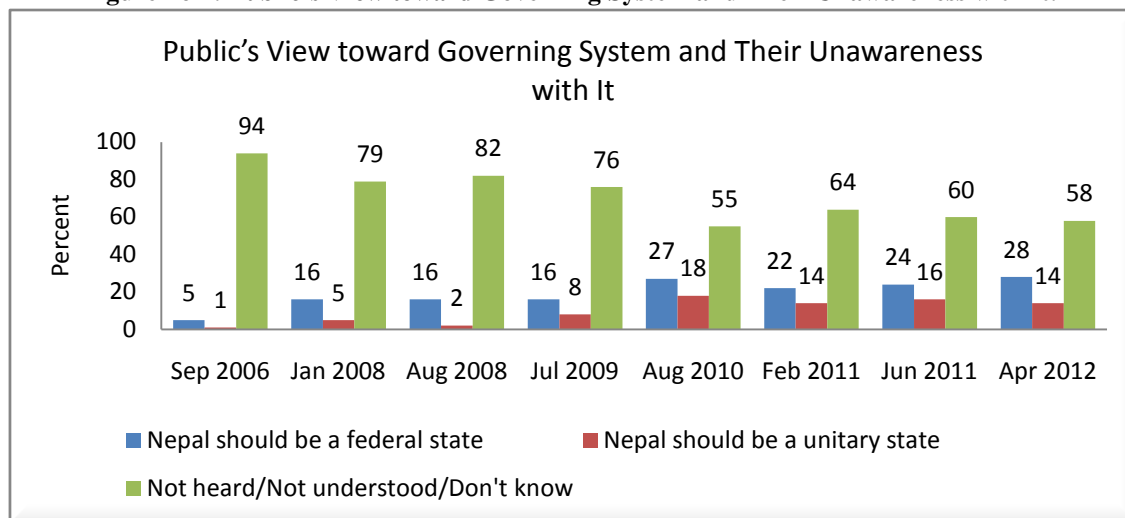
mirror opinions of the entire adult Nepali citizens with a certain margin of error, not only the sample respondents.³⁰ In other words, findings of these surveys are generalizable to the entire population.

IV. UNITARY STATE VS. FEDERAL STATE: OPINIONS FROM THE PEOPLE

Even though federalism is the most contentious issue among the political parties of Nepal, the issue of federalism is not deeply rooted in the mindset of the Nepalis public. As of September 2006, a few months subsequent to the *Jan Andolan II* of April 2006 (this was the first survey that asked respondents about federalism, the exact phrasing of the question was: What should be the type of governing system of Nepal, unitary system or federal system?), overwhelming majority (94 percent) of the people either had not heard the term, or had not understood the term, or had no opinion in this regard (see Figure-1). The proportion of such people was still as high as 79 percent in January 2008, just a few months prior to the May 2008 declaration of the CA. This proportion was slightly increased to 82 percent in August 2008, a few months subsequent to the May 2008 declaration of the CA. By July 2009, about three quarters of the general people (76 percent) still professed ignorance about the issue of federalism. This revealed that even after the *Jan Andolan II*, *Madhes* Movement and *Janajati* Movement, and the May 2008 declaration of the CA, the public's acquaintance with the issue of federalism was still very low.

However, the proportion of those who had not heard of or had not understood the term steadily declined after July 2009. As of August 2010, only 55 percent said that they had not heard of it or did not understand it. Again in February 2011, this proportion increased to 64 percent. Since then, this proportion began slightly decreasing and registered at 58 percent as of April 2012. However, still more than half of the ordinary public reported that they had not heard of or did not understand the term, though it had already been four years after the CA declared Nepal a federal state. This indicated that, at least until 2012, the message of federalism had not yet sufficiently penetrated into the Nepali society.

Figure no 1: Public's View toward Governing System and Their Unawareness with It.



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

Since the largest segment of the Nepali people had not become familiar with the term federalism, most respondents were not in a situation to mention whether Nepal should become a federal state or remain a unitary state. In September 2006, only 5 percent said that the country should become a federal state. However, the proportion of the people who preferred the federal system gradually increased over the period. As of April 2012, 28 percent had favoured the federal form of governance, and proportion of those who had favoured the unitary state was even smaller (only 14 percent). Still, more than half of the ordinary people either had not heard of it or had not understood anything about it. This exposed that the general public's awareness toward federalism was very low. Even though the issue of federalism was the most contentious issue at the central level politics, the ordinary Nepali citizens were not well informed with this issue at the community level and apparently had no strong feelings about it. The public opinion surveys conducted in August 2010, February 2011 and June 2011 (the only public opinion surveys discussed in this paper in which types of the federalism the public preferred were asked) found that a majority of those who wanted Nepal to be a federal state suggested that federal units be

³⁰ Representative opinion polls measure the public opinions of a population of interest (Kepplinger 2008, Weisberg 2008).

demarcated on the basis of either east-west geography (including mountain, hill and Tarai) or north-south geography (separating mountain, hill and Tarai). Proportions of those who wished to see formation of the federal provinces on the basis of ethnicity and language were very small (Sharma and Khadka 2011: 56).

Since majority of the general public were not acquainted with federalism, it would be understandable to have a low level of support toward federalism in all ethnic groups.³¹ Despite of the fact that public's support toward federalism was still low, the public's support toward federalism grew gradually in all ethnic groups between September 2006 and April 2012. Hill caste group and *Newars* were relatively more likely to support a federal system despite the fact that plurality people within these communities, too, were unaware about it. Even though there were *Madhesi* and *Janajati* protest movements demanding a federal state structure in January and February 2007, a plurality of the people from these particular groups (i.e. *Madhesi* caste group, *Madhesi* Dalit, and Tarai and hill indigenous groups), too, professed ignorance about federalism through April 2012 and was not demanding it. Still, the public's preference toward federalism had slightly increased. Moreover, the survey data revealed that more people were in favour of a federal state than a unitary state in all ethnic groups. In other words, the proportion of people who preferred the unitary system of governance in the country was lower than those who preferred the federal system in all ethnic groups. The public's support toward unitary system increased between September 2006 and August 2010, but started to decline gradually since then.

Table no 1: Public's Support toward Federal System and Unitary System By Ethnicity.

	Supported to	Sep 2006	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Federal system	5%	16%	16%	16%	27%	22%	24%	28%
	Unitary system	1%	5%	2%	8%	18%	14%	16%	14%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	79%	82%	76%	55%	64%	60%	58%
	N	3000	3010	3025	3004	3000	3000	3000	3010
Hill caste group	Federal system	7%	19%	18%	20%	27%	26%	23%	33%
	Unitary system	2%	9%	4%	10%	21%	17%	27%	18%
	NH/NU/DK	91%	72%	78%	70%	52%	57%	50%	49%
	N	1008	930	935	928	926	969	926	930
Hill indigenous group	Federal system	2%	11%	15%	13%	27%	16%	17%	26%
	Unitary system	1%	2%	2%	7%	12%	12%	16%	12%
	NH/NU/DK	97%	87%	83%	80%	61%	72%	67%	62%
	N	533	648	660	652	632	655	635	646
Hill Dalit	Federal system	4%	6%	7%	6%	15%	21%	15%	24%
	Unitary system	0%	2%	2%	7%	13%	11%	11%	10%
	NH/NU/DK	96%	92%	91%	87%	72%	68%	74%	66%
	N	143	213	214	213	244	253	242	242
Newar	Federal system	5%	12%	13%	15%	18%	17%	17%	35%
	Unitary system	3%	7%	4%	9%	13%	10%	20%	15%
	NH/NU/DK	92%	81%	83%	76%	69%	73%	63%	50%
	N	222	165	166	165	164	198	165	165
Madhesi caste group	Federal system	4%	26%	20%	18%	36%	30%	37%	27%
	Unitary system	1%	2%	0%	8%	24%	11%	5%	12%
	NH/NU/DK	95%	72%	80%	74%	40%	59%	58%	61%

³¹ Nepali people are divided into 8 broad groups of ethnicity in this research: hill caste group, hill indigenous group, hill Dalit, *Newar*, *Madhesi* caste group, Tarai indigenous group, *Madhesi* Dalit and Muslim. The former 4 groups are originally hill people while latter 4 groups are originally plains people. Any Nepali man and women can be categorised in one of these 8 groups of ethnicity. According the 2001 census (i.e. the nearest census to the years the series of polls conducted), their proportions to the total population of Nepal are 31 percent (hill caste group), 23 percent (hill indigenous group), 8 percent (hill Dalit), 5 percent (*Newar*), 16 percent (*Madhesi* caste group), 9 percent (Tarai indigenous group), 4 percent (*Madhesi* Dalit) and 4 percent (Muslim).

	N	465	497	482	528	529	478	532	438
Tarai indigenous group	Federal system	4%	9%	16%	15%	27%	20%	22%	24%
	Unitary system	1%	3%	1%	5%	16%	17%	7%	19%
	NH/NU/DK	95%	88%	83%	80%	57%	63%	71%	57%
	N	326	284	288	271	247	226	247	303
Madhesi Dalit	Federal system	2%	13%	14%	17%	26%	20%	32%	23%
	Unitary system	0%	1%	0%	10%	17%	9%	2%	4%
	NH/NU/DK	98%	86%	86%	73%	57%	71%	66%	73%
	N	139	145	153	121	129	93	124	160
Muslim	Federal system	5%	23%	15%	10%	19%	13%	38%	27%
	Unitary system	0%	4%	0%	7%	34%	17%	10%	9%
	NH/NU/DK	95%	73%	85%	83%	47%	70%	52%	64%
	N	132	128	129	129	128	128	128	129

Note: NH/NU/DK stands for Not Heard, Not Understood and Didn't Know respectively,

Across religious affiliation, people from any religion were more likely to support a federal system than unitary system since September 2006 when this survey series started. By April 2012, Kirati people showed the highest level of support toward federalism followed by Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims.

Table no 2: Public's Support toward Federal System and Unitary System By Religion.

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

Out of five development regions, the highest level of public's support toward federalism was in the Eastern development region. But still only less than half of the people living in this region (38 percent) favoured a federal form of government as of April 2012. In other regions, only around a quarter of people supported it. However, more people were in favour of a federal state than a unitary state in all development regions. In other words, the proportion of people who preferred a unitary system of governance was smaller than those who preferred a federal system in all development regions.

Table no 3: Public's Support toward Federal System and Unitary System By Development Region.

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

Education attainment had a significant influence on the public's view in this regard. People with higher level of education had a higher probability to support federalism, while those with lower level of education had a lower probability to support it. Illiterate people, people who had received informal education and people who had attained only primary level or lower secondary level had very low levels of support for federalism. On the other, people with more than this level of education had higher level of support for it.

Table no 4: Public's Support toward Federal System and Unitary System By Educational Status.

	Support to	Sep 2006	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Federal system	5%	16%	16%	16%	27%	22%	24%	28%
	Unitary system	1%	5%	2%	8%	18%	14%	16%	14%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	79%	82%	76%	55%	64%	60%	58%
	N	3000	3010	3025	3004	3000	3000	3000	3010
Illiterate	Federal system	1%	4%	5%	3%	9%	8%	10%	8%

	Unitary system	0%	1%	0%	3%	11%	4%	4%	4%
	NH/NU/DK	99%	95%	95%	94%	80%	88%	86%	88%
	N	1146	1209	944	848	881	850	849	901
Informal education	Federal system	2%	8%	9%	12%	22%	14%	17%	21%
	Unitary system	1%	3%	2%	9%	11%	10%	13%	17%
	NH/NU/DK	97%	89%	89%	79%	67%	76%	70%	62%
	N	438	429	586	676	506	506	453	563
Primary/lower secondary	Federal system	3%	14%	14%	14%	22%	21%	24%	28%
	Unitary system	1%	5%	2%	8%	24%	14%	14%	16%
	NH/NU/DK	96%	81%	84%	78%	54%	65%	62%	56%
	N	628	672	655	785	578	663	688	567
Secondary	Federal system	9%	38%	30%	33%	42%	35%	35%	45%
	Unitary system	2%	11%	4%	11%	25%	22%	26%	19%
	NH/NU/DK	89%	51%	66%	56%	33%	43%	39%	36%
	N	466	483	598	453	691	638	637	598
Higher secondary	Federal system	17%	52%	46%	37%	55%	45%	44%	56%
	Unitary system	5%	12%	6%	23%	24%	31%	30%	26%
	NH/NU/DK	78%	36%	48%	40%	21%	24%	26%	18%
	N	242	153	185	178	278	261	270	290
Bachelor's & above	Federal system	33%	73%	57%	62%	71%	63%	49%	70%
	Unitary system	10%	16%	17%	23%	22%	21%	31%	16%
	NH/NU/DK	57%	11%	26%	15%	7%	16%	20%	14%
	N	80	62	54	66	68	82	102	90

On the other hand, the proportion of people who preferred a unitary system of governance was smaller than those who preferred a federal system in all educational groups. Though the public's support toward a unitary system had increased till August 2010, it had dwindled since then.

The surveys also revealed that people from younger age cohorts were more likely to support for federalism than their older colleagues. As of April 2012, about 33 percent of the people below 25 years of age favoured a federal system while only 14 percent of the people above 65 years of age did so. The survey data divulged that more people were in the favour of the federal state than the unitary state in all age groups except in those who were above 65 years of age.

Table no 5: Public's Support toward Federal System and Unitary System By Age Group.

	Support to	Sep 2006	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Jul 2009	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Federal system	5%	16%	16%	16%	27%	22%	24%	28%
	Unitary system	1%	5%	2%	8%	18%	14%	16%	14%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	79%	82%	76%	55%	64%	60%	58%
	N	3000	3010	3025	3004	3000	3000	3000	3010
25 and below	Federal system	6%	18%	20%	19%	38%	31%	29%	33%
	Unitary system	1%	4%	3%	9%	19%	15%	18%	16%
	NH/NU/DK	93%	78%	77%	72%	43%	54%	53%	51%
	N	738	676	675	907	780	691	759	775
26 – 35	Federal system	6%	17%	15%	16%	28%	22%	26%	29%
	Unitary system	2%	7%	2%	8%	20%	17%	18%	16%
	NH/NU/DK	92%	76%	83%	76%	52%	61%	56%	55%

	N	802	846	839	765	794	783	811	742
36 – 45	Federal system	3%	17%	17%	16%	23%	21%	23%	27%
	Unitary system	1%	4%	2%	9%	19%	14%	16%	11%
	NH/NU/DK	96%	79%	81%	75%	58%	65%	61%	62%
	N	586	634	645	563	609	646	627	656
46 – 55	Federal system	6%	16%	13%	15%	23%	17%	23%	29%
	Unitary system	1%	4%	2%	7%	15%	12%	11%	13%
	NH/NU/DK	93%	80%	85%	78%	62%	71%	66%	58%
	N	460	428	431	388	392	458	377	396
56 – 65	Federal system	3%	9%	14%	8%	16%	13%	17%	22%
	Unitary system	1%	2%	2%	9%	17%	10%	11%	13%
	NH/NU/DK	96%	89%	84%	83%	67%	77%	72%	65%
	N	268	299	295	250	289	270	266	258
Above 65	Federal system	0%	12%	11%	8%	5%	18%	13%	14%
	Unitary system	1%	2%	1%	12%	12%	5%	9%	15%
	NH/NU/DK	99%	86%	88%	80%	83%	77%	78%	71%
	N	146	129	141	130	136	152	161	182

The likelihood of the public's support toward federalism was significantly influenced by individuals' political party preference.³² Supporters of UCPN (Maoist) and Tarai-based regional parties had more favouritism toward federalism than any other party supporters. UCPN (Maoist) supporters had the highest level of support toward federalism. Supporters of Nepali Congress and CPN (UML) also showed a moderate level of support toward federalism. Small rightist parties' supporters (including the supporters of RastriyaPrajatantra Party, RastriyaPrajatantra Party Nepal, RastriyaJansakti Party, Nepal Janta Party, and those who supported the king) had the least level of support toward federalism. Beside the supporters of these parties, there were more supporters in favour of a federal state than a unitary state in all political parties.

Table no 6: Public's Support toward Federal System and Unitary System By Political Party Preference.

	Support to	Sep 2006	Jan 2008	Aug 2008	Aug 2010	Feb 2011	Jun 2011	Apr 2012
All groups	Federal system	5%	16%	16%	27%	22%	24%	28%
	Unitary system	1%	5%	2%	18%	14%	16%	14%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	79%	82%	55%	64%	60%	58%
	N	3000	3010	2392	3000	2994	3000	3010
UCPN (Maoist)	Federal system	7%	23%	16%	29%	27%	28%	43%
	Unitary system	1%	8%	2%	11%	11%	17%	12%
	NH/NU/DK	92%	69%	82%	60%	62%	55%	45%
	N	492	247	879	819	568	636	369
Nepali Congress	Federal system	5%	27%	17%	29%	21%	22%	28%
	Unitary system	2%	8%	4%	23%	21%	24%	17%
	NH/NU/DK	93%	65%	79%	48%	58%	54%	55%
	N	418	334	477	488	619	495	418
CPN (UML)	Federal system	7%	19%	23%	31%	26%	35%	34%

³² Political party preference of the survey respondents were identified either based on which political party they voted for in the last election or based on which party they would vote for in the upcoming election. Political party they would for in the upcoming election was taken as the basis for the identification of political party preference in the surveys conducted in Sep 2006, Jan 2008 and Apr 2012 while party they voted for in the last election was the basis in the surveys conducted in Aug 2008, Aug 2010, Feb 2011 and Jun 2011.

	Unitary system	3%	5%	3%	17%	15%	20%	20%
	NH/NU/DK	90%	76%	74%	52%	59%	45%	46%
	N	356	379	404	387	505	342	264
Small rightist parties	Federal system	5%	9%	10%	23%	13%	39%	22%
	Unitary system	1%	8%	3%	21%	22%	24%	27%
	NH/NU/DK	94%	83%	87%	56%	65%	37%	51%
	N	170	53	31	43	76	41	37
Small leftist parties	Federal system	18%	19%	14%	18%	24%	48%	26%
	Unitary system	4%	12%	9%	23%	21%	8%	31%
	NH/NU/DK	78%	69%	77%	59%	55%	44%	43%
	N	28	26	69	57	33	25	42
Tarai based regional parties	Federal system	8%	37%	12%	38%	33%	56%	39%
	Unitary system	0%	3%	0%	34%	13%	3%	12%
	NH/NU/DK	92%	60%	88%	28%	54%	41%	49%
	N	24	110	311	175	146	119	77

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

As of 2012, the small rightist parties and small leftist parties (including Janmorcha Nepal, Nepal MajdurKisan Party, CPN [ML] and SanyuktaJanmorcha) were the only political parties where more people want Nepal to be a unitary state. In other political parties, larger proportions showed their favouritism toward federalism.

So, the survey results reveal that the Nepali public's preference toward the federal state is growing in the recent years though majority of the people are still predominantly ignorant about the issue. However, the survey data disclose the fact that, among respondents with a substantive opinion on the issue, more people have favoured a federal state than a unitary state, and the differences between support toward a federal state and that toward a unitary state have significantly increased in the recent years.

Multiple regression analysis measures the relationship of independent variables to a dependent variable and shows the significance and sign of the relationship (Snedecor and Cochran 1980: 149 & 334; Field 2009: 198). I investigated which independent variables were really significant to understand public's attitude toward federal system and unitary system through binary logistic regression analysis.³³ Independent variables included in the regression analysis were ethnicity, religion, development region, education, age group and political party preference. Bivariate analyses performed above showed that they seemed to be important variables to influence public opinion on governing form of system. Public opinion that showed agreement with unitary system state was coded 1, while that which showed agreement with federal system was coded 2. The public opinion toward federal system and unitary system was considered as a dependent variable in the regression analysis. The 'Other' responses, 'Not understood', 'Not heard' and 'Didn't know/ couldn't say' were treated as missing and excluded from the regression analyses because I wanted to see the relationship between public support toward unitary system or federal system and socio-demographic variables only.

I found that ethnicity, development region, education, age group and party preference significantly contributed in the influence of the public's opinion on the governing system in April 2012 while only party preference had a significant influence in September 2006.

In April 2012, Madhesi Dalits were more likely to support a federal state than hill caste group at $p < 0.01$. People living in CDR and MWDR were more likely to support for federalism than those living in EDR at $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.001$ respectively.

It also was found that people with higher educational status (those who completed Bachelor's level) were more likely to prefer a federal state (because beta coefficients of them were positive and significant) than their illiterate counterparts in April 2012. In July 2009 and August 2010 too, beta coefficients of the general public who had attained secondary level and above were positive and significant indicating that they were more likely to support the federalism compared to those who were illiterate (see Table 7 below). Therefore, the higher the educational status of the general public, the higher the support toward federalism.

³³ The reason for employing the binary logistic regression is due to the binary nature of the dependent variable. Binary logistic regression is performed when there are only two categorized outcomes (Field 2009: 265). For example, when public's opinion on the issue of federalism (i.e. opinion on "Unitary state vs. Federal state") is taken as the dependent variable, there are only two possible public's responses (outcomes): "Unitary state" opinion coded as 1 and "Federal state" opinion coded as 2.

Table no 7: Beta Coefficients Given by Binary Logistic Regression with Public's Opinion on Governing System Issue as the Dependent Variable (1 = Unitary state, 2 = Federal state).

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

	1.866*					1.497***		
CPN (UML)	1.786*	.039	.111		-.897**	1.164***	.062	-.962***
Small rightist parties	-.981	-1.206	-1.428		-2.172**	1.940***	-.407	1.923***
Small leftist parties	-.694	-.680	-1.793*		2.921***	-.972	-.679	-1.497**
Tarai based regional parties	16.353	.171	16.787		-1.001*	-.888	.548	-.300
Constant	21.158	.496	2.529*	-.061	1.215**	1.755***	.828*	1.258**
N	174	648	485	741	1338	1078	1196	1286
Negelkerke R ²	0.334	0.175	0.276	0.227	0.305	0.130	0.255	0.131

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

Though age was not significant variable in September 2006, people aged above 65 were less likely to support a federal state than their younger counterparts aged between 18 and 25 at p<0.05 in April 2012.

The survey data revealed that people who supported political parties other than the UCPN (Maoist) were less likely to prefer a federal state (because beta coefficients of them were negative and significant) than those who supported the UCPN (Maoist) in April 2012. The situation was almost same in other years too (see Table 7 above). Therefore, the general public who supported the UCPN (Maoist) were more supportive toward the federalism compared to those who support other mainstream political parties. So, the multiple regression analyses fundamentally confirmed the results obtained from the bivariate analyses.

V. UNDERLYING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PUBLIC OPINIONS ON DIFFERENT STATE RESTRUCTURING ISSUES

In this section, underlying (or latent) relationships between public opinions toward the four issues of state restructuring have been investigated through factor analysis, which is an appropriate technique for such purpose (O’Muirheartaigh and Francis 1981: 107; Kothari 1985: 376; Field 2009: 628). The main reason for examining the underlying relationships was to identify number of underlying factors (i.e. clusters of variables) and investigate what the factors represented conceptually.

Two surveys conducted in September 2006 and January 2008 were the only ones in which questions related to all of the four state restructuring issues (federalism, republicanism, secularism and multi-lingualism) were asked to respondents in the same survey. Therefore, the underlying relationships between them have been thoroughly investigated in this section using the data from these two surveys.

Public’s opinions that showed agreement with the old structure of the Nepali state were coded 1, while those that showed agreement with the new structure were coded 2. For instance, ‘Unitary state’ was coded 1 and ‘Federal state’ 2; ‘Monarchy’ was coded 1 and ‘Republic’ 2; ‘Hindu state’ was coded 1 and ‘Secular state’ 2; and ‘Nepali language as the only official language’ was coded 1 and ‘Other national languages as the official language’ 2 in the respective questions. The ‘Other’ responses such as ‘Not understood’, ‘Not heard’ and ‘Didn’t know/ couldn’t say’ were coded 99.

Factor analysis with extraction method of principal component analysis (PCA) and rotation method of varimax conducted for the January 2008 data identified the public’s opinions on republicanism, secularism, federalism and multilingualism as one underlying factor (i.e. one cluster of the variables). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis (KMO Measure = 0.6, which was mediocre [Field 2009: 647]). Bartlett’s test of sphericity $\chi^2(6) = 546.3, p < 0.001$, indicated that correlations between the variables were sufficiently large for PCA. Only one component had eigenvalue more than 1 and explained 37.5 percent of the variance. The Table 8 shows the factor loadings of the variables, eigenvalue and percentage of variances.

Table no 8: Summary of Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for the Public’s Opinions on the Four State Restructuring Issues, September 2006 (N = 3000).

Variable	Factor Loadings (Component 1)
Public’s opinion on ‘Monarchism vs. Republicanism’	0.56
Public’s opinion on ‘Hindu State vs. Secular State’	0.76
Public’s opinion on ‘Mono-lingualism vs. Multilingualism’	0.73

Public's opinion on 'Unitary State vs. Federal State'	0.26
Eigenvalue	1.50
% of Variance	37.50

The factor analysis revealed that all the four state restructuring issues belonged to the same group and represented the same nature of the public's opinion in September 2006. It meant that people with pro-republicanism opinion also had positive attitude toward secularism, multilingualism and federalism. In other words, supporters of monarchism also supported Hindu state, mono-lingualism and unitary state.

Factor analysis with extraction method of principal component analysis (PCA) and rotation method of varimax was conducted for the January 2008 data too. The analysis produced the same results. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure verified that sample size was adequate for the analysis (KMO Measure = 0.6, which was mediocre [Field 2009: 647]). Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2(6) = 1014.2, p < 0.001$, indicated that correlations between the variables were sufficiently large for PCA. Only one component had eigenvalue more than 1 and explained 42.5 percent of the variance. The Table 9 shows the factor loadings of the variables, eigenvalue and percentage of variances.

Table no 9: Summary of Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for the Public's Opinions on the Four State Restructuring Issues, January 2008 (N = 3010).

Variable	Factor Loadings (Component 1)
Public's opinion on 'Monarchism vs. Republicanism'	0.59
Public's opinion on 'Hindu State vs. Secular State'	0.78
Public's opinion on 'Mono-lingualism vs. Multilingualism'	0.75
Public's opinion on 'Unitary State vs. Federal State'	0.43
Eigenvalue	1.70
% of Variance	42.52

As with September 2006 data, the factor analysis showed that all the four state restructuring issues belonged to the same group and represented the same nature of the public's opinion in January 2008. It confirmed that pro-republicanism people were also pro-secularism, pro-multilingualism and pro-federalism. In another way, the people who favoured monarchism also favoured Hindu state, mono-lingualism and unitary state.

VI. CONCLUSION

In general, Nepali people are still unwitting toward federalism – the most controversial issue in the present context of the Nepali state. A majority of the people are still ignorant about federalism as of April 2012. In this situation, it is obvious that only a small segment of the Nepali population has wanted a federal form of governance in the country. However, this segment of the population is significantly larger than those who prefer a unitary form of governance. In addition to it, the public's support toward federalism is growing while the support toward unitary system is diminishing.

Even though majority of the Nepali people, irrespective of ethnicity, are unaware of the term of federalism, proportion of those who want Nepal to be a federal state is larger than those who wish to see it a unitary state in all ethnic groups. More importantly, a significant number of people from hill caste group, Newars and Madhesi caste group think that Nepal should become a federal state. Similarly, a significant number of people from the Eastern region, people with a high level of education attainment and people at younger age cohorts are more supportive toward a federal system. Also, a larger proportion of supporters of UCPN (Maoist) and Tarai-based political parties favour federalism.

In aggregate, people who support a new structure of the state with regard to one issue also support a new structure with regard to another one. Supporters of republicanism, secularism, federalism and multilingualism form one group of people while those of monarchism, Hindu state, unitary state and mono-lingualism belong to another.

Given the fact that Nepal is linguistically and ethnically diverse, a federal governing system is justified. This system promotes the recognition of the identity of all groups: both privileged and under-privileged. Despite the debate among political parties on the type of federalism, there is a consensus among them about ending the political and cultural domination of the Hindu high caste hill group, and erecting new Nepali identity based on inclusion, pluralism, and multiculturalism. Nepal cannot turn away from multi-cultural value-based new structures of the state, because the new Constitution of Nepal 2015 has already declared the country a federal

democratic republic. The declaration is the most important incident toward institutionalizing a new Nepali identity.

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