



## Identity Politics and Democracy in Nepal: A Comprehensive Analysis

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### Abstract

*This paper focuses on historical antecedents, present issues, and future possibilities of identity politics in the context of Nepal's democratic course. Understanding how identity politics will shape the nation's democratic institutions and processes takes center stage in this study, focusing on its positive and negative outcomes. It also examines the scope of achieving inclusive governance in a society with acute societal cleavages. The study points out the need to emphasize the desperate need to manage the competing demands of diverse identity groups within the larger framework of national aspirations, which appreciates differences in working towards a shared national vision. As the paper argues, the fate of Nepal's future transformation towards a more inclusive democratic order rests on the ability to manage the intricacies of the country's identity politics. It argues for the need to reconcile the many groups' aspirations with the state's coherence with dialogue and understanding to foster a common identity with diversity.*

**Keywords:** Caste, Democracy, Ethnicity, Gender, Identity Politics, Inclusive Governance, Nepal, Political Mobilization, Religion,

### Introduction

The political environment of Nepal became more radical with the rise of identity politics after the democratic aspiration brought forward in 1990, which gave voice to the voiceless ethnic groups repressed under the earlier autocratic rule (Mikesell, 1997, pp. 3-14). Political participation is helpful in these groups as it enables them to claim their rights and pursue their goals in building up the country. By looking at history, extending the 'politics of inclusion' by injecting more and more diverse identities into the country's politics has been a feature of the democracy of Nepal, making it a diverse society.

However, in the case of Nepalese, this nationalistic resemblance and identity-politics-induced development has a disadvantage. Demand for recognition of diverse (marginal) identity groups and redress of past grievances based on these identities seeking power fragmented the social fabric and invoked fear for national integrity (Hagen, 2007). The savage struggle among the diverse factions, all with different demands and aspirations, has created an active, politically complex, confused quagmire of the political spectrum.

Through a historical and contemporary analysis of identity politics, this paper explores their complex relationship with democracy in Nepal as well as the prospects they hold for the future (Koirala, 2012). It explores the impact of identity

politics on Nepal's democratic institutions and processes at a time when conceptions of national cohesion are increasingly challenged while also recognizing its positive contributions to inclusivity. The paper also looks at the prospects for securing inclusive governance in a gridlocked society fractured deeply along ethnic, caste, and regional lines.

This article's core contention is that success in constructing a more participatory, equitable, and sustainable future for Nepal will depend on how well the country copes with these identity politics. This highlights the importance of balancing respect for the desires of various identity groups with the need for national unity. Arguing for dialogue, tolerance, and a shared national identity that respects pluralism, the paper supported dialogue, inshallah, and steering an identity that would accommodate these differences. It prescribes a Nepal where the tenets of democracy are fully embedded, and every citizen — irrespective of history, religion, or ethnicity — feels at home in their country and has an equal share in deciding its fate.

### Research Methodology

This qualitative research-based paper is based mainly on a wide-scale review of the existing literature and secondary sources. Focusing on the historical and contemporary aspects of identity politics in Nepal, it discusses general background literature and different analytical accounts ranging from books

and journal articles to reports. This paper evaluates the effects of identity politics on Nepal's democratic institutions and processes, recognizing both its positive contributions to and interruptions of democracy. It further investigates the possibilities for inclusive governance in a divided society. Drawing together insights from multiple sources and perspectives, this paper provides an integrated account of how identity politics affects Nepali democracy.

## Literature Review

The Nepalese landscape of literature on identity politics and democracy is rich, diverse, and sometimes confusing. The end of the Panchayat in 1990 facilitated more significant assertions of identities and entitlements by groups historically suffering marginalization (Gaige, 1975). As such, it gave rise to diverse identity-based movements (Janajati, Madhesi, Dalit, Women, and Religious Minorities) (Subba, 2008, pp. 121–135). This literature emphasizes the positive consequences of these movements, including increased political engagement, better representation in decision-making, and acknowledgment of Nepal's diversity (Mishra, 2011).

However, even as scholars discuss the benefits of identity politics, they point out that the concept also has its downfalls. Identity-related fragmentation of society, exploiting identity for electoral gain, and the possibility of conflict and violence are significant concerns (Brass, 1991). Existing literature highlights that one should strike a proper balance between recognizing the varieties of identity, national unity, and social cohesion (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). Many scholars have argued that the road ahead can only run through addressing drivers of identity-based grievances, cross-group dialogue and reconciliation, and re-enforcing democratic institutions and processes (Kaphle, 2012, pp. 147-165; Onta 2005: 124-138). It is essential to develop a national identity that allows for diversity, belonging, and inclusion while providing equitable representation and participation in decision-making (Acharya, 2010, pp. 251-285; Gurung, 2010, pp. 355-371). Analyzation between identity politics and democracy in Nepal has been a popular area of research. It will continue for the foreseeable future while also giving us insight into how state development, political involvement, and peacekeeping will transpire.

### Historical Context of Identity Politics in Nepal

Until 1990, the regime in Nepal was an authoritarian one-party system known as Panchayat that denied and marginalized various identities (Gaige, 1975). The system nurtured a unitary national identity based on cultural Hinduness and the Nepali language (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2009, pp. 163-184), disregarding similar ethnicity, language, and cultural diversity across Nepal. This homogenization concentrated diversity in the hands of a ruling elite, primarily from hill Hindu communities (Shrestha, 2005). The state imposed blanket restrictions and repression, mainly targeted toward Janajati groups and Madhesi, who were made invisible in mainstream political discourse (Subba, 2008, pp. 121–135).

### 1990 People's Movement

The Panchayat system circumscribed the political expression of identity, which bred resentment that ultimately erupted in 1990 with the declarative People's Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (Mikesell, 1997, pp. 3-14). It was not only instrumental in overthrowing the Panchayat system but also provided an opportunity for marginalized women to share their demands and interests regarding the future of Nepal (Lawoti, 2005). Different sections like Janajatis, Madhesi, Dalits, and women came to the streets for their rights against the existing power centers (Subba, 2008, pp. 121-135; Brown, 1996).

### The Legacy and Challenges of Identity Politics

The 1990 People's Movement was a turning point for identity politics in Nepal, bringing a new pluralism and elements of inclusivity to the political discourse (Hutt, 2004). However, the impact of the past is that identity has been hidden, and there are still so many forces against what it means to be an individual (Koirala, 2012). Democracy has opened up spaces for marginalized groups while redressing historical injustices and creating genuinely inclusive societies still present significant challenges. The historical backdrop of identity-based movements is an essential building block for the perplexing interrelation of each competing identity in Nepalese polity concerning Identity politics as well as democracy and Myanmar's strides towards a fairer and equalitarian future.

### The Emergence of Identity-Based Movements

Since 1990 in Nepal, there have been identity politics movements for Janajatis, Madhesi, Dalits, and women, each having their forms based on the specific grievance and expectations of themselves (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2009, pp. 163-184). They have played a crucial role in redefining the political landscape of Nepal, demanding more representation, identity, and rights in the new democratic structure. They were champions for the needs of those pushed to the fringes, pushing a message that demanded inclusivity and social justice. However, this rise also revealed the challenges of reconciling different group interests with national unity. As Nepal moves forward, burdened by history filled with social hierarchies and injustice, the nation walks a fine line of reconciliation between these opposing forces while attempting to develop an inclusive and peaceful society.

### Contemporary Manifestations of Identity Politics

In Nepal, the 1990 People's Movement proved to be a milestone event, ushering an end to the authoritarian Panchayat system (a framework that marginalized a wide range of identities and concentrated power) and bringing new hope for multiparty democracy (Gaige, 1975; Shrestha, 2005). This transition allowed marginalized communities such as Janajatis, Madhesi, Dalits, and women to articulate their claims for recognition and rights (Kraemer, 1997; Onta, 2005, pp. 124–138). This triggered the emergence of diverse identity-based movements, paving the way for a comprehensive political dialogue (Koirala, 2012).

Today, identity politics can be seen in the movements in different parts of Nepal. Carelessness is an emancipatory ideal for which the Dalit movement, both significant and within Nepal, has struggled by resisting prevalent casteism and pushing for equality and social justice (Lawoti, 2005; Kaphle, 2012: pp. 147-165). OA has also played an essential role in placing secularism and the protection of religious freedoms on the agenda (Baral, 2015, pp. 132-138; Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). Gender movements demand women's empowerment and representation by contesting patriarchal structures (Onta, 2005, pp. 124-138).

Identity politics has been a most effective tool for inclusion wherever it is practiced, but ultimately, there are clefs. The sociopolitical context is still determined by historical injustices and social hierarchies (Koirala, 2012). A major challenge continues to be balancing these diverse demands with national unity and the need to prevent religious tensions and conflicts (Lawoti, 2005).

Nepal has seen radical transformation after the 1990 movement and identity-based politics, leading to changes over subsequent decades. However, the future lies in abstraction beyond identity politics, in the idea that we are one body of an equal society. This will require acknowledging past wrongs, encouraging dialogue, and building a common national identity that embraces diversity while maintaining unity in nation-building.

#### **Impact of Identity Politics on Democracy**

The impact of identity politics on the democracy in Nepal is two-fold. However, it has also posed challenges to a more inclusive political landscape and, in other cases, empowered previously marginalized groups. With the growing political participation of these groups, we are seeing better representation and more unique identities recognized, which will create a more responsive democracy. However, it has also contributed to divisive social fault lines and identity politics, which could threaten political loyalty and social cohesion. The irony is that while democratic pluralism recognizes multiple identities, the need for national unity seems non-negotiable, as group rights or schemes showing favoritism to groups cause a big dent in democracy and social cohesion.

#### **Positive impacts**

The political participation of marginalized groups is one significant positive impact identity politics has had on democracy in Nepal. The emergence of identity-based movements has allowed traditionally marginalized peoples like Janajatis, Madhesis, Dalits, and women to make their voices heard and participate in the formal political arena (Subba, 2008, pp. 121-135; Lawoti, 2005). As a result, they have been better represented in elected bodies, political parties, and civil society organizations and can participate actively in decision-making and policy agendas (Hangen, 2007).

This has created a more representative and inclusive democracy in Nepal, with marginalized groups participating on equal footing in politics. It has disrupted the old status quo and silenced the voices of people in marginalized

communities to be heard (Mishra, 2011). It has also raised consciousness on social issues, like caste inequity and gender discrimination, and compelled the state to find solutions through policy, Gurung, 2010, pp. 355–371

Nonetheless, the enhanced political engagement by marginalized groups has likewise brought about obstacles in establishing democracy. While identity-based interests play an essential role in democracy, their mobilization can sometimes result in fragmentation and rivalry among various groups with negative implications for national unity and social cohesion (Koirala, 2012). One of the most critical challenges for Nepal, as it struggles to cement its democratic foundations, is this balance between such identity issue demands and a common national goal, especially when those identities are very different from – even oppositional to – each other.

#### **Increased political participation of marginalized groups**

Identity politics has also had some positive spin-offs, like increased participation of marginalized groups in Nepal in decision-making processes. The mobilization of these identity-based movements has compelled the state to take some actions in the form of affirmative action policies and reservation quotas for their presence in the elected bodies and policy-making institutions (Hutt, 2011). The consequence of this is increased representation within parliament, local councils, and other forms of government, providing a more significant opportunity for those in marginalized communities to affect the decision-making that directly impacts their lives (Subba, 2008, pp. 121-135).

By including a diverse range of views in decision-making, Nepal has created a more responsive and accountable democracy. This has resulted in problems that had previously remained unrecognized being brought to the fore and considerable policy effort directed towards (specific) needs (Mishra, 2011). In addition, it has engendered ownership and empowerment among these communities, thus strengthening their confidence in the democratic system (Brown, 1996).

However, ensuring marginalized groups genuinely have a seat at the table and the ability to make their voices heard is still being worked on. Koirala (2012) describes structural barriers, like access to information and resources, as hindering their capacity for meaningful engagement in decision-making processes. Entrenched power relations and resistance from hegemonic groups will constrict the scope of listening to marginalized groups and responding to their demands (Onta, 2005, pp. 124-138).

While identity politics in Nepal has had many damaging effects —the hardest thing to shake is the total lack of cohesion and sense of extremes setting up between various groups— one very significant positive effect has been a recognition that the tapestry of Nepalese identities and cultures is vibrant. These forces — especially identity-based movements — which were more or less galvanized by the democratic transition of 1990, have diffused mainly support for a single nation under one, unifying narrative with its roots in a Khas-Arya/ Hindu-led identity. Such a challenge has opened up the discourses on Nepali society to be more

pluralistic and inclusive of diverse ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural sections (Hutt, 2004).

One reason has been a glaring shift in governmental outlook, which has translated into more significant stakes, with several languages appearing among the state repast as per some eventualities and all cultural strands through adoption by state sectors. This acknowledgment encourages a sense of inclusion and pride among marginalized communities historically alienated from the national conversation (Subba, 2008, pp. 121-135). This addition added to a more dynamic and diversified cultural environment, imperative for preserving indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and art forms (Onta 2005: pp. 124-138). This newly found acknowledgment has also made it possible to include broader perspectives into main sectors such as education, media, and other public arenas to be recognized and celebrate Nepal's extensive multicultural tradition (Lawoti, 2005).

However, these advancements aside, the evolution of a multicultural society is still in process. It is a delicate balancing act between acknowledging multiple identities and the need for national cohesion and social harmony (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). Even with formal recognition, systemic discrimination and dislike can remain entrenched (Kaphle, 2012, pp. 147-165). Therefore, efforts are ongoing to ensure a sense of belonging and equality for people of all identities. Meeting these challenges between addressing diversity in reflection and inclusion is crucial to ensuring that advances in diversity transform into genuine equity within society.

### Negative impacts

**The fragmentation of society along identity lines:** On the one hand, identity politics has been a critical force for democratization in parts of society by mobilizing marginalized communities as a voice against hegemonic power, but at the same time, it has led to the fragmentation of Nepali society along identity lines (Hutt, 2011). While the initial goal was to gain recognition and rights, the mobilization of identifiable groups and their claim to uniqueness created competition between them (Chandra, 2006, pp. 397-424). Evidence of this fragmentation can be seen in the emergence of ethnic or regional political parties and the growing inclination to see political issues in terms of identity as opposed to national interest (Kumar, 1995, pp. 1533-1536).

The ghettoized segments of society keep the nation disjointed and prevent social cohesion, as people cannot work together to overcome common challenges or achieve national development criteria (Mikesell, 1997, pp. 3-14). In addition, it can facilitate the politicization of identity, whereby politicians often use ethnic, caste, or religious sentiments to win elections, which creates more fissures in an already divided society (Brass, 1991). This fosters an atmosphere of distrust and resentment, obstructing attempts at reaching a consensus and creating a shared national vision (Brown, 1996).

The difficulty is to balance recognition and respect for different identities with a sense of shared national identity. It

is essential to honor differences, but honesty also demands that we highlight overlaps and commonalities that cross identity boundaries. We can only do this by reframing our identity politics and aspiring to build a truly inclusive and just society where we take ownership of what is happening in each other's homelands, irrespective of caste, creed, or religion.

**Identity politicization for vote bank:** One of the adverse effects of identity politics in Nepal has been the politicization of identity. The process of instrumentalizing citizenship by political parties and leaders to appeal for a vote bank based on ethnic, caste, or religious sentiments during elections has been widely observed (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). Identity manipulation can take many forms — offering to treat some groups more favorably than others, bringing out the past to highlight grievances by some on others, or creating panic in other communities (Hutt, 2011). Typically, this means using polarizing language and framing it as almost binary between us and them to gain support in the name of identity.

Although these tactics may help elections in the short term, they can harm their broader efforts by consolidating and deepening democracy in the long run. Second, identity politics can deepen societal divides and sow mistrust and hatred between social groups (Chandra, 2006, pp. 397-424). Weak national stories may also stymie the creation of a shared national vision and deny the solution to some of the urgent problems that cross-cut identity, for example, economic development, good governance, social justice, etc., as political rhetoric becomes increasingly confined to narrow identities (Mikesell, 1997, pp. 3-14).

In addition, the incessant calls for hollow identity politics can make meritocracy untenable—appointments and resources may be allocated based on group identities rather than abilities (Brass, 1991). This can undermine public confidence in the democratic system and thus breed a sense of apathy and skepticism among citizens. Therefore, the political mobilization of identity is likely to be detrimental to the future of democracy in Nepal.

**Possibility of conflict and violence:** One of the worst adverse effects of in-identification politics in Nepal has ever existed is the tendency to cause conflict and violence. An identity-based grievance—ethnic, caste, religious, or regional—left unaddressed leads to a fraught social milieu and the possibility of agitation in the form of protests and riots if political mobilization takes an exclusionary or confrontational course (Lawoti, 2005). History in Nepal and beyond its borders is littered with examples of how identity politics have been exploited disastrously. As the Rwandan genocide and post-Yugoslav wars illustrated to a watching world, ethnic and religious alignments can be used as instruments of mass murder (Brass, 1991)

In Nepal, the Madhesh movement and the subsequent protests are stark examples of how demands based on identity can turn violent if they go unaddressed or are faced with repression (Hutt, 2011) [Research notes: Need to write about this more. I will do it in my draft.]. Organized as a series of violent movements in 2007, 2010–11, and 2015–16, it was

characterized by significant civil unrest reflecting the perspectives of the Madhesi population feeling marginalized and discriminated against, clashing violently with security forces resulting in loss of life and destruction of property (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). The politicization of ethnicity through inflammatory rhetoric in a system where leaders have openly expressed confidence just made the situation even more dire, teetering towards instability for the country. Likewise, the historical grievance of Janajati, if not adequately addressed, may further create social tension and conflict (Gurung, 2010, pp. 355-371).

It is also critical to realize that not all identity-based movements are doomed to violence. Countless similar movements nonviolently call for the righteousness of those who seek acknowledgment, voice, and rights. Nonetheless, space is still available for potential conflicts due to social divide, and historical grievances still exist in societies like Nepal (Chandra, 2006, pp. 397-424). Wherein comes the challenge — to channel these aspirations defined by identity to constructive engagement and dialogue rather than letting the movement of aspirations fester, which may result in violent explosions.

Reducing this risk takes a multi-pronged approach. This is where the remedy lies in tackling the underlying sources of identity-induced grievances, promoting contact and communication between diverse communities, and encouraging more inclusive representation and involvement around decision-making (Mikesell, 1997, pp. 3-14). Instead, it demands thoughtfulness and responsible leadership that refrains from sowing division and strives to build bridges across communities. Addressing the political and socio-economic dimensions of identity-based grievances while promoting a common national identity that is inclusive, peaceful, and democratic will be crucial to building a better society where different identities co-exist in harmony.

## Challenges and Opportunities for Inclusive Governance

**Root causes of identity-based grievances:** Addressing the root causes of identity-based grievances is critical in building inclusive governance in Nepal. It requires an acknowledgment and reparative response to past violations and injustice, deep-rooted structural discrimination, and regime behavior in distributing power-building and resources that provoked anger among oppressed sectors of society (Lawoti, 2005). This means symbolic gestures and measures to tackle economic disparities and political exclusion that drive identity-based grievances (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003).

Ensuring that all citizens—regardless of their ethnicity, caste, religion, or gender—have equal access to education and healthcare as well as economic opportunities is essential to creating a level playing field and equitable society (Hangen, 2007). Affirmative policies and capacity-building programs empower marginalized communities to transcend their historical disadvantages and participate in the nation's future development (Kaphle, 2012, pp. 147–65).

In addition, it should promote friendly relations and respect among various cultures, languages, and religions since this is selective and will be able to bring about change in case of identity-based grievances (Subba, 2008, pp. 121-135). This includes advocating for access to and the content of education curricula, media representation, and public discourse that recognizes Nepal's multicultural identity and confronts stereotypes and prejudices (Mishra, 2011). It also requires establishing channels for dialogue and conflict resolution between the different groups, where grievances can be expressed and addressed non-violently (Hutt, 2011).

Solving the core causes of identity-based grievances can help Nepal build a society with more inclusion and harmony, where everyone enjoys the joy of citizenship and ownership in the Nepali state. Achieving this will demand continued engagement from the state, civil society, and every section of society to forge a more equitable and just Nepal.

**The challenge of balancing the demands of different identity groups:** Balancing the demands of various identity groups in Nepal remains a severe challenge to inclusive governance. The aspirations and grievances of diverse ethnic, caste, religious, and gender-based groups are frequently intermingled over the backdrop of long-established social cleavages and historical inequalities (Lawoti, 2005). Devolving to meet these various requirements while preserving social solidarity and national integrity necessitates balancing the aspirations of an individual community within its confines and those of the nation as a whole (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003).

The first challenge is that the quest for identity-based rights and recognition should not be at the cost of one group to another or against the worth of equality and non-discrimination (Kaphle, 2012, pp. 147–165). Even though affirmative action policies are essential for securing appropriate responses to the legacy of injustice, care is needed to implement them so as not to alienate or generate resentment from other communities (Hangen, 2007). This means embracing a carefully crafted combination of particularism and universalism — sensitively tailoring policies that respect the unique needs and past discrimination experienced by various groups while vigorously supporting equality for every individual.

The second challenge is to control the potential conflict and competition of identities. Political capital is a zero-sum game, and resources are rarely abundant (Hutt, 2011), making group interest promotion an attractive but perhaps dangerous course of action for any target group. Mishra (2011) points out the need to create an environment of discussion and consensus building where diverse bodies can talk among themselves, negotiate, and arrive at accepted solutions. It calls for promoting broad national purpose, transcending ethnic-based interests, and building community confidence and understanding.

Thus, managing the demands of competing identity groups is complex and a continuous challenge that requires political commitment, prudent leadership, and inclusive dialogue and

compromise. Only then, through such efforts, will Nepal successfully traverse the challenging road of identity politics and ultimately become a truly inclusive democracy where all citizens' dignity and fundamental rights are respected and valued.

**Inter-group conversation and comprehension:** Promoting social harmony is vital to the governance of Nepal, which has such variety and intricacy in its social structure. It is about having the space to connect and communicate between different social identity groups to share perspectives and create bridges of empathy and trust (Lawoti, 2005). Depending on the context, this could involve community-to-community dialogues, cross-cultural exchanges, and support for initiatives to promote social cohesion and reconciliation (Hutt, 2011).

Education can do wonders in promoting inter-group understanding. Curricula recognizing Nepalese communities' varied cultures, languages, and historical backgrounds are significant in tackling stereotypes and prejudices about ethnic minorities and help promote respect between students from diverse backgrounds (Subba, 2008, pp. 121–135). Besides, the media can contribute positively through balanced and nuanced coverage of identity issues rather than sensationalizing them and facilitating dialogue between groups rather than division (Mishra, 2011).

Community leaders and civil society organizations are also vital in conducting inter-group dialogue and fostering community understanding. They can create workshops, seminars, and other events that bring people from multiple communities together to talk about challenges they may have in common (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). Moreover, they can play a role in mediating conflicts and reconciliation processes, thus assisting the rebuilding of trust and addressing wounds left by past injustices (Kaphle, 2012:147–165).

Encouraging communication and comprehension between diverse groups is not something to be done once but rather an all-day activity that each sector of society will have to do over the long haul. Nepal can help to overcome the challenges of identity politics and work towards a more inclusive and harmonious society by creating opportunities for authentic engagement while fostering a culture that values respect, compassion, and understanding.

**Embracing Diversity in National Identity:** Constructing an inclusive governance system in Nepal requires a common national identity that receives the virtues of diversity. It involves telling a story that rises above divisions of ethnicity, caste, religion, and region, bringing together all citizens to share a common sense of identity (Hutt, 2004). This means acknowledging the roles played by different communities in the history, culture, and development of the country while also stressing common bonds and values that unite all Nepalis (Lawoti, 2005).

Moving beyond a monolithic understanding of Nepaliness and embracing a more pluralistic and inclusive conception that recognizes diversity (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). The project of

creating an inclusive national identity espouses the idea of 'unity in diversity', where different identities live together but remain an integral part of a whole (Kaphle, 2012, pp. 147–65)

This includes efforts to encourage inclusive national symbols and narratives, promote intercultural dialogue and exchange, and acknowledge the contributions of diverse communities towards nation-building (Mishra, 2011). This also involves combating historical grievances and advancing social justice, such that every citizen takes pride and ownership of the country they live in. (Subba, 2008, pp. 121-135)

**Reinforcing Democratic Structures and Processes:** Reinforcing democratic structures and processes is crucial for inclusive governance in Nepal (Miller, 2002). However, it strengthens the institutional capacity, autonomy, and independence of the parliament's judiciary (Hangen, 2007). This includes ensuring that these institutions reflect the country's diversity and matters such as transparency, accountability in their functioning, and autonomy from unwarranted political interference (Lawoti, 2005).

Democratic processes need to be improved and refined, and this can only happen through continuous electoral reforms, civic education, and citizen participation in decision-making (Thapa & Sijapati, 2003). This involves instituting free and fair elections, empowering citizens with appropriate knowledge and skills to participate actively in the democratic process, and providing participatory spaces for meaningful public engagement in policy formulation and implementation (Subba, 2008, pp. 121-135).

Well-functioning democratic institutions and processes are vital for protecting all citizens' rights and interests, especially disadvantaged groups (Kaphle, 2012, pp.147-165). They lay out a route and guidelines to resolve disagreements amicably, hold stakeholders accountable, and serve as a means for good governance. Through this institutionalizing process, Nepal should be able to ensure that its democracy is resilient enough to absorb the shocks associated with identity politics, thus enabling more tolerant and inclusive societies.

## Conclusion

Identity politics and democracy in Nepal is a subject that has greatly influenced the country since it transitioned to multi-party democracy in 1990. Nevertheless, the rise of identity-based movements has given voice to groups that long had none, leading to a more significant role for these affinity categories in political outcomes and institutional arrangements. But it has also resulted in social fracturing, political opportunism — the weaponization of identity — and possible violence between opposing groups.

Meaningful and inclusive governance → Solution is the counter-violence discourse, which needs to address grievance at its root, between people dialogue by their representatives, creating a democratic people systems sense through institutions of democracy. If it is important to acknowledge different identities, it is equally necessary to do what you can for the cohesion of the homeland. A shared national identity

that values diversity is key to creating belonging among all citizens.

How Nepal negotiates identity politics will determine its future. It requires dialogue, working across the aisle, and making decisions that are in the public interest. Suppose the issues of identity politics are managed well. In that case, they will undoubtedly reaffirm democracy in Nepal and contribute to building a cohesive society that is inclusive and where all citizens feel safe and empowered.

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