

Vote for change and effect of intimidation-fear: The Maoist electoral victory in the Constituent Assembly election

Mahendra Lawoti

Western Michigan University

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist emerged as the largest party in the Constituent Assembly election in April 2008, becoming the first Maoist party to win in a national election in the world, surprising most political observers and analysts. It achieved the feat after giving up insurgency just two years ago. This paper argues that people's aspirations for change, effect of Maoist intimidation and threats, and disconnect of the other political parties with the people contributed to Maoist win. The paper will also discuss other trends the election produced such as the emergence of identity parties, weakening of 'democratic parties' and growth of communist parties, domination of communist parties in the Constituent Assembly, and reward to movement parties and other outcomes. The analysis employs an innovative approach of comparing outlier results of the Constituent Assembly election with previous parliamentary election results and a case study of pre and post election violence in a district to establish the effect of intimidation, and it compares performance of established older parties in districts that were considered as strongholds but lost to Maoist and also compares performance of Maoists in urban areas where the election was relatively free and fair to verify the change hypothesis.