

“Power Games All Over the Place”

By [Barbara Nimri Aziz](#)

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Region: [USA](#)
Theme: [History](#)

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“Stop Mitch McConnell!” screams yet another message to my inbox.

*Wait a minute. I understood that the power **Mitch McConnell** wielded over the Senate (and the nation), thwarting all attempts at progressive reform and adequate Covid relief, ended two weeks ago.*

Where are Georgia’s Democratic victories that leveled the playing field? That 50-50 party share in Congress’ powerful upper house would endow **VP Kamala Harris** with decisive power; wouldn’t it? The hard campaigning that wrenched away two seats from senate Republicans ended McConnell’s rule; didn’t it?

Democratic senator **Charles Schumer**, the [putative replacement of McConnell](#) as Senate leader, has leapt into prominence in recent weeks. But this Jan 21st article in The Hill affirming Schumer’s status nevertheless suggests that *it’s kind of unclear* how much control he and 49 Democratic senators will have. Can Schumer hold sway over the Senate? Can he prevail over his predecessor?

The two men have to work together to allocate the powerful senate committee chairmanships, to decide on the [filibuster](#), and [how much of Biden’s \\$1.9 trillion “American Rescue Plan” are acceptable](#). Then there’s the Senate trial over Trump’s impeachment; McConnell could derail a conviction. Yes, the former majority leader condemned Trump for inciting the January 6th attack on the Capitol, implying his support for a conviction by the Senate. Yet last week, McConnell joined 44 GOP-Republican senators to [deny the 60 votes](#) needed for a swift and clear verdict against Trump.

Schumer’s inexperience and his lackluster job as minority head does not offer much encouragement regarding how as majority leader, he might override resistance from McConnell.

Republicans have already begun placing obstacles in the way of some of Biden’s promised policy reversals, e.g., ending deportations. A [Texas judge has temporarily delayed](#) that, an example of influence wielded by Republican judges appointed by the Trump administration.

Call me pessimistic, but pursuing stories behind the political headlines is simple civic responsibility. Struggle is a process, a process that doesn’t end in Washington. And it’s a process which too many Democrats who become energized largely by the presidential

drama every four years, often relinquish. Republicans meanwhile press ahead in the shadows, like in state capitals.

That's where powerful governors and state legislators pursue agendas which are sometimes regressive. Take the recently passed anti-protest laws aimed as much at peaceful protestors like you and me as at right-wing mobs threatening the Capitol. According to a report by the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law examined by [The Intercept](#), some of these laws were drawn up before the January 6th riot. We learn that new bills passed across varying states "contain a dizzying array of provisions that serve to criminalize participation in disruptive protests. The measures range from barring demonstrators from public benefits or government jobs to offering legal protections to those who shoot or run over protesters." Some proposals, we learn, "...would allow protesters to be held without bail and (they would) criminalize camping... A few bills seek to prevent local governments from defunding police."

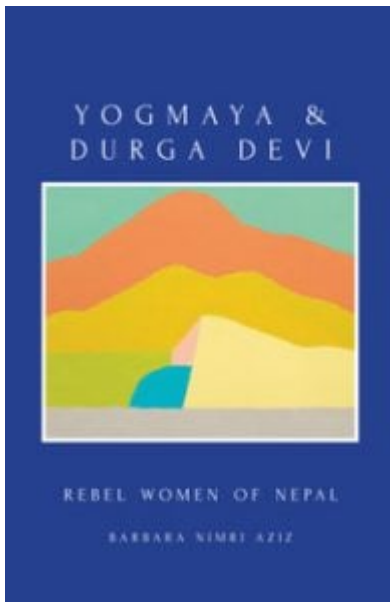
Many of these oppressive laws are passed by state governments where Republicans advanced their strength in last November's election. Where those gains are is listed in a November 6th article by [Forbes Magazine](#). We learn, for example:

"In [22 states](#), Republicans will hold unified control over the governor's office and both houses of the legislature, giving the party wide political latitude — including in states like [Florida](#) and [Georgia](#) where Democrats hoped to take a legislative majority.

Republicans flipped the governor's mansion in [Montana](#) and both legislative bodies in [New Hampshire](#) on Tuesday, granting the party unified control in two new states.

Democrats will only hold both the legislature and governor in 15 states, and while the party did not lose any of those states, its hopes of flipping legislatures and forming unified governments in [North Carolina](#), [Pennsylvania](#) and [Minnesota](#) went unrealized.

Eleven states will have divided governments in 2021, unchanged from this year: Democratic governors will need to work with Republican legislators in eight states, and Republican governors will contend with Democratic lawmakers in three."



Note Forbes' own observation about the quiet headways made by Republicans "State legislative races are usually low-intensity affairs: The issues at play are highly localized, media attention is scant..." "elections took on special meaning because of redistricting.... Beyond redistricting, state lawmakers also have broad control over policy. Some observers believe conservative state legislatures may [try to pass](#) severe abortion restrictions, cueing up legal battles that could end with parts of Roe v. Wade being relitigated by the [Supreme Court](#). Also, the 11 states with divided governments will probably contend with partisan gridlock."

Check out [your state](#).

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BN Aziz whose anthropological research has focused on the peoples of the Himalayas is the author of the newly published ["Yogmaya and Durga Devi: Rebel Women of Nepal"](#), available [on Amazon](#).

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Articles by: **Barbara Nimri
Aziz**

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