

Summary of article for CMI website

'The King cannot make a comeback'. *Himal Newsmagazine*, 29 March-12 April, 2008, p.28.

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The King cannot make a comeback because (a) almost all political-party manifestoes and documents have pledged to honor the republican transition pushed through in 2006, (b) there is a long history of political movements against hereditary and monarchical rule, (c) familial, clan, caste and communal bases of ascription have weakened fundamentally across the board in political, economic and social domains and such domains have become far more open, progressively during the last three decades, for individual achievement, and (d) King Gyanendra made a fatal political-military mistake by usurping political power and coopting the armed forces which, in turn, unified the popular and democratic forces against monarchy.

However, it is very much the case that political parties have not become as sanguine about the nature of the economy and economic change. A political transition, on the other hand, cannot be sustained without a commensurate mode and rate of economic transition. Democracy cannot be sustained at a very high level of concentration of productive resources, very high level of inequality and high absolute poverty. It is unwise, therefore, not to adequately recognize the immense economic and political significance of employment and livelihood.

The 2006 political movement, despite the very significant role the Maoists played in it, was primarily a bourgeois and petty bourgeois movement. It is notable that the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist seems to be pushing, at this specific stage of history, and despite considerable internal dissension, for bourgeois democracy. It is historically warranted indeed that the bourgeoisie should lead the society for the next several decades. However, it also has to be able to carry the workers and serve their interests as well. The constituent assembly should be adequately represented by both these groups. The ethnic struggle being waged now is also, at bottom a bourgeois and petty bourgeois struggle. Beneath the question of identity lies the delegitimation of old modes of generation of livelihood and the progressively increasing objective possibility as well as a search for a new mode of generation of livelihood. Ethnic politics which does not seek to further open up and utilize the increasingly diversified and more productive structure of livelihood and, instead, focuses completely on identity cannot but be a rightist and reactionary political ploy.