NEPALI POLITICS
Retrospect and Prospect
Second Edition

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I could heartily wish a law were enacted, that every traveller, before he were permitted to publish his voyages, should be obliged to make oath before the Lord High Chancellor that all he intended to print was absolutely true to the best of his knowledge; for then the world would no longer be deceived as it usually is, while some writers, to make their works pass the better upon the public, impose the grossest falsities on the unwary reader. I have perused several books of travels with great delight in my younger days; but having since gone over most parts of the globe, and been able to contradict many fabulous accounts from my own observation, it hath given me a great disgust against this part of reading, and some indignation to see the credulity of mankind so impudently abused. Therefore since my acquaintances were pleased to think my poor endeavours might not be unacceptable to my country, I imposed on myself as a maxim, never to be swerved from, that I would strictly adhere to truth; neither indeed can I be ever under the least temptation to vary from it, while I retain in my mind the lectures and example of my noble master, and the other illustrious Houyhnhnms, of whom I had so long the honour to be an humble hearer.

—Nec si miserum Fortuna Sinonem
   Finxit, vanum etiam mendacemque improba finget.

Jonathan Swift, Gulliver’s Travels
Foreword to the First Edition

Volumes on political development in the ‘Third World’ are now very numerous, and even the smaller countries such as Nepal have had their quota. Most of these, for Nepal as elsewhere, are the products of academics—foreigners and nationals—who have a reasonably good grasp of their discipline but usually only an outsider’s perspective—and hence understanding—of how the political and governmental system works. A number are by ideologues—so often also academics—whose only concern is with shaping current developments to fit their particular sets of beliefs, either by making history or rewriting history. Unfortunately only a much smaller group of producers have had extensive exposure to the ‘system’ and most of these have lacked the academic discipline to formulate general principles from their broad base of knowledge and experience.

It is all too rarely, then, that a book on political development is forthcoming from an individual whose career straddles a variety of experiences within the political, administrative and academic systems. Rishikesh Shaha is one such person. In the period after the 1950-51 revolution in Nepal he was involved in, first dissident party and then dominant party politics, both at the organizational and agitational level. He then spent approximately five years in international politics—as Nepal’s Ambassador to the United Nations and, for some time, to the United States. Following the abolition of the parliamentary system in 1960, Mr Shaha served as Minister of Finance and, for one short period, as Minister of Foreign Affairs under King Mahendra, acting as a ‘liberalizing’ force within a system that was relatively un receptive to such influences at that time. The 1962 Constitution was to a considerable extent his handiwork, even though it failed to come up to his expectations in certain key respects.

Since his dismissal from office in 1964 Mr Shaha has been active in the very limited form of oppositional politics that is possible under ‘Partyless Panchayat Democracy’. Fortunately for us, this does not take too much of his time and he has been able to turn his attention to a more academic approach to the study of politics. During two extensive visits to the United States, during which he spent some time at the University of California at Berkeley, he
sought to expand his horizons to the general problems of political development in Asia and Africa, and relate these to his own experiences in Nepal. Those of us at Berkeley who watched this process at work were delighted—and to some extent dismayed—by the ease and rapidity with which he picked up our tools of trade and commenced to expand on them. We urged him to do this in a more structured form, of which this book is one small part.

May I add a final word about the pleasure afforded to me by my personal relationship with Mr Shaha. The optimism and enthusiasm with which he has approached the subject of Nepal's political development, no matter what his momentary status may have been—Ambassador, Minister, opposition leader, National Panchayat member, political prisoner, or aspiring social scientist—has always been infectious and a necessary counter to what can be a rather dismal enterprise. It has been a great educational experience as well and one that readers of this volume can now share.

Leo E. Rose

Berkeley, California
15 September 1974
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Preface to the First Edition

Chapter 1 in the work was presented to the International Seminar on Political Development in South Asia, sponsored by the University Grants Commission and the Indian Council of Social Science Research and held at Jaipur from 5 February to 9 February, 1973 under the auspices of the South Asia Studies Centre of the University of Rajasthan. Chapter 2 is based on a paper read at a special meeting of the faculty and students of the South Asia Studies Centre at Jaipur in the spring of 1971. Chapter 3 is a summation of a series of lectures delivered on Nepal’s international relations at the School of International Studies of the Jawaharlal Nehru University in February-April 1971 and at the Berkeley Campus of the University of California as Regents’ Professor in the fall quarter of 1971.

The three sections which form chapters of the book, although written and published at different times for different purposes, have been carefully revised, partly re-written and brought up to date for publication in this form. The first chapter concerns itself with the problems of nation-building in Nepal and even ventures to suggest lines along which the country must proceed for purposes of modernization. The second chapter deals with the organization and working of Nepal’s Panchayat politics, and the third and final chapter on Nepal’s foreign policy discusses her international relations and internal developments in historical perspective. I hope that the three chapters together will not only give the readers a fairly comprehensive and connected view of Nepal’s domestic politics and international relations but will also afford them an insight into her present problems and prospects for the future. My efforts will not have been in vain if the book, while satisfying the general curiosity and interest in a small way, creates in thoughtful readers a sympathetic awareness of Nepal’s present moods and aspirations, and enables them to understand with greater clarity her problems and prospects.

It is pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to the East-West Center of the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, the Political Science Department of the University of California, Berkeley and the School of International Studies of Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi for supporting from time to time my researches on Nepali politics.

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to discuss with the pioneers and specialists on South Asia various aspects of the politics of Nepal on an extensive scale and in depth. I have immensely profited by these discussions, and they have in no small measure influenced my own approach to the present study.

The names mentioned here do not by any means exhaust the list but I do wish to express my sincere appreciation to all who contributed in various ways and particularly to Leo E. Rose and Margaret W. Fisher of the University of California, Berkeley; Bhuwan Lal Joshi of the University of California, Santa Cruz; Daniel Nelson of Auburn University and Steve Sloan of the University of Oklahoma; Bimal Prasad, Ram Rahul, Iswar Baral, Urmila Phadnis and Mohamed Ayoob of the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; S.P. Varma, Ramakant and S.D. Muni of the South Asia Studies Centre of the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur; and Dr Jose V. Abueva of the Philippines.

I shall certainly fail in my duty if I forget to thank warmly my friend Margaret Sheffield for all the encouragement and help I received from her in preparing this manuscript for publication.

I would also like to thank Shyam Bahadur Maharjan for his painstaking assistance in typing the manuscript for press.

Let me add at the end that the individuals and organizations mentioned above should not be held responsible in any way for the views expressed in the book and that the opinions and conclusions in it are entirely my own.

RISHIKESH SHAHA

Kathmandu
1 January 1975
Preface to the Second Edition

I am most grateful to the press, the public, and to my friends in academic circles for the kind welcome they have given this little publication of mine. It is the warmth of their welcome that has emboldened me to bring out the second edition within such a short time. I have tried to bring the book up to date in a new chapter by analysing in some depth the latest amendments to the Constitution of Nepal and also Nepal’s growing tendency to maintain equi-distance between India and China in every respect. These recent trends, like Nepal’s zone of peace proposal, may in the future have considerable significance for international relations in the area.

My fellowship from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars has enabled me to by accomplish the task of studying in depth the momentous developments that have occurred in Nepal’s domestic and foreign policies since this book was first published and I should, therefore, like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the Center for its generous assistance. I would also like to express my indebtedness to Dr Dora Alves, my research associate in the W.W.I.C.S., for her assistance in preparing the second revised and enlarged edition of this book.

RISHIKESH SHAHA

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars,
Washington, D.C.
1 January 1977
CHAPTER ONE

Political Development and Modernization: the Prospect for Nation-building

From 1846 to 1950, Nepal was autocratically ruled by the hereditary Prime Ministers of the Rana family, who, by eclipsing royal authority, had enjoyed a veritable monopoly of political power in the country for a period of 104 years. However, the Rana rule in its last phase during the late nineteen-forties proved utterly incapable of providing the kind of foresight and statesmanship demanded by changed circumstances both domestically and externally. The system of hereditary Prime Ministers was dealt a fatal blow by the armed insurrection started by the Nepali Congress Party in the autumn and winter of 1950-51 with the covert blessings of the late King Tribhuvan and the connivance of the Government of India. Apart from allowing the Nepali rebels and insurgents to use Indian territory as a base for their activities, the Nehru government of India continued to recognize and support King Tribhuvan even after he had been formally removed from the throne by the de facto Rana government and flown to India by a special Indian Air Force plane for his safety. The 1951 political change restored the King to the position of a constitutional monarch and brought the beginnings of democracy to the people. It is from 1951 onward that Nepal has consciously sought to pursue the path of modernization and nation-building in a modern democratic sense, and for this reason the post-1951 era may be taken as a starting point for our study of the problem of nation-building in Nepal.

Modern Concept of Nation-building

Nation-building in the modern democratic sense does not merely imply the setting up of that most intricate of modern organizations, the machinery of government. It also envisages the establishment of a great number of other organizations within the society. In the
sphere of politics, these organizations would cover a wide range, from those that voice the aspirations of various organized interests in the society to those that are capable of formulating public policies by reconciling conflicting interests as far as practicable and casting them in a coherent form with a view to providing guidelines to the organization of the state itself. In the economic field, nation-building entails the creation of a variety of other organizations: factories, commercial and industrial concerns, well-organized means of communication and transportation, and, last but not least, the highly sensitive market. In the social sphere, modernization involves the growth of a vast number of organizations capable of providing the individual with the requisite options for association outside the family, so that there exists a wider range of opportunities for him to develop his skills and fully realize his personality as a human being.

Over the last decade there have been a number of scholarly works on the subject of nation-building and modernization. The factors and techniques required to bring backward countries into the mainstream of modern life have been analysed and certain tentative conclusions have been posited. Although these solutions require a long time to test in the real world, it cannot be denied that the new approaches to the problem of nation-building have had considerable value. In the pages that follow, frequent reference is made to various writers who have discussed the problems of nation-building, and in particular to Lucian Pye, whose definitions of six 'crises of development' are used as starting points for a discussion of the corresponding situation in Nepal. Pye lists six of what he characterizes as 'crises of development' which a developing country must resolve to achieve modern nationhood.

Identity

All the six factors apply in an analysis of Nepal; the one that presents the least difficulty, however, is the first. Nepal will easily satisfy one element of Pye's first condition which is territorial identity. For slightly upwards of two centuries, Nepal has been, in terms of international law, a sovereign state ruled by the Shah dynasty. After Prithvinarayan Shah, King of Gorkha (1742-69), conquered the Kathmandu Valley in 1768-69, the Shah-ruled House of Gorkha became the ruling dynasty of Nepal. The Gorkha conquest gave Nepal a single name and a strong central government. But even before the Shah dynasty came into prominence, Nepal had a long-
established identity, and a history characterized by antiquity. Centuries before the start of the Christian era, Nepal had acquired a distinct territorial character.

However, Nepal has yet to resolve the psychological aspect of the problem of national identity. Until 1951, even the people from the Tarai region of Nepal needed a permit from their own government to visit Kathmandu. They were not employed in the military and police service and only a very few of them were accommodated in the civil service. These considerations, together with the fact that the Tarai people were only marginally involved in the national adventures connected with territorial expansion in the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries, have created for them a problem of identification in psychological terms. Some of the ethnic groups in the northern border region seem to experience the same kind of problem for more or less the same reasons. The problems of both Tarai and northern mountain people may have been further aggravated by their frequent contact and dealings with people across the national frontiers.

In Nepal, territorial expansion in the second half of the eighteenth and the first decade of the nineteenth centuries provided a sense of emotional unity and identity among the people of various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, who had just then been brought together into one kingdom. Similarly, in the changed circumstances of today, people living in the mountains, the mid-montane valleys and the Tarai plains can be imbued with a sense of identity of national purpose if inhabitants of those regions are allowed to participate fully and without discrimination in the political and economic process of modernization and development.

The problem of identification not only affects the people living outside Kathmandu. The educated elite of the capital also must come to identify themselves more with the nation as a whole than they have done in the past.

The Modernizing Elite and the Masses

In recent years the gap between all the educated modernizing elites—the political, the bureaucratic and the military—and the masses, has grown more rapidly and become much wider than that between the traditional or feudal elites and the masses. The gap between a traditional elite and the masses can, to a large extent, be bridged overnight, by abolishing ascribed distinctions of caste and
status. But the distinction between an educated elite and the masses cannot be removed easily because the population cannot be educated overnight.

The educated class in Nepal belongs to the tiny upper crust of the privileged section of society called the middle class, as distinct from the majority of the people who live below the poverty line.* But a large proportion of this middle class is itself subject to innumerable pressures because of its comparative poverty. And the degradations of poverty can be resisted only with the help of a basic sense of integrity. Unfortunately for Nepal, the educated middle class in general has been found wanting in this regard. The relative prosperity of some members of the more fortunate elite has created in them an utter indifference to the principles of social morality or the interests of the society as a whole. The irresponsible habit of advancing mere self-interest is widely prevalent among them. One even wonders whether the level of social consciousness or responsibility has suffered a decline. In traditional Nepali society, the individual at least thought beyond his own self-interest in terms of the interest of the family, the tribe or the clan. Now the social ties between individual and family or tribe or clan are fast disappearing under the impact of rapid social change, and at the same time the elites have not been able to forge new social ties in the shape of increased awareness of their responsibility towards the nation. More understandably, the masses have also failed to do this. Sunk in their age-old way of life, they are merely intrigued by the forms of technological, social and psychological changes which they see about them, but whose contents are largely inexplicable to them.

The modern educated elite have thus not been able to withstand either the strain of poverty or that of prosperity. They have developed a split mentality which is the worst enemy of national character and which can be cured only by an intensified effort on their part to coordinate their belief and action as much as possible. Their education in Western values has made the elite neglect traditional values without being able to adopt Western values in practice. They find themselves cut off from the mainstream of national life and culture with the result that they can fit in nowhere.

This would, generally speaking, also apply to the members of the Western educated elite groups in all of the countries of the transi-

*Vide Tables 1, II and III at the end of the chapter.
Jawaharlal Nehru, the late Prime Minister of India, has given poignant expression to this kind of schizophrenic feeling as suffered by himself when he writes in his autobiography, 'I am a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere, nowhere at home'. If a man with Nehru's dedication to the service of his fellow countrymen could acquire this feeling, how much more are others, with a lesser sense of social consciousness, likely to suffer from this condition and how much more limited is their active participation in the process of nation-building likely to be.

**Legitimacy**

Prithvinarayan Shah established modern Nepal by the right of conquest. No wonder that in Nepal legitimacy was initially based on the power of the sword and was reinforced by the traditional Hindu view of the nobility of birth resulting from meritorious action in a previous life as well as of the sanctimonious character of royal authority as such. Even after the transfer of effective power from the absolute Shah monarch to the hereditary Prime Ministers of the Rana family, the original concept of legitimacy did not undergo significant change. The Ranas also claimed to have come to power by the sword as their family had acquired office in the aftermath of the Kot Massacre on the night of 14 September, 1846. They subsequently exercised power as the birthright of their family.

The traditional political system in Nepal, like the social system, was an excessively fragmented, pyramidal structure, controlled by a handful of Chhetri and Brahman families on the basis of service and allegiance to the reigning dynasty. The familial basis was so pronounced in the traditional Nepali political system that it has a pervasive influence on all other organs of the government, including the religious establishment, whose primary duty was to legitimize the person or family in power.

The traditional concept of legitimacy based on birth and the sword, and the familial core of politics suffered a modification only after the political ‘revolution’ of 1951 which abolished the Rana family oligarchy, and obtained the monarch’s commitment to constitutional rule. But during the period between 1951 and 1960, constitutional concepts and democratic sentiments could not be fully realized despite the attempt of the modernizing political elite to introduce some of the legal and political forms of democracy in Nepal.
General elections were held in 1959, but the first-ever elected government which resulted remained in office for only eighteen months. The royal take-over of 15 December, 1960 amounted to a restoration of the kind of monarchical rule that had prevailed before 1846 and the concept of popular legitimacy based on universal adult suffrage was subverted, before it had time to gain respect and sanctity, by the doctrine of royal supremacy. The Crown was once again regarded, in theory and in practice, as the source and the dispenser of executive, legislative and judicial authority.

The late King Mahendra, a master tactician, used considerable skill to avoid emphasizing certain aspects of his political system. To justify his dissolution of parliament and to present his subsequent political practices in a favourable light, he attempted to create a cultural myth about the Panchayats to support claims of legitimacy by royal authority. He put forward a vigorous plea that his 'democratic' Panchayat system with its roots in the soil of the country was better suited to the socio-psychological climate of Nepal than parliamentary democracy, which was 'alien to its tradition and genius'. The Panchayats, however, had never in the past functioned as regular units of local self-government and had been at best councils of elders drawn from a particular caste to conciliate minor disputes relating to caste matters. In support of his climate-and-soil theory, King Mahendra refurbished the Panchayats on a model of traditional polity that basically derived its authority from the spirit of reverence for hierarchy based on seniority and age in a caste-ingrained society.

King Mahendra's Panchayat system was in practice a means of exploiting, under the garb of 'tutelary democracy', the age-old Nepali tradition of unquestioned obedience to autocratic authority of any kind. Even so, King Mahendra took great care to avoid the impression that his Panchayat system had, in practice and theory, discarded the basic democratic tenet that power belongs to the people. He professed his faith in the concept of popular sovereignty by emphasizing in public the principle of decentralization. He did not, however, make it clear whether or not decentralization implied in actual practice any gradual diminution of his own royal powers and prerogatives.

He also never tired of repeating in public that his Panchayat system was basically democratic. When for the first time in the Panchayati decade King Mahendra, in 1968, appointed a cabinet on the recommendation of his Prime Minister, Surya Bahadur Thapa,
he appeared to be handing power back to the people, as though he had only temporarily held it in trust for them. This concept of holding power as a trust on behalf of the people, though a traditional Hindu concept of royal power, is also amenable to interpretation in terms of modern constitutional and democratic practice. But all this did not deter King Mahendra from ruling directly without any Prime Minister from mid-April 1970 to mid-April 1971. The only plausible explanation for this state of affairs is that the late King did not wish to appoint any Prime Minister other than his own favourite Kirtinidhi Bista who had been Prime Minister in 1969 and was finally returned unopposed to the Rastriya Panchayat in 1971. The conclusion seems warranted that what King Mahendra really sought to accomplish was to retain intact his position as the traditional custodian of absolute authority and the source of all legitimizing powers.

King Birendra Bikram Shah Dev, who succeeded his father the late King Mahendra on 31 January, 1972, has clearly stated his position on the question of the ultimate source of political authority in Nepal in his written answers to questions submitted by a newspaper correspondent for a press interview:

‘Q. Can you imagine Nepal ever becoming a constitutional monarchy such as Britain is ?

A. My country is constitutional monarchy because my government and people are governed under a constitution. In Nepal, the monarch and his subjects have been governed by dharma, a system drawn from the Hindu religion. The King cannot change this value system. Therefore he too is governed by the ethical code. According to this code, the King lives and has his being only to protect the people, to dispense justice to them and punish the wrong-doers. Indeed, the King embodies the collective identity of the people and, as desired by his people, it is he who grants and amends the constitution.

Q. How do you feel about being looked upon as God?

A. It is not a question of how I feel about it. There are local customs and traditions. This relates to our religious background. I have responsibility (under the Vedic scriptures) to protect the people against injustice. The concept of God is there among the people.’

However, the real rationale of the Panchayat system is politically personal rather than ideological or traditional. It is based on a tutelary and teleological concept of democracy which simply
assumes that the Nepali people are not prepared to practise self-government. The source of all political authority, the King, has the sole and ultimate responsibility to decide what is best for his subjects, politically and otherwise.

**Communication**

Crucial to the modernization process is communication: both the content of communication messages flowing through society and also the processes of communication themselves. The status relationship between communicator and recipient in a traditional system is highly personalized—as for example the relationship between the Brahman preceptor or preacher and his lay disciples or audience—and any appraisal of the reliability of the communication is related to the strength of the recipients’ personal relationship with the source of information. This may partially account for the fact that political parties in Nepal, India and Pakistan were at times tempted to exploit the relationship between the Brahman priests or Muslim maulvis and their followers for election purposes. King Mahendra after his take-over also sought to establish a personal relationship with the masses through extensive royal tours and also through Royal Commissions for tours of inspection to communicate his ‘Panchayat’ message to the masses effectively.

The amount of communication is fast increasing in today’s world owing to the rapid development of science and technology. Apart from the content of communication, development also implies a change in the basic form or structure of the process of communication. As examples, one might cite the use of satellites for the inter-continental transmission of television programmes, and the extensive use of radio programmes for the dissemination of information even among the people of a backward country with a high percentage of illiteracy. From the viewpoint of modernization, it is imperative that knowledge of science and technology as well as knowledge of some of the essentials of the emerging world culture be made available to the people of a modern state in their own languages.

English, which is fast becoming the world language, can under the present circumstances at best serve only as the second language in Nepal. The prevalence of as many as thirty-six dialects in Nepal speaks for the country’s linguistic and cultural diversity. Although the number of Tibeto-Burman dialects may be as high as twenty-four, the speakers of the Indo-Aryan languages far outnumber
those who use Tibeto-Burman dialects. Nepali, the lingua franca of the kingdom, is the mother-tongue of about 52 per cent of the total population and is widely understood throughout the country. The business of the state and the law courts has been entirely conducted in Nepali for a period of more than two centuries. Compared to other developing countries Nepal is perhaps fortunate in having a language which is capable of being developed as a suitable medium of national communication. This does not mean that other languages and dialects in the country should be suppressed. Certainly their development could also serve to enrich the national language and culture. The contention is merely that Nepal's limited resources must be concentrated at first on equipping and developing Nepali, particularly to make it a fit medium of secondary and higher education along modern lines.

There is at present no truly comprehensive and authoritative dictionary of the Nepali language. This situation needs to be remedied as soon as possible. The compilation of a definitive dictionary is an essential first step to the establishment of Nepali as a truly viable modern language. And as modern scientific knowledge must be disseminated among the people effectively and widely, any dictionary that claims to be comprehensive and definitive should include a section on scientific and technological words. Also, as language in some cases has proved a sociological barrier, efforts must be made from the beginning to develop Nepali on the right lines.

It is unfortunate that the kind of pedantic Nepali used in the news broadcasts over Radio Nepal and in the government newspaper, Gorkhapatra, which has the largest circulation of all newspapers in Nepal, is not understood by a great majority of the population in the country. If Nepali is to be developed as a popular vehicle for education and culture, it must be simplified and standardized, and brought close to the language of everyday speech. The government may even have to subsidize the production of a standard dictionary and grammar. Nepali, enriched from all sources including various dialects in use in Nepal, can effectively serve as a medium of popular education at different levels and promote the development and modernization goals only if it is fully equipped to impart technical competence and scientific knowledge to the people.

From the very beginning Nepal has been inhabited by diverse ethnic groups with different racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Because of the mountainous terrain of the country, they
have developed in some degree of isolation from each other. Under these circumstances, it is essential for the Nepali people for the purpose of modernization to develop complementary habits and facilities of communication by simplifying and standardizing Nepali in both social and literary terms. Nepali can be developed over a period of time as an effective medium of social and cultural intercourse between the peoples inhabiting different areas of Nepal.

Modern communications systems consist of two distinct levels or stages. The first level is that of the well-organized, clearly and openly structured mass-media and the second is that of informal opinion leaders who, like the communicators in traditional systems, rely on face-to-face communication. In passing, it may be pointed out that political workers in Nepal initially made use of the traditional method of popular education and communication by public recitations and readings from religious books to carry on political propaganda against the Rana government of the day, which had denied civil liberties of any kind to the people.

The 1951 political change witnessed a mushroom growth of newspapers and news magazines in Nepal where there had been very few such periodicals previously. None of these publications had anything like mass-circulation. Their readership was limited to the urban elite in Kathmandu and a few other townships, and to the headquarters of the district governments in the outlying regions. Yet this plethora of publication brought about a considerable change in the Kathmandu communications pattern, and they acquired an importance hardly merited by the quality of their content.

The inflation of the communication process during the interim period was a direct result of the seven-year delay in the holding of general elections, during which time the representative character of the political parties could not be tested democratically by free elections. Before the General Elections of 1959, every pressure group or vested interest in Nepal attempted to influence governmental decisions in its favour through publications since they could be produced without much cost. Thus all conceivable pressure groups were free to publish irresponsibly anything that suited their temporary interests.

The most unfortunate characteristic of the new political communications system was that newspaper contents were seldom based on facts or events but consisted mostly of editorial opinions and subjective interpretations of events. This tendency was slightly
Political Development and Modernization

checked during the nineteen-month interlude of parliamentary government, but after the royal take-over on 15 December, 1960, the previous pattern of subjectiveness and irresponsibility returned unabated, subject only to restrictions on criticism of the activities of the palace. Hence the conclusion is warranted that the efforts to substitute a modern communications system in Kathmandu for the traditional practice of rumour-mongering and hearsay have failed. All that has happened is that the rumours are now carried by the printed word rather than word of mouth. This has done little to create a factual or objective basis for political activity. With a few exceptions, most of the members of the Fourth Estate in Nepal have merely replaced the informers, tale-carriers and rumours-mongers of the bygone political era.

In an open democratic system a political party achieves its status and function by virtue of the fact that its influence and strength are tested in competitive, representative elections. In the partyless system of contemporary Nepal, however, it is the Palace Secretariat which must attempt to fulfil the function of a political party, despite the fact that the Secretariat is not even similar to a political party in form or operation. Because of its key position in the Panchayat political process, the Palace Secretariat has a vital role in channelling communications to the King through a filtering process of selection and elimination.

Furthermore, all lines of communication vital to the system must flow through the palace at some key point, thereby making the Palace Secretariat the political institution in possession of far more knowledge than others of the facts on every important issue. This set of circumstances inevitably brought about a reversion to the traditional Nepali pattern of politics in which a politician must rely on influence with the court to maintain his political primacy. In order to retain influence he must attempt to achieve a near monopoly of all available channels of information on vital matters which might engage the palace. He must also deny political competitors any knowledge other than routine information, and provide even that information in as misleading a form as possible.

The result of this overcentralized communications system is that the noblesse oblige concept of the previous systems of Shah and Rana rule has once again gained ascendancy over a system of popular pressures and support serving as a basis for public policy. There has been a revival of the traditional image of the Nepali politician as
an operator behind the scenes rather than an honest broker in an open forum. In the popular mind he is seen as working on hidden motives in the service of vested interests rather than working to channel popular aspirations to the centres of decision-making.

Today in developed societies, there have emerged professional communicators with their distinctive role as men who ‘understand politics but are not of politics’. In transitional societies, communicators such as writers, journalists and broadcasters can, if permitted, play an important role in the process of political development by conveying to the people new concepts of the realities and potentialities of politics in such a way as to make them absorb the spirit of the modern world.

The problem of the transitional society has been one of reconciling the universal elements of world culture with the parochial expressions of local or national culture. Nepal’s official abandonment of the path of parliamentary democracy has resulted in the revival of authoritarian trends and institutions, disguised as manifestations of the traditional culture, which are apt to hinder the process of modernization. It is only within the framework of competitive politics that both individuals and society may be able to harmonize elements of the modern cosmopolitan world with their own historic sense of individuality.

One effective communications network was created after the 1951 political change. This was the advent of frequent public meetings and processions and, most importantly, the launching of intensive and enthusiastic party propaganda campaigns. But, with the introduction of the non-party or partyless Panchayat system, this method of communication has ceased to be operative.

A non-party system is essentially a traditional system unsuited to cope with the complexities which the process of modernization inevitably brings in its train. Parties are the products of modern politics and are the direct result of social mobilization, the expansion of political consciousness and the growth of mass political participation.\(^5\) Karl W. Deutsch, who has made an original contribution to the modern concept of nationalism, has thus highlighted the role of social communication in nation-building: ‘In the political and social struggles of the modern age, nationality, then, means an alignment of large numbers of individuals from the middle and lower classes linked to regional centres and leading social groups by channels of social communication and economic intercourse, both
indirectly from link to link and directly with the centre.6

Political parties provide the channels by which interest articulation7 and aggregation8 can take place and thus bring within their fold a variety of organizations and groups such as peasants, workers, women and young people, creating a nationally-based network which penetrates into every corner of the country and endeavours to mobilize every group. The mobilization process, after all, consists of using manpower fully and of enabling those involved in the economic and political processes of nation-building to adopt new mental attitudes, new ideas and new forms of social organization. Judged from this point of view, the non-party feature of the Panchayat system in Nepal has not only impeded the process of mobilization but also hindered the growth of a unified system of communication on a national basis.

According to modern political scientists, there are three stages of socialization9 essential to the process of nation-building: (1) The basic socialization process by which a child is initiated into its particular culture and trained to be a useful member of the society, and by which the child, as it advances in years, acquires conscious and subconscious experiences that have a profound influence in the shaping of its basic personality structure; (2) political socialization which brings an individual awareness of its political world and adapts it to its political culture, thereby making it realize its place or identity in the nation's political scheme; (3) the process of political recruitment which assures an individual an active and distinct role in the political process. The all-pervasive influence of the extended family had in the past served the purpose of basic socialization in Nepal. Now the socializing function is being gradually taken over by the state system of education.

A national system of education oriented towards technology and applied science was introduced in 1971 but with considerable emphasis also on socialization into the Panchayati culture as a major aim. The new education plan provides for selective admission into the university and institutes of higher learning on the basis of manpower planning and needs, and also for compulsory social service at certain stages as part of the training for diplomas and degrees. There can be no quarrel with these features provided the government can muster adequate human and material resources to implement them. But the professed use of the new system of education as a channel for national indoctrination in the 'Panchayati' culture,
whatever that may mean, may prove to be anti-educational and may restrict the scope for the foreign and growth of the human mind and intellect, with disastrous consequences for the future.

Penetration

It is not possible for a small coterie of influential people at the centre, however educated, brilliant and intelligent they may be, to influence the thoughts and actions of the people in remote and scattered areas except through a well-structured system of communication, with a nation-wide network of channels providing for interaction between the centre and the periphery by the continuous interchange of information and messages. From the democratic point of view, the problem of reaching down into society to motivate attitudinal changes on a comprehensive popular scale cannot be tackled satisfactorily in countries where the concept of popular legitimacy has yet to gain general acceptance and where cabinets, parliaments and parties have so far not proved themselves as the principal efficient authorities in actual practice. In such countries, the government's attention is merely confined to raising revenues, maintaining law and order and to implementing foreign-aided development projects.

Especially in the absence of political parties, the message of modernization—inspiring attitudinal changes, cannot be carried to the people, because it is not possible for the governmental machinery alone to communicate ideas to the masses on a wide scale. Only political parties with a wide network of organization at the grass-roots level can reach all sections of the people and help induce changes in popular attitudes. No amount of official propaganda, publicity and public relations can by themselves achieve this purpose.

Again, the wide gap between a handful of the educated elite and the masses, who are illiterate and steeped in age-old beliefs, cannot be reduced or closed unless something is done by the former to relate themselves to the latter to arouse political and social consciousness among the people in general.

In the Nepali context mass political parties, far more than formal governmental or purely social organizations, could function as an effective link between the elites and the masses, and could provide the best hope for building the nation. The mass party may provide the framework within which ethnic, caste and regional differences,
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accentuated by the non-party Panchayat system, could be buried in the pursuit of common national goals.

Participation

The Panchayat system with its unique method of representation, is often described as a tiered democracy. It is a system of tiers or layers of assemblies (Sabhas) and executive committees (Panchayats). The tiered Panchayat framework consists of the village executive committee (Gaun Panchayat), the district executive committees (Zilla Panchayat) and the national assembly (Rastriya Panchayat). Previously, at the base of the Panchayat hierarchy stood the village assembly (Gaun Sabha), composed of the entire adult population of a village or a group of villages (altogether about 5,000 electors). The village assembly elected an eleven-member village executive committee (Gaun Panchayat) and one representative from each village was also sent to the district assembly (Zilla Sabha), which, in turn elected an eleven-member district executive committee (Zilla Panchayat). All the district executive committees (Zilla Panchayats) in a particular zone formed an electoral college to elect, from among members of the district executive committees (Zilla Panchayats), their respective representatives to the national assembly (Rastriya Panchayat). The 1975 Amendments to the Constitution leave this outward pattern of elective bodies intact by increasing the number of members of the district executive committee (Zilla Panchayat) from 11 to 13 and of those of the national assembly (Rastriya Panchayat) from 125 to 135.

What is remarkable in the constitution as amended by King Birendra in December, 1975 is a new provision for the setting up of the village and town assemblies (Gaun and Nagar Sabhas) with a view to restricting popular participation even at the village and town level. In the new Panchayat set-up, the forty-five member village assemblies are composed of five representatives for each or every one of the nine wards in which the village is divided for purposes of election to the village assembly. Whereas, in the past, the entire adult population of about 5,000 persons would form the village assembly and elect the chairman and the vice-chairman of the village executive committee along with its other members, only forty-five persons would now elect nine members, one from among five members of each of the nine wards, to the village ex-
The village executive committee will now consist of these nine elected members and two other nominees of the Back-to-the-Village National Campaign and will elect from among its eleven members its chairman and vice-chairman. The base of the Panchayat hierarchy has thus been further narrowed down from the entire population of the village or villages, comprising about 5,000 people, to 45 persons. Further, the Local Panchayat (Election Procedure, First Amendment) Ordinance provides that no one can contest these elections unless his candidature has been approved beforehand by the appropriate level of the BVNC apparatus with its network spreading from the centre to the zones, districts and villages. The central committee of the BVNC, including its chairman and secretary, consists of nine members handpicked by the King. It has been designed as an instrument for conducting organized politics under the 'active leadership' or the 'direct guidance' of the King.

The composition of the higher level bodies in the Panchayat hierarchy, such as the district executive committees and the national assembly, ultimately depends entirely on who is permitted to run for elections at the village levels. Under the constitution as amended by King Birendra, only those with whose loyalty to the King and faith in the existing system the BVNC is satisfied, are permitted participation in the political system. Since the so-called class and professional organizations, which are government controlled and financed, by the government have had their national or central and zonal level set-ups abolished, and function now only up to the district level, their office bearers, at both the village and district levels, are nominated by the BVNC, from among the Panchayat bodies at the corresponding levels. These changes have further restricted and closed the Nepali political system to popular influences outside the traditional governing elite, closely linked to the monarchy.

It can be seen immediately that all executive committees and assemblies (Panchayats and Sabhas) in the system are now indirectly elected. The actual number of votes that could theoretically send a candidate up through the system to a seat in the Rastriya Panchayat is ludicrously small by the standards of representative democracy understood elsewhere. The Panchayat system has thus a very narrow base of popular representation and, in the absence of political parties and activities for popular mobilization, the system
has extremely limited scope for any meaningful direct participation by the people.

Even in the case of the Gaun Panchayat or the village executive committee, which was directly elected by the adult population within its territorial jurisdiction, the election campaign, in the absence of political platforms and parties, had no significance for the people in terms of political education or socialization. The annual general meeting of the Gaun Sabha or the village assembly in the absence of organized discussions or debates on local problems with alternative suggestions for their solution, was in effect nothing more than a routine formality. The root cause of all this was the lack of freedom of political expression and organization, without which political mobilization is impossible. Under these circumstances, there could be no meaningful interaction between the polity and the society in the shape of a harmonious inflow and outflow of popular demands and public policies so as to promote stable and ordered national progress.

In the Panchayat system, the most crucial levers of power, consisting of the control of finance and manpower, are vested in the King and the Palace Secretariat. Budget proposals cannot be introduced in the national legislature without the prior consent and approval of the King, although the responsibility for policy-making and implementation is theoretically entrusted to the elected Panchayat bodies and officials. The responsibility for implementation and for meeting popular criticism of the policies of the government and the working of the system is placed on the Panchayat bodies at the various levels culminating with the Rastriya Panchayat, in the words of the late King Mahendra the nation’s ‘highest legislature’.

The elected representatives in various tiers of the Panchayat system have an extremely narrow base of support among the people in their constituency. For this reason and also because of the lack of organized support in the absence of political parties, they have been helpless against the supreme authority of the Crown.

King Mahendra was opposed to political parties as such because he viewed every kind of organized popular force as a threat to his absolute power. He preferred to stress an administrative approach to nation-building instead of emphasizing the need for a political process. All this has made ‘the King’s critics charge that the entire Panchayat system is merely a subterfuge behind which the
King continues to exercise an unchallengeable authority while giving the illusion of a deconcentration of powers. Democratic politics must be viewed as a process by means of which conflicting interests can be exposed and then adjusted in such a way as to maximize the interests of all groups. But in Nepal, as in most transitional countries, the process of modernization and industrialization have not advanced far enough to create a wide range of specific interests to provide and sustain a differentiated social structure along associational lines. It is no wonder that the most prevalent grouping are still of a communal character, each group representing a mode of life and an immense variety of diffuse interests.

The novel and so-called class organizations in Nepal, which are officially recognized by the government, do not represent any specific economic interests and, for this reason, their actions tend to reflect either the highly personal demands of individuals with pronounced ideological overtones or the unyielding and unacceptable demands of distinctive ethnic, religious or other communal groups. The interplay of forces that affect the working of the class organizations within the operational political framework of the Panchayats shows no signs of evolving a ‘pragmatic bargaining style’ of politics.

The modernizing political elite of the developing nations—the western-style businessmen, the educators, the new bureaucratic elite and officials of the government—all have something in common. In separate and sometimes contradictory ways, they are all engaged in an attempt to forge highly differentiated and formally structured organizations in a traditional environment. It is their efforts which form the very essence of social change in tradition-bound societies.

In Nepal, the agencies of development are, in short, faced with the task of creating ‘more effective, more adaptive, more complex and more rationalized organizations’. Professional associations such as the Bar Association, Medical Association, Engineers’ Association, Teachers’ Association, Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Commerce and Industries have been in existence in Nepal for a number of years. But the lack of freedom and scope for them to articulate their interests in a meaningful way has hampered the growth of a rationally-based system of interest aggregation. The purpose of political articulation in transitional societies is not merely to educate and train the electorate to assess public affairs and issues
critically but also to instil in people new values and new outlooks consistent with the needs of modernization.

The best way to get the people interested in development is to provide them opportunities to participate in the political process of policy and decision-making on vital issues. In the Nepali situation, it is true that the people at their present stage of development cannot be expected to supply all the policy inputs. Public administrators will have to make many decisions themselves. But, in the absence of an adequate level of social consciousness and opportunity for popular participation, and especially in the absence of political platforms and parties, the bureaucratic administrators, consisting entirely of the socially privileged elite, cannot be trusted to discharge their duties with a sense of public accountability. Hence the need to strengthen representative political processes by providing for political platforms, parties and representative institutions such as a parliament and local councils elected on the broadest possible basis. If modernization and development by democratic means are the aims, there is no getting away from the creation of fully representative political structures both at the national and local levels.

Integration

In the past the process of Sanskritization fostered the integration of Nepali society by standardizing religious and social practices and by providing common perceptions of social values and attitudes as well as a limited degree of social and economic mobility. Professor M.N. Srinivas in his *Social Change in Modern India* defines Sanskritization as: ‘The process by which a “low” Hindu caste, or tribe or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently, “twiceborn” caste. Such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community. The claim is usually made over a period of time, in fact, a generation or two, before the arrival is conceded.’

Sanskritization may be thus characterized as the process of assimilating ‘low’ caste Hindus and tribal groups into the tradition of higher castes by making them acquire some of the accepted norms of Hindu culture and religion. The observance of the basic rules and rituals relating to birth, marriage and death, and the acceptance of Brahman priests and dietary restrictions were preliminary requirements for being initiated into the higher caste. Some of the sub-clans
of the Magar tribe in central Nepal such as Bhujel, Budathoki, Mudule Khadga, Thapa, Gharti and Rana, and the liquor-consuming tribes of western Nepal, the Matwali Chhetris, may have been promoted to the status of the Chhetris through their gradual absorption of the 'superior' culture of the 'twiceborn'. The dominant peasant castes seem to have acquired the status of Chhetris by gradual stages over a period of years.

When Muslim empires replaced the Hindu kingdoms in the wake of the Muslim invasions of India in the eighth century and the centuries following, Nepal became a political sanctuary for many fugitive Hindu chieftains. The Malla dynasty which ruled Kathmandu Valley from the thirteenth century until 1768-69 as well as the present Shah dynasty are said to have been founded by immigrant Hindu chiefs, keen on protecting their religious integrity from the inroads of Muslim power in India. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that the rule of the Mallas and Shahs led to a distinct Sanskritization of Nepali culture on a wide scale. From the Thakalis in remote central Nepal to the Magars, Gurungs, Rias, Limbus and Sunwars in the middle belt and further down to the Tharus at the base of the Siwalik foothills, the people of Nepal have been gradually but steadily brought under the influence of this dynamic cultural force. During the Rana period, even some of the more pronouncedly Mongoloid ethnic groups such as the Tamangs and Thakalis applied to the government for initiation into the Hindu religious tradition through the imposition of restrictions on beef-eating and through the acceptance of Brahmans as priests.

The Thakalis are at present claiming connection with the Thakuris by imitating surnames ending in Chan. Some of the lower occupational castes of the Tarai such as the Teli (the oil crushers and dealers), the Kalwars (the liquor dealers) and the Sundis (the liquor distillers) have surreptitiously changed their family names from Sahu or Sah to the Thakuri title Shah and even married Chhetri girls. In this manner the process of Sanskritization has been a kind of egalitarian tendency in the caste system, and has afforded scope, however limited, for social, political and economic mobility within the caste hierarchy.

The slow but steady Sanskritization of the unifying social links over a period of several centuries made a multi-communal pattern of life and communication feasible before other visible unifying links appeared upon the scene. The central Himalayan region initially
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consisted of independent principalities inhabited by diverse ethnic groups, with no permanent system to regulate their relations. The situation was anarchic in the extreme and defied unified politics or even permanent working alliances. The society in each case was based on familial and caste considerations and was extremely parochial and exclusivist in outlook. But the process of Sanskritization gradually paved the way for the unification of the entire area under a single dynasty. The standardization, however minimal, of social, political and economic norms through the process of Sanskritization harmonized behaviour and value-patterns to the point of making rationalized interaction between various groups possible. It might also be pointed out that, although some of the aspects of Sanskritization may be altogether at variance with the modernist outlook, the experience and knowledge of the working of the Sanskritization. There is an interesting parallel here. The process of Sanskritization in Nepali and Indian culture is somewhat similar to the process of westernization within the modernization process. For who can deny the essential ingredients of western values and styles in what we broadly label the ‘modernization process’? Sanskritization was at one time seen as essentially elevating and civilizing. So too is modernization.

Even after the 1951 political change the possibility of social mobility for various ethnic groups other than the three socially dominant castes of the Brahmans, Chhetris and Newars has been minimal. According to a study based on experimental research conducted by the Centre for Economic Development and Administration, 80 per cent of the positions of power and profit are still held by the Brahmans, Chhetris and Newars, who represent a small minority of the total population of Nepal.* A subsequent survey has revealed that more than half of the governmental civil service is drawn from the Kathmandu Valley, which contains about three per cent of the population of Nepal.

This chronic state of inequality, which has tended to give the widest possible opportunity for government service and education to only three castes and to one small area of the country, cannot be said to be consistent with the modernization goals of the country. Hence the need for a conscious and coordinated policy of national integration.

*Vide Table IV at the end of the chapter
The following practical suggestions, if implemented, may help evolve a coordinated policy of national integration:

(1) The Public Service Commission should be required to follow a policy of keeping to a minimum the number of new entrants to the civil service from Kathmandu or from the three dominant castes. This might be accomplished by giving some kind of handicap in favour of all other groups for recruitment to government service. A tiered system of handicaps would have to be worked out to ensure justice to all backward ethnic groups in different stages of development. Some of the ethnic groups such as the Magars, Gurungs, Rais and Limbus suffer less discrimination and disadvantage than those on the lowest rungs of the ladder such as the Tamangs, Tharus and Satars. Educational scholarships from the lowest to the highest levels of education should also be allocated on a similar basis. The government must find extra funds to finance such an elaborate system of scholarships. The Guthi (public religious trust) funds might fruitfully be used for this purpose, as has been suggested.14

(2) Recruitment in the army and the police must be widely extended to the Tamangs, the Tharus and the Satars on a favoured basis and there should be no discrimination against them as in the past on the basis of a kind of 'apartheid' myth of the so-called martial and non-martial races.

(3) The national language, as has been suggested already, must be brought close to the language of everyday speech with a view to making it an effective medium of national communication. Words should be borrowed extensively from the dialects in order to enrich Nepali vocabulary, since words borrowed from Sanskrit or coined by the traditional Sanskritic method do not always have the same natural vigour, simplicity and raciness as the expressions borrowed from the dialects.

(4) More could be done to provide for a wider dissemination of folk-lore and culture and for the popularization of folk songs and dances.

All this, however, presupposes a change in the attitude of the dominant minority power-elite. Unless the legitimate grievances of the hitherto neglected majority are properly heeded and a greater opportunity is provided for the upward mobility of various ethnic groups, the process of development may create a highly explosive situation in the country.

The spokesmen of the government of Nepal have claimed from
time to time that the Panchayat system, despite the indifference of the urban educated elites towards it, has benefited the countryside by promoting the growth of local initiative and leadership in development efforts. But two inquiries of an empirical nature into the impact of the Panchayat system on the pattern of changing social life in certain rural areas of the hills and the Tarai in eastern Nepal have belied their claims.* These studies by Nepali and foreign scholars have shown that the Panchayat system has not only strengthened the traditional hold of the influential castes and families on the economy and politics of the villages but has, in some cases, as for example in the far-eastern hill district of Ilam, alienated the indigenous inhabitants such as the Limbus by encouraging the dominance of the Brahmans.13 Because of the lack of nationally organized platforms and clear-cut election manifestoes promising the removal of economic and social injustices on ideological grounds, the Panchayat elections at all levels have involved merely an undisguised play of selfish and personal interests, and have tended to accentuate ethnic, tribal and religious differences.

In today's context what is important from the viewpoint of integration is evolving a national consensus and a national political culture capable of mobilizing the nation as a whole. This was to be done by educating those involved in the political and economic processes of nation-building to understand new mental attitudes, new ideas and new forms of social organization. Considered in this light, a party or non-party system appears to be only an instrumental aspect of the more basic problem—namely the creation of a national unified political culture or consensus.

The problem of integration in Nepal will become more serious as the demands for an equitable allocation of development resources to different regions acquire force. The integration of various geographic regions and ethnic groups in socio-psychological terms may be promoted in the future through the implementation of a comprehensive long-term national development plan aiming at the harmonious development of the country as a whole. By involving the entire people in the common enterprise of development, a judiciously conceived national plan may also foster a viable integration of people of different ethnic and linguistic origins.

Some of the measures adopted during the Panchayat decade to

*Vide Table V at the end of the chapter
promote integration may be listed as follows: (1) propaganda and publicity emphasizing the traditional role of a monarch as a symbol of national unity and as a centre of loyalty for various ethnic groups, (2) a new legal code abolishing laws based on caste rules and differences, (3) a legal provision making a working knowledge of the Nepali language mandatory for citizenship, (4) an attempt to standardize the system of education, (5) the improvement of roads and communications with the help of foreign aid and (6) the introduction of land reforms which were, however, characterized by inchoate conception, ambiguous legislation and inefficient implementation. The adoption of national symbols including the flag, flower, and animal, and the patronizing of Nepali songs, dances and dramas at the state level may also be mentioned as symbolic moves to promote national unity and integration. However creative, Nepal’s efforts at strengthening the process of integration have proceeded along traditional lines and have so far been symbolic rather than real and earnest.

Nepal is faced with its own peculiar problems of emigration and immigration, which have a bearing on the question of integration. Only about a century ago, people from the adjoining areas of India had to be actually lured into cultivating the Tarai land and settling there. However, an outflow of emigrants from Nepal to India commenced soon after the pressure on land in the midland region in Nepal had increased with the rapid growth in its population. But the people in the mid-montane region initially dreaded the malarial hot climate of the Tarai and showed greater interest in seeking employment as mercenaries in foreign armies and, at times, in emigrating to the hill areas of India, Sikkim, Bhutan and Burma.

Tension is building up at present in the Nepal Tarai between the immigrants from the Nepali hills and those from across the Indian border. There has of late been an exodus of people from the hill areas to the Tarai, which, till half a century ago, was largely inhabited by immigrants from India.* Meanwhile the government of Nepal has enacted legislation forbidding the sale of land to foreigners, including Indians, even in the Tarai. Now the Tarai is populated by both groups of immigrants while the indigenous tribal populations are losing importance.

Elsewhere in South Asia, the intrusion of divergent linguistic and cultural groups into a competitive economic situation has often

*Vide Tables IV and V in the Economic Fact Sheet in Appendices
created social and political tensions. Controversies and tensions have already arisen in the Tarai as to who is a 'local Nepali' and who is an 'outsider', meaning an Indian citizen. Again, there is tension between recent emigrants from the Nepali hills who consider themselves to be representative of Nepali culture and the indigenous Tarai dwellers most of whom are of Indian social and cultural origin. The Nepali government's attempt to integrate the Tarai emotionally, politically, and economically into Nepal by reducing links with India, wherever possible, also produces political tensions. The Tarai people have genuine grievances in so far as they are not adequately represented in the power structure of Nepal, be it in the army, the administration, the national legislature or the cabinet. The continued settlement of Indian-born immigrants into the Tarai may eventually pose severe problems. Despite the 1950 Nepal-India Treaty's provision for reciprocity in the matter of residence and the acquisition of property in one country by the nationals of another, the government of Nepal has not been and is not in a position to allow an unrestrained immigration of Indian nationals into the country. If a compulsory birth-registration scheme is not introduced and implemented strictly in the near future, the Nepali Tarai may also be involved in the citizenship disputes that have characterized the politics of Sri Lanka, Burma and East Africa.\textsuperscript{16}

_Distribution_

For physical, psychological and historical reasons the central government in Nepal has failed to enforce an equitable distribution of goods and services throughout the society. For a long time the vision of the government at Kathmandu did not extend beyond the confines of the Valley. More than half of the development budget has for a long time been spent entirely on the Kathmandu Valley and its environs. Indeed the Kathmandu Valley alone was treated as Nepal for all practical purposes. Even the present government of Nepal under King Birendra's leadership, with its professed goal of an equitable allocation of resources for development of various regions in the country, has not been able to do better than allocate a mere 17.2 per cent, 13 per cent and 11 per cent of the 1973-74 development budget for the eastern, western and far-western region respectively while 58.8 per cent of the development budget has been set aside for the central region comprising the Kathmandu Valley and the adjoining areas.
The lack of roads, transport and communication also posed a handicap to the central government in meeting the problem of an equitable distribution of goods and services. The east-west mountain ranges and the north-south river systems make transport and communication difficult to this day. It is often easier and more economical to travel to destinations in the hills by way of the Tarai or Indian territory than by the direct mountain route. The terrain of the country makes air travel and transport cheaper, although it is naturally beyond the reach of most people, than travel by road or by beasts of burden. But the people have by force of habit become apathetic towards the central government and do not expect prompt action from it to benefit them. Nor are the people in the outlying areas politicized enough even to formulate their demands upon the central government in an effective manner. The local and national elite continue to come from the same old families as in the past and there has been no change in the traditional power structure in the countryside, either in the hills or in the Tarai.

Nepal's Political Culture

Before we proceed further with a discussion of the prospects for the modernization of Nepal it may be useful to examine certain aspects of Nepal's political culture.17

For hundreds of years, the central government in Nepal was run by a number of interrelated families, with the most influential and powerful of them keeping the Prime Ministership or the chief executive position to themselves. Centrally appointed governors provided the link between Kathmandu and the rest of the country. The principal functions of the government were to maintain law and order and a semblance of justice within the territory, to protect it against encroachment from outside, and to raise revenue from the inhabitants of the territory for the services of order and protection. Revenues realized from the people were not necessarily in the nature of taxes in the modern sense. The system was feudal in nature; land was, as it is now, the primary resource in Nepal, and land-grants were made by the central government for services or favours. These revenues or collections were largely appropriated by a handful of the ruling elite as a consequence of the exercise of political power. To promote one's status, it was necessary to become part of the ruling hierarchy or to undertake some activity with its favour and sanction. For those who could not belong to the ruling hierarchy, the landed
aristocracy was the second-best choice as long as opportunities for reclaiming new land in the Tarai and the hills existed.

After all the suitable land had been taken under cultivation, the system became static as education, mercantile activity and other avenues for economic, social and political enterprise were ignored. The result was that room at the top became extremely limited; the elite class did not have wide scope for economic enterprise and was small in number compared to the total population. Under these circumstances, a political system was evolved which relied for its effectiveness on plots and rumour-mongering, bluster and bullying, and primarily on manoeuvres and counter-manoeuvres. The governing elite did not envisage a constituency in the masses and operated on the basis of co-opting individuals as temporary allies in the struggle for position, power and related benefits. Under this system, it was the primary obligation of the common people or the masses to support the elite in the government and in the landed aristocracy. The government existed for the elite rather than for the people. The organs of the government were used largely for personal gain and the masses were exploited rather than benefited.

Even after successive changes in the structure of the government and even after the formal adoption of the principles of the welfare state, individual well-being and social justice have not been promoted in Nepal. According to a study on problems of employment and income levels, even on the conservatively estimated national annual per capita income of five hundred Nepali rupees, the Tarai has 56.1 per cent and the hilly region 72 per cent of its total population below the poverty line, i.e. in 1973 as many as 2.2 million people in the Tarai and 5.5 million people in the hills were below the minimum subsistence levels of the standard of living.18

The exploitative nature of the old political style seems to remain unchanged to this day. Those in government who continue to practise the same old style of politics tend to become corrupt, with the result that the people are demoralized by submitting to them and ineffective in opposing them. The landed interests, the merchants and small traders contribute to corruption and malpractice by resisting reforms that might undermine their exploitative positions. The ministers in power are never tired of repeating that the people have been the beneficiaries of the government’s actions, even when the masses are being actually subjected to the worst kind of exploitation. The end result of all this is that although the masses still remain
submitive, they are increasingly discontented.

Nepali politics and society have always had a pronounced familial core. The extended family has been the primary agent of education and the centre of socialization for the child. Nepali citizens owe their knowledge of Nepali religion, economics, politics, castes and class to the family, whose several generations and various kinships are often today in the same household patterns as in the past. In this system the child is made to accept uncritically the percepts of the all-powerful family. The members of the extended family do not possess freedom of initiative in any matter, not even in the choice of profession.

The writ of the head of the family, be he the grandfather, father or eldest brother, runs supreme in the management of the old-style family’s property or earnings. His precepts have to be carried out in every case, since the extended family has no tradition of solving problems through discussion in a spirit of mutual accommodation. The tendency of Nepali religious traditions both Hindu and Buddhist to overemphasize spiritual and magical concerns has not encouraged a rational confrontation of the worldly problems of time, space and matter.

Nepali society with its traditional religious ideology, with its explanation of one’s present status in terms of the reward and punishment for one’s actions in a past life and with its emphasis on the rewards for present actions in some future life, may be said to have developed in a gratifying symbiosis. The ideology satisfied the society’s needs, and the society in turn reinforced the ideology. On the whole, religion has in practice acted as a tremendous force for social inertia. While rationality, which is the very essence of modernization, may not be in conflict with religion in its abstract and idealized version, it is definitely in conflict with religion in the form in which it actually exists among the people. Religion as a social fact cannot be identified with the higher form in which many intellectuals in developing countries want it to be preserved, since at its higher level it has no connection with prevailing attitudes, customs and institutions.

The political culture of Nepal has always been characterized by authoritarian tendencies. Both religion and general societal norms have reinforced the authoritarian tradition by encouraging blind obedience to autocratic authority of some kind or the other. Just as the will of the head of the family had to be obeyed under all circum-
stances, the ruler’s wish was a law and a command unto the people. Nepal was ruled for centuries by the personal fiat of one strong man or the other. There has always been an emphasis on the merit of military tradition or profession with special stress on unquestioned obedience to superior authority. Considerations of the common people seldom figured in the calculations of the rulers. Peasants were associated merely with the ceremonial functions of the central government. Successful politics implied well-thought out and determined use of force aimed at the immediate gain of office for those involved in the adventure.

Nepal’s conscious desire at present to alter age-old economic and social patterns is likely to strike at the very foundation of its traditional culture—political, social and religious. An attempt is being made to alter the monolithic all-purpose function of the extended family. Its educational functions are being taken over by a system of formal education. Under the impact of modern ideas and the limited application of science and technology to societal problems, the family’s overall influence on the individual and on society is gradually declining.

Nepal’s traditional approach to knowledge, with its excessive reliance on supernatural explanation, is not consistent with the philosophical-religious foundations of western culture. Nevertheless, educational and political innovations are supported to a certain extent by some aspects of Nepali culture. For example, as a foreign educational adviser has pointed out, the construction of primary school buildings throughout the country may not prove to be difficult or unrealistic even in financial terms. The idea of having a school building is supported by the culture, because the presence of a school building adds to the prestige and pride of the local leaders of the neighbourhood. But it is not so easy to change the content of education itself, because the traditional culture is immediately affected by a qualitative change and may oppose it.19

On the whole, the pattern of the extended family operates as a conservative force, as young people prepared to try innovations usually receive little moral support from the many older members of the family with whom they are in constant touch. Even the students who tend to reject doctrinaire Hindu-Buddhist dogma are not free from the influence of these traditional religious beliefs since they pervade every aspect of the culture. The students’ motivation systems are both consciously and unconsciously rooted in the habits
and institutions of the culture. In like manner the Nepali masses participate in the institutions and practices established over the centuries by religious usage without bothering to understand the philosophical aspects of the religious system.

There are perhaps two remaining questions which need to be answered before we can proceed to discuss conclusions:

1. Before a backward nation can modernize, is it necessary for it to go through a vigorous revolution affecting the major aspects of its life and values, and in the process experience fundamental changes in attitude?

2. Can a ‘backward’ nation gradually become a modern nation even without possessing tangible resources for industrial and technological development?

Prospects for Cultural Innovations

In answer to the first question it might be pointed out that what is needed to reduce the tension and explosiveness of the process of modernization in Nepal is a gradual but steady transformation of social structure, of loyalties and values, of methods of government and modes of political participation, and of prospects for education, skill acquisition, and employment. The mere establishment of the legal and administrative structures of a modern government such as a government secretariat, a legislature and a court system, is never enough. These institutions must be related to political processes that make the regime responsive to political forces in the society.

Aid from the developed countries, especially from the western countries, is concentrated on the improvement of the quality of the administrative machinery and personnel with an eye to the successful implementation of development projects. Lucian Pye has pointed out: ‘Both historically under colonialism and through the weight of American aid programmes, the west has been overwhelmingly identified with efforts to strengthen the authoritative structures of government.’ This is true notwithstanding the positive contribution of American aid in such spheres as education, communications and land reform. As a result of this, power has gradually become the monopoly of administrative officialdom in developing countries. The authoritative organs of the government, however weak, have completely overshadowed the non-bureaucratic elements or components of the political system. While it is admitted that ‘the bureaucratic process’ and ‘the political process’ cannot replace each other,
nothing is being done to strengthen the representative political processes or institutions, with the result that many developing countries have neither effective administration nor the bases of stable political processes.

In fact, undue emphasis on strengthening the administrative processes has proved to be self-defeating, since it has created a greater imbalance between the administrative and political bases of power than existed previously and has led to a situation in which the political leaders are prone to exploit the administrative services for political purposes. Because of their permanence of tenure, those in the permanent administrative or civil service gradually begin to acquire the same importance in the eyes of the people as the feudal masters of old. Political leaders, after remaining in office for some time, often begin to neglect the popular bases of power in the nation and begin to depend on the administrative services both for implementation of their policies and for the consolidation of their political power. In the process the bureaucracy gains immensely and eventually succeeds in replacing political authority, as the popular base of the latter diminishes in strength and importance. This largely accounts for the emergence of bureaucratic-cum-military ruling cliques in the developing countries, the notable exceptions being India and Sri Lanka where political parties have succeeded in maintaining their popular bases intact with the help of their organizations at the grass-roots level.

There should be a greater realization on the part of Nepali elites that the benefits of the revolution brought about by science and technology in the world cannot be assimilated into a traditional society without a major shock or explosion unless some other liberal and human elements of world culture are meanwhile introduced. Respect for the dignity of man and the rule of law, majority rule, direct elections on the basis of universal adult suffrage and so on are not just random features of western civilization but have been accepted as essential elements of any developed system of democratic polity and culture in today's world. Economic or technological developments cannot take place in a vacuum; they presuppose a certain level of political freedom and culture. It is also true that ivory tower intellectualism coupled either with wishful longing or bitter criticism can be of no help in fuelling the fires of viable national development. Modern insights together with actual involvement in the existing conditions of national life are needed to produce
young leaders who, despite their dissatisfaction with the present state of their culture, will be able to adapt it purposefully to new circumstances and avoid the risk of blind and reckless modernization.

Although value-premises seem to have fallen into disrepute in certain academic circles which have begun to take special pride in their ‘value-free’ approach, the fact remains that values and judgements are implied in our pursuit of truth as in all purposeful behaviour. A ‘disinterested’ social science has never existed nor can it ever exist if we assume that analysts are capable of eliminating their own values. We must be clear in our minds that value-premises do influence the viewpoint from which reality is studied. But they do not in any way determine whether the factual data and relations among variables that are observed and analysed are correct: experience makes this determination. In approaching the problem of the modernization of Nepal, we cannot afford to neglect value-premises. The modernization ideals professed by leaders for Nepal may be explicitly stated once again here: a rational and scientific approach to development planning, steady growth of productivity and living standards, increased social and economic equalization, improved institutions and attitudes, national independence and consolidation, and grass-roots democracy and social discipline.

The State of Nepal’s Economy*

To turn to the second questions relating to Nepal’s viability as a modern nation in economic terms, it is not an exaggeration to state that the Panchayat system has failed to mobilize Nepal’s human and material resources for economic development. Nepal has one of the lowest ratios of internal resources used for development of any of the developing countries. More than 50 per cent of Nepal’s development budget has been met by foreign aid during the Panchayat decade. With a per capita income of less than US $ 90 per year, Nepal is poorer than most countries in the world. According to the 1975 World Bank Atlas, Nepal’s Gross National Product increased only at a rate of 0.4 per cent per annum during the period between 1960 and 1973. Nepal’s population was growing at a rate of 1.8

*For further information and details vide the Economic Fact Sheet in Appendices
per cent annually during the same period, it appears that there must have been an actual decrease in the per capita income.

According to an official Nepali estimate, the Gross National Product increased by 4 per cent at 1964-65 prices during the three year 1970-73 period, while population increased by 6.2 per cent and per capita income which had been estimated at Rs 578.00 at 1964-65 prices in 1970-71, actually declined to Rs. 562.00 in 1972-73. Nepal is regarded as one of the three least developed countries in the world, the other two being Laos and Afghanistan.

Nepal has a subsistence level agrarian economy. Cash trading is still not practised in many parts of the country. The basic overhead facilities or social benefits are non-existent. Agriculture is the primary occupation of the people of Nepal. More than 90 per cent of the country’s national income comes from agriculture. The occupational pattern for Nepal is as follows: agriculture—94.73 per cent, government services (civil and military)—3.44 per cent, industrial labour—2.19 per cent and trade and business—0.1 per cent.

Nepal is mainly a country of villages and 95.1 per cent of the total population live in settlements of less than ten thousand inhabitants. It is obvious from these figures that all efforts to better the lot of the people must be related primarily to the villagers, who are mostly farmers, and this indicates the need for a massive programme of agrarian reforms.

Agriculture is, in fact, the mainstay of the Nepal economy. The total cultivated area of land is put at 2.3 million hectares. 1.51 million hectares of the cultivated area in the Tarai, 210,000 hectares in the inner Tarai and 580,000 hectares in the mountain region. Because of the difficulty of farming in the hill region only about 16 per cent of the total land area is under cultivation, whereas in the Tarai the percentage rises to 70 per cent. Geographically, 66 per cent of the total land area of Nepal falls in the Himalayan and hill regions, and 60 per cent of Nepal’s total population live there. Yet these regions constitute less than one-third of the total cultivated area. In these parts there is consequently a very high labour-land ratio with too many people depending on too little land.

Despite implementation of four periodic plans for economic development over a period of nearly two decades, there has been retrogression rather than progress in this vital aspect of the national economy. According to a report on the national economic situation put out by the National Planning Commission, the goal was to raise
the Gross National Product by four per cent per annum during the fourth Five Year Plan period (1970-75) and the target in agricultural production was to raise food production by three per cent every year. Actually, the agricultural production declined by 5.4 per cent during this three year period. This has been ascribed to failure of crops owing to unfavourable weather conditions. But there seems to have been no effort during this period of time to develop irrigation facilities, as the figure for irrigated area has remained unchanged since 1970 at about 195,000 hectares or less than 12 per cent of the total cultivated area.23

Officials statistics indicate that nearly half the farm families of Nepal belong to the ‘small’ category with holdings of less than 0.5 hectares each.24 Their average income is Rs 1,016.00 per year in the hills and Rs 1,456.00 in the Tarai.25 Since each family in Nepal may be mathematically treated as 5.3 persons on an average,26 annual per capita income of about half of Nepal’s population amounts to no more than Rs 191.00 in the hill region and Rs 274.00 in the Tarai. Moreover, about 10 per cent of Nepal’s farm population has a holding of less than 0.1 hectare, that is to say, they are virtually landless.27

An interesting, if disheartening, feature of the Nepali economy is that its structure seems to have been very little affected by the apparent efforts of the government to diversify and expand economic activities. The important factors mentioned earlier, namely, the degree of dependence on agriculture both for employment and for national income, have remained more or less constant despite the ‘completion’ of three development plans. After some two decades of planned development, the National Planning Commission cannot tell us whether the well-being of the average people has improved or deteriorated. There simply is no evaluation of the impact of development effort on the lives of the citizens.

Concomitant with agricultural modernization is the need for a larger industrial establishment which can create viable export trade for Nepal and make less total the country’s economic dependence on other countries. But, even after the implementation of three development plans, Nepal has yet to make the initial breakthrough in its quest for industrializing the economy. Even now, manufacturing other than cottage industries, does not contribute more than two per cent to the Gross Domestic Product of the country. Similarly, according to the first industrial census carried out in 1965, the
number of persons employed in factories came to about 15,000. It may be noted for purposes of comparison that the government employed in its permanent civil service more than 30,000 people at the time not including numerous others employed on a temporary basis. The ratio between the total number of civil servants and that of industrial labourers has hardly changed, although the number of both has increased over the years.

According to figures supplied by the United Nations, Nepal's share of the world export and import trade is negligible and amounts to hardly 7.3 in 100,000 units of world trade or $7.3 \times 10^{-5} = 0.000073$ per cent. In 1970, Nepal's imports were listed as US $23$ million as against total world trade imports of $335$ billion; Nepal's exports were stated as US $16$ to $20$ million against world trade exports of $310$ billion.

Despite Nepal's vocal profession of a policy to diversify trade and the economy, it has not been able to reduce its heavy dependence on trade with India. Nepal's attempt to diversify export trade with respect to the range of commodities and their destination has not so far met with much success. More than 95 per cent of Nepal's total commerce takes place directly with India. Nepal exports to India a narrow range of agricultural products and her imports largely consist of manufactured goods, textiles and chemicals.

Although the figures for recorded foreign trade from 1964-65 to 1967-68 show an overall deficit in Nepal's balance of trade, the figures for overseas trade show a surplus balance from 1966-67 to 1968-69. But this surplus does not make much difference to the overall trade deficit because the percentage of overseas trade is very small compared to that of trade with India. Nepal's vulnerable balance of payments position vis-à-vis India became clear during the 1966-67 period. Nepal's so-called revaluation of its rupee following the devaluation of the Indian rupee in June 1966 met with disastrous results. In December 1967, after a period of about 18 months, the government of Nepal was forced to devalue its rupee vis-à-vis the Indian rupee.

One peculiar aspect of Nepal's unbalanced pattern of trade is that, though precise estimates are not available, its balance of payments with India is barely comfortable while the balance of payments position with other countries has been showing a surplus for the last several years. In addition to the surplus of exports over imports, the receipts from remittance of payments to Gorkha soldiers and
from tourism put Nepal in a very enviable position for a developing country. The size of its convertible exchange holdings has been growing to such an extent that the government may soon find itself in an embarrassing position when it has to negotiate for capital aid with one or more of its numerous donors.

Nepal is not altogether lacking in prospects for attaining economic viability as a modern nation. It has not needed artificial sustenance or spoon-feeding like some other members of the international community. Having embarked upon its development programme relatively late and from a very low base, Nepal will, however, need technical assistance and external financial assistance for a long time. As Nepal is seeking 'equal' friendship with all of its neighbours, foreign aid should be available to it during the period when there is still competition among the have-nations to win and influence friends among the have-nots. However, the classic development problem which Nepal shares in common with other poor countries is inadequate savings and investment combined with lack of capacity to spend even the available funds. In Nepal, incapacity to spend has proved to be the greater problem, and one that is too elusive to cope with. Various technical departments and ministries of the government involved in implementing development plans have found by experience that getting funds released and spent is difficult, and that locating responsibility for action and inaction is even more difficult.

Problem of Development

Most traditional societies have the following features in common: limited production and trade functions resulting from the lack of application of modern science and technology, the allocation of a very big proportion of resources to agriculture, and a hierarchical political and social structure based on the possession of land. The common problem is one of transforming a traditional society in such a way as to enable it to reap the benefits of modern science and technology through the creation of savings which could be ploughed back into development in the form of productive investment. Although the need for increased capital investment, or to quote W.W. Rostow's expression, 'the march of compound interest', to accelerate the growth of the economy cannot be overemphasized, the vital question is how developing countries can stimulate the growth of capital and investment in the prevailing conditions of
extreme poverty, low subsistence-level consumption, negligible savings and low social mobility. The answer seems to be for the people to ‘tighten their belts’, to produce more and use what is left after meeting minimum consumption needs to promote further production. But all this is easier said than done in societies where the population growth outstrips the pace of economic development and where material incentives for change are yet to be fully developed since the population has a subsistence-level existence anyway.

Models of Development

The answer to the question of improving the living standards of the people by bringing them the benefits of modern science and technology has been sought through two important experiments in development. One is the experiment tried by the communist world—that of ‘forced’ savings, highly centralized planning, increased capital investment and the resultant growth of the economy. The other well-known experiment is that of the democratic capitalist or socialist countries where the economy is based on free enterprise, competition, limited state-control or planning and political democracy. These are the two major models that are available to the developing countries in accelerating the growth of their economies. However, each of these two models has a number of variants.

Today there are at least four or five kinds of communism in the world: Russian, Chinese, Yugoslavian, North Vietnamese, and possibly North Korean. There are also different kinds of capitalism with varying degrees of commitment to the ideals of the welfare state. The systems of the USA, Canada and many other countries may be cited as examples. Lastly, there are countries like Sweden whose societies, although dominated by free enterprise, also have large public sectors and have governments which favour democratic socialism. However, neither the communist nor the capitalist democratic model of development has proved to be the perfect solution for extremely backward countries. Most of the developing countries, out of a natural desire to combine the advantages of both models to the exclusion of the disadvantages of either, have opted for political democracy of a sort and for a flexible approach to the problem of economic development. Nepal has also done this, opting for a mixed economy consisting of both a private and a public sector.

King Birendra, ever since his accession to the throne in early 1972,
has laid considerable stress on development in his public statements. He has publicly advocated attitudinal change among the people as a prerequisite of development. Further, the problem of development has been projected primarily as one of waging war against poverty, ignorance, disease and backwardness. A comprehensive national plan for all-round development has been suggested as a means of approaching the problem by well-defined stages. As Gunnar Myrdal has pointed out in *The Challenge of World Poverty*: ‘For what a state needs, and what politics is about, is precisely a macro-plan for inducing changes similarly in a great number of conditions, not only the economic, and doing it in a way so as to coordinate all these changes in order to reach a maximum development effect of efforts and sacrifices. This may, in popular terms, be a definition of what we should mean by planning.’

To use technical terms, the institutional and behavioural variables of the production process deserve notice because economic development is a complex process and cannot be analysed or explained in strictly economic terms. The institutional variable relates pure economic function to the history, culture and value system of a particular society. Hence the explanation for the failure of Nepal's economic plans in the past has to be sought in sociological, psychological and political terms as well as in pure economic terms. Nepali society is in a transitional stage, and the extent to which the institutional and behavioural factors affect the course of economic development over a period of time is a question of considerable importance. Defects in the institutional framework affect economic expansion adversely. The ability of the governing elite to maintain stability in given circumstances depends on how far the disequilibrating inputs can be controlled and absorbed by the system. The gap between the rising aspiration level of the people and the level of actual economic achievement results in frustration which may lead to a discrete change in the institutional framework.

Economists have established arbitrary but useful indices of progress such as increased per capita income, higher rates of literacy, urbanization, industrialization, and exposure to mass-media information. All of these may result in a greater demand from the politically conscious sections of the population for an increase in governmental services and capabilities. This naturally implies a wider scope for the employment of the educated elite as well as increased general political participation with a shift in attention from the
local scene to the national scene. This is very different from a traditional society which, as Daniel Lerner states in *The Passing of Traditional Society*, is ‘non-participant’—and ‘deploys people by kinship into communities isolated from each other and from a centre...’ However, adoption by some economists of an almost unilinear concept of progress frequently perturbs other social scientists whose methods cannot admit of the use of such an oversimplified tool. In recent years the economists themselves have become conscious of the simplistic and somewhat one-dimensional nature of their view of ready-made prospects for rapid change and development.

According to a leading American political scientist, three factors may be said to bring about changes in cultural values and attitudes: (1) technical competence, (2) motivational goals and (3) associational sentiments. Only those with a minimal understanding of human nature and behaviour are inclined to think that increase in technical efficiency or know-how alone will cause significant changes in cultural values and attitudes. The problem from the viewpoint of nation-building and socialization is one of diverting human motivations from old forms of activity to new ones. For example, even for achieving sustained economic growth, the shift of emphasis and concern from religious or ascetic interests to secular activities connected with material development is necessary.

Now it is being increasingly felt by all social scientists, including economists, that it is the socialization process which provides the basic motivation for change and development, and that success depends on what form of activities are sanctioned as appropriate goals. It is also important to know how far changes in accepted goals may affect the intensity of motivation and the potential of the people to work for the professed goals. Everett Hagen in his essay entitled ‘How Economic Growth Begins’ offers a theory about the psychological determinants of such motivations and attitudes as would apply to effective performance in the sphere of economic development. Edward C. Banfield in his work *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* analyses the problem of associational sentiments that concern people in their preoccupation with nation-building. He also deals explicitly with the problem of how the socialization process can produce people incapable of creating effective organizations, thus dooming them to remain economically underdeveloped. Both of these theories are related to the question
of beliefs and attitudes conducive to the developmental process. In order for development to proceed, feelings and calculations must predominate which clearly define the capacity of people to relate themselves to each other so as to facilitate collective action.

In his article ‘Political Development and Political Decay’, Samuel P. Huntington points out the explosive nature of the situation created in large areas of the world today by the conflict between mobilization and institutionalization. He focuses attention on the problem of institution-building which is the most important prerequisite of nation-building. The lack of viable institution-building unfortunately characterizes the politics of contemporary Asia, Africa and Latin America, where it is not clearly understood that charismatic charm and personal leadership can never be substitutes for established democratic institutions, processes and procedures. Social mobilization and political participation have strangely enough added to the deterioration of political institutions in many countries in these regions.

However, in Nepal, unlike some other developing countries, the problem is not one of excessive politicization accompanied by a relatively low pace of institutionalization, but that of under politicization combined with an utter neglect of institutionalization in all spheres. The problem is still one of making the people development-conscious and development-oriented. The best way to solve it perhaps would be to permit the people to participate in the policy and decision-making processes through adequate representation in the bodies through which the processes operate. But it should also be noted that undue stress on institution-building (state-building) has often acted against the basic need of mobilization and participation for nation-building.

In Nepal, economic planning and development may serve as a means of social mobilization. As economic and social development makes headway and as the means of transport and communication expand, a national economy will gradually take shape. This will result not only in the creation of new vested interests tying particular individuals and groups to the existing order but will also give everyone a stake in the preservation of national unity and strength. Those attached previously to the tribe and the clan alone will in due course acquire a new mobility and move into a money economy.

Economic growth does not always make for stability, but sometimes causes ferment and political instability. It may result in ‘a
revolution of rising frustrations’, to borrow Huntington’s expression. It is only by fostering the growth of suitable institutions which direct popular ferment and energy into channels of constructive and dynamic nation-building that Nepal may be able to avert a rising current of frustration.

**The Modernizing Oligarchy**

The traditional political system of Nepal had over a period of time attained, though not without considerable violence and bloodshed, an equilibrium based on the harmonization of the interests of four important groups—the royal family, the religious establishment, the army and the vested interests in land. These interest groups, acting in collusion with the Shah or the Rana court, had brought about political changes from time to time. This basic pattern of traditional politics did not undergo a radical change even after 1951. It was only temporarily submerged under a new political tide which brought to the surface new interest groups who, despite their modern political labels and vocabulary, failed to bring about any changes in the existing power-structure.

The new interest groups that appeared prominently on the surface after the 1951-political change were the Crown in its modernizing role; the modernizing political, bureaucratic and military elites; and the traders and businessmen. Each of these groups endeavoured to enhance its influence and further its interests by subsidizing pressure groups such as the press, student bodies, governmental ranks and positions, political parties, and social and cultural organizations. Among the traditional interest groups, the religious and the military establishments continued to play a minimal role until the royal takeover on 15 December, 1960. In addition, the landed interests were all along active and wielded influence as non-party independent politicians. The routing of the independent candidates in the 1959 general elections compelled them to pool their resources and put up a United Front against the Nepali Congress in collusion with some of the commercial interests. The concrete result of their efforts was the emergence of the Jana Hit Sangh (Organization for the Good of the People) which played an active role on the eve of the December 1960 royal takeover by protesting against taxation, land reforms and other progressive measures of the Nepali Congress Government.

The 1951 political change also brought into existence a large
number of occupational and professional organizations, ranging from a Drivers' Union to a Low Paid Civil Servants' Union. As the social structure was not sufficiently differentiated nor the population adequately specialized to create a wide range of specific interests with quite definite but still limited political objectives, these vocational groups did not prove themselves capable of protecting and promoting their goals. Hence, they became, for the most part, mere tools in the hands of one party or the other. Since 1961, some of the occupational groups have been combined into government-sponsored and controlled class organizations, but they have not as yet been truly effective as pressure groups.

The modernizing oligarchy responsible for initiating the 1950 political change and for conducting the period of transitional politics proved to be the most immature and ill-organized of the vocal political groups in Nepal. The members of the modernizing elite group expended great effort in organizing political parties, running newspapers, directing educational institutions and acting as administrators for the new government. But partly owing to a lack of consensus among them on the nature of the political and social landscape of the future and partly owing to their selfish and individualistic outlook, they were hopelessly divided among themselves and fragmented into innumerable political parties and splinter groups. They were thus unable to shape the future course of events and the destiny of the country as a collective entity.

Students, journalists and civil servants emerged as the most influential pressure groups in the post-1951 era. Students were largely responsible for the agitational activities of political parties. Journalists, particularly the so-called 'independents', turned out to be impassioned critics of the activities of the government in power but voiced mainly ultra-nationalist and jingoistic sentiments with the covert financial backing of the land-owning interests.

The civil servants also emerged as a pressure group under the peculiar circumstances that prevailed in Nepal both before and after the 1951 political change. Before 1951, the bureaucracy had functioned as the guardians of law and order and as a managing agency for the ruling Rana family. After 1951, they had not only a higher status but were also called upon to undertake welfare and developmental activities. During the interim period between 1951 and 1959, civil servants, in their quest for security, had tended to look to the palace for support and invite royal intervention in the process of
government. In 1959 the elected government tried to adjust the administrative machinery to the purposes and procedures of parliamentary government. Some of the leading members of the secretariat, in keeping with the changed circumstances, began to look less to the Royal Palace and more to the Cabinet so that the civil servants were prevented temporarily from encouraging palace participation in politics. The administrative reorganization on a wide scale both at the district and the central levels that followed the royal takeover was primarily motivated by the desire to re-install in the higher echelons of the administration persons who were prepared to link their fortunes with those of the Royal Palace.

The Political Elite

Modernizing political elites had little or no place in the traditional power structure that prevailed in Nepal during the Rana rule. Although the leaders of the 1951 revolution came from the dominant castes such as the Brahmans, Chhetris and Newars, they were extra-systemic since they stood on the outer edge of the operational political framework of the Rana rule and their attitudes and beliefs were typical of ‘the marginal men’. A great majority of the educated elite of the time (who were, incidentally, both few in number and educated in the English-language medium) were absorbed in the Rana bureaucracy and remained indifferent to the movement for liberalization and democratization. Only a handful of the educated elite—those who had come under the influence of the Indian nationalist movement—provided the hard core leadership of the 1951 political ‘revolution’.

The Modernizing Bureaucratic Elite

The political change of 1951 not only conferred the highest administrative posts and responsibilities on the educated bureaucratic elite of the previous Rana period but also provided vastly increased job opportunities to the educated elite in general, all of whom were readily absorbed into the newly created and expanded government ministries and departments. Before 1951, the non-Rana officers in the Nepali army and the civil bureaucracy could not aspire to a rank higher than that of a commanding colonel and a Bada Kazi, the topmost non-Rana civilian officer during the Rana rule in Nepal; it was only after the 1951 ‘revolution’ that the highest civil and military offices were thrown open to every qualified Nepali. The
educated bureaucratic elite, who had thus acquired a new social status and higher salaries, without even having to struggle or compete for them, developed the irresponsible habit of promoting its own self-interest without regard for the larger interests of the society as a whole.

The Military Elite

What was true of the bureaucratic elite also applied to the military elite and the soldiers of whom the following description given by Henry Ambrose Oldfield in the nineteenth century is still remarkably apt: ‘The Nepalese soldiers are at all times, and under all circumstances, most singularly obedient to the “powers that be”; and they obey the constituted authority—be in Rajah, Rani, Prince or Minister—most unhesitatingly, and without any reference to the duty required or its consequences.’ 37

Following the Kot Massacre of 1846 which led to the establishment of the Rana family oligarchy, the army stood by Jang Bahadur Rana, the new strong man, and later founder of the system of hereditary Rana Prime Ministers, in his struggle against the pleni-potentiary queen, Rajyalakshmi, and subsequently also against King Rajendra Bikram Shah in 1847. During the armed insurrection in Nepal shortly preceding the 1951 political change, the army stood by the Rana government of the day and did everything in its power to crush the popular armed insurrection even after King Tribhuvan had shown his sympathy for the popular democratic cause by seeking asylum in India. After King Tribhuvan was back and secure on the throne, the same army sided with him and his newly appointed popular Home Minister, B.P. Koirala, and kept itself aloof from a violent pro-Rana demonstration at Kathmandu in 1951. Again, in 1952 when the armed police force, the Raksha Dal, composed mainly of the elements of the erstwhile liberation army of the Nepali Congress, revolted against the Congress government of the day, the Nepali army came to its rescue. When King Mahendra, in exercise of his emergency powers, dissolved parliament on 15 December, 1960 and imprisoned the first-ever elected Prime Minister of Nepal, B.P. Koirala, and other members of his cabinet, the army firmly stood by the King. After the takeover, King Mahendra also used the army successfully to deal with the insurrectionist activities of the Nepali Congress from its base in India.

For well over a century, the Nepali army has had no occasion to
fight in defence of the country's freedom and frontiers. It has been used merely for internal security. During the Rana rule, several contingents of the Nepali army were sent to India not only during the First and Second World Wars but also at the time of Indian military action against Hyderabad and the Indo-Pakistani armed conflict in Kashmir in 1948. As they were primarily used for garrison duties in India, they had no opportunity to gain experience of modern warfare except in the Assam-Burma theatre of the Second World War in 1942. These remarks apply only to the Nepali army itself; Gorkha soldiers in the employ of the British and Indian forces have of course seen active service in many parts of the world.

After the political change in 1951, the army was trained by the Indian military mission for over a decade. As a result it is more highly trained now than during the Rana regime. Although the 'serviceable' elements of the old Rana army were retained intact even after 1951, the character and composition of the army and especially of the officer corps did not change. There has been an addition of Sandhurst and Dehra Dun Military Academy-trained junior officers over the years, but only one of them has so far reached the rank of a Brigadier-General and he too happens to be a direct scion of the erstwhile ruling Rana family. The officers of the Royal Army are mostly drawn from the same castes and families which supplied the officers during the Rana rule. However, promotion to ranks above Lieutenant-Colonel is not always based on professional skill and recommendation of the army but requires approval of the King and the government. After the royal takeover of 15 December, 1960, King Mahendra became his own Defence Minister for a considerable period and brought about numerous changes in the command of the army at all levels.

King Mahendra's personal interest in the welfare and training of the officers and men of the army, and the bestowal by him of special favours on them in the form of royal grants of land and other concessions, have in recent years created bonds of a personal nature between the King and the army. The Royal Army thus regards the King as the sole personification of the state, with the result that to the army it appears that there is no such thing as loyalty to the state and the people, as distinct from loyalty to the King as a person. However, the existence up to 1970 of a separate corps of Royal Guards consisting of the Kali Bahadur and Gorakh Bahadur regiments stationed in the palace grounds as distinct from the general
body of the army, while serving the purpose of checks and balances from the viewpoint of the monarch, had also created a state of mutual jealousy and friction, which could eventually undermine the concept of loyalty to the Crown. In 1971, the late King Mahendra sought to remedy the situation by arranging for all of the battalions of the regular army to act as Royal Guards by rotation.

Although at one time during King Mahendra’s rule in the mid-sixties there were suggestions in a section of the controlled Kathmandu press about the desirability of royal rule through the army, and rumours were aired from time to time about the possibility of a takeover by the army, the prospects for either seem most unlikely at present. The Royal Army has neither the kind and quality of leadership that is needed to run the government of the country nor are its historical background, character and composition of such a nature as to make it suitable for undertaking political adventures of a risky nature. In Nepali society where traditional habits of mind have always been strong, the military is apt to be more strongly conservative than most other social forces.

However Nepal has a valuable human resource in retired or demobilized soldiers from the British and the Indian Gorkha regiments mentioned previously. With their experience of life, service and travels abroad, and especially with their background of training and the skills they have acquired, they are a great potential for social change. The problem is essentially one of mobilization. They do not find employment in the Royal Nepali Army.

The Attitude of the Emerging Elite

With the rapid spread of education, Nepal like other developing countries, is faced with a problem created by new emerging elites. As the pre-1950 generation of educated elites came into power at the relatively young age of around forty at most, they are unlikely to fade from the scene as quickly as the younger generation would like. The new generation of educated youth have had more formal education than their elders and some of them were trained abroad. Hence they have escaped the corrosive influence of the closed autocratic regime at home during the crucial formative years of adolescence and may well find themselves in serious conflict with the government. If the conflict has not yet become intense in Nepal, it is only because the educated youth have not so far had great problems in finding some kind of government job. But if jobs cease to be
easily available, the young men will naturally side with one of the extra-governmental bases of power in the country.

The educated youth are no more likely than their elders to bridge the gap that separates them from the masses, since vital linkages to the masses will only diminish the distinctive character of their elitist position without necessarily giving them corresponding political advantage. If there is no opportunity or scope for a loyal open opposition, then a disloyal covert opposition may seem the only choice. The emphasis on rapid social and economic change also poses problems for the narrowly-based autocratic regime at the level of the masses. If through economic and social planning the regime increases the rate of popular mobilization, the demands made on the government will grow both in number and intensity.

**Opposition Forces in Nepali Politics**

Although political parties are technically banned in Nepal, the main opposition forces are represented by the Nepali Congress elements and the pro-Chinese Communist Party. There is no worthwhile opposition inside the Panchayat legislature, since that body has no organized support either inside or outside.

Despite the fact that both political parties and politically motivated organizations have been banned in Nepal for over a decade, an extremely rigid and restrictive amendment to the long-existing law relating to the control of associations and organizations was enacted in 1969. The amendment prohibited even the gesture of demanding political parties in any conceivable form by making it a legally punishable offence. However, after a long and arduous struggle, the students have been able to secure legalization of the students' organizations. In 1970 a case arose in which several members of Nepal Vidyarthi Sangha (Nepal Students' Union) were convicted by a special tribunal under the 1969 Act. A judgement of the Supreme Court, however, not only brought about the release of the students in detention but also held their organization legal in terms of the Fundamental Rights section of the Nepali constitution. The government has been apparently helpless in the face of the Supreme Court judgement.

At present four students' organizations with distinct political orientations and affiliations are openly functioning in Nepal. The Nepal Vidyarthi Sangha (Nepal Students' Union) represents the Nepali Congress or the democratic socialist platform among the
students. The pro-Chinese and the pro-Russian communist factions have as their representative organizations Akhil Nepal Swatantra Vidyarthi Union (All Nepal Free Students' Union) and Nepal Rastriya Vidyarthi Federation (Nepal National Federation of Students) respectively, whereas rightist and loyalist elements have the Rastriya Swatantra Vidyarthi Mandal (National Independent Students' Union). As the main overt opposition to the present regime has come from the students, their political activities deserve considerable attention. Further, different political forces at work in Nepal today—the democratic socialist elements, the pro-Chinese and the pro-Russian communists use the news-weeklies, the Rastra Pukar, the Matribhumi and the Samiksha respectively to propagate their points of view and also to bring their pressure to bear on the government within the limitations imposed by the Panchayat system. This discontent, if not opposition of the educated elites, can be seen most clearly in the results of successive elections in the Graduates' Constituency of the Rastriya Panchayat.

However, opposition to the present regime in Nepal has come from the peasants as well as from the educated elite as shown by periodic peasants' uprisings. As long as the modernizing political elites cannot vitally relate to the masses and galvanize the people into action, they will be helpless against the present monopoly of political power in the country. Despite all the fanfare about land reform, there seems to be considerable discontent among the peasants, especially in the new agricultural settlements in the Tarai, where occasional uprisings have been suppressed by force. These uprisings so far have been spontaneous and sporadic, since peasants are not organized for effective political action and since no underground political party has so far found itself in a position to capitalize on the uprisings. However, the situation created by general discontent among the peasants is highly explosive and may prove a real threat to the regime if it erupts into violence on a large scale.

All that has been said above makes it clear that the climate for development and growth cannot be created unless the political atmosphere is completely changed. But this is not necessarily a counsel of despair. The developing countries cannot sit back for years and wait for distant political changes. The leadership can initiate the transformation now with the help of a party of the masses in the true sense—a party that mobilizes the dispossessed so that they may acquire the self-confidence to assert their rights and
the capacity to police the reforms; a party that does not have to depend on the very rich for money and whose dedication to the cause of the masses is proved by the life-style and social practice of its members.

At the present time the forces of opposition in Nepal are divided among themselves and have failed to forge an effective instrument of action on a mass scale. Consequently, the time-honoured institution of monarchy in Nepal, propped up by the vested interests of the army and bureaucracy, appears to be unassailable and even stronger than it actually is. However, the history of the world has shown that monarchy as a traditional symbol of national authority, unity and continuity can last only as long as the people do not regard it as an obstacle to the fulfilment of their wishes and interests.

It is true that between 1951 and 1958 there were too many political parties in Nepal. There was indeed an excessive subdivision and fragmentation of public life. The differences between the parties were not based on programmes and politics but were of a personal nature. However, in practice the political parties drew their followers and recruits mainly from students, literati, merchants, ex-servicemen and urbanized peasants. Parties tended to revolve around personalities and broke up as easily as they were formed. It appeared as if a ‘democratic consensus’ or the tradition of a ‘loyal opposition’ could not be evolved in Nepal. But once the elections were held, all these fears and prognostications were set at rest, at least temporarily.

In the first-ever general elections held in 1959 the Nepali Congress, with a moderate socialist programme, won 73 out of 109 seats in the Lower House of the parliament and retained its majority intact until the royal takeover of 15 December, 1960. The right-wing Gorkha Parisad which had won 19 seats and was the main opposition party played the role of a ‘loyal opposition’ until the very end. Until King Mahendra’s takeover the experiment in parliamentary government proceeded smoothly despite a few untoward incidents in Nuwakot, Gorkha and Dang, the responsibility for which cannot be easily fixed to this day.

However, it is still true that the Nepali Congress Party did not have at the time a grass-roots organization or a communications network on a nation-wide scale, nor was it in a position to mobilize the people in the countryside or the peasants to the extent necessary for the modernization of Nepal. Further, it may have basically represented merely an urbanized elite. But, despite all its limitations,
the manner in which the Nepali Congress Party won the first-ever general elections in the country proved that it had the potential to develop into a full-fledged national party in due course. Just because there is an inadequate educational, political, economic and social infrastructure for the operation of a democratic political system in a country, it cannot be argued that no attempt at all should be made to introduce democratic measures or institutions, or that there should be no prospect for a democratic government in the future. Similarly, just because ideal conditions for the existence and growth of the party system may not exist at a particular time, it cannot be said that there is no justification for efforts to build a party or to evolve a party system. In view of the past performance of the Panchayat system in Nepal, it has become obvious that it is absolutely necessary to revive the party system if the people are to be mobilized for development through opportunities for participation.

It has been assumed that over a period of twelve years the Panchayat system has developed a political culture made up of political orientation 'appropriate to the political order. But the powers-that-be view the situation not as one of creating or encouraging new orientations, but of perpetuating old ones. The people are even denied legal freedom to evolve a mass political party or organization to stimulate popular participation and mobilization for development purposes. Ultimately the monarch or the Crown, in whom the Panchayat system both in theory and practice vests all power and also complete responsibility for development, may be held solely responsible for the stagnation and lack of progress, with drastic consequences for the institution of monarchy itself. In Nepal, monarchy is no doubt a force to be reckoned with. The monarch could still play an important part in charting the future course of development if he were to encourage freedom and the growth of institutions through which popular reaction to public measures and policies could be ascertained.

Two arguments have been vigorously put forward in support of the partyless Panchayat system in Nepal. One of them is based on an exaggerated fear of the alleged consequences of excessive politicization as a result of a high degree of mobilization and participation. But in the present Nepali context, any fear that politicization may produce insatiable popular demands, which in turn may contribute to a chronic state of anarchy and instability, appears to be unrealistic. It is as ridiculous as the contention of some of the military rulers
and dictators of other Asian countries that political stability, which in their eyes merely implies an absence of political freedom of expression, is the primary requisite or pre-condition of economic advance or social security. The examples of Ayub’s Pakistan and Ne Win’s Burma are there for everyone to see.

During the Panchayat decade, it has also become fashionable in Nepal to reinforce the plea for ‘partyness’ by arguing that Nepal’s geographical location between two big countries with different social systems has made it imperative for Nepal not to have any parties advocating either system because parties can be easily influenced by foreign money and inducements. Although this argument may appear to be ingenious on the surface, it undermines the very basis of Nepal’s nationalism, ignores the basic right and freedom of the Nepali people as an independent nation to evolve a political system of their own choice, and shows lack of faith in their integrity. In the present-day world, there are many examples of small states situated between two ideologically antagonistic neighbours, which have developed parties as effective instruments of national stability and progress and have survived as independent nations. As to the question of political parties being readily influenced by foreign money, the simple answer is that individuals who do not have to account for their behaviour to many people can be more easily and cheaply bought than the leaders of mass organizations in which there are several groups competing for power and influence.

Nepal has had experience with the non-party Panchayat system under ‘the King’s direct leadership’ for about a decade. The form in which the system has been advocated by its most vociferous and ardent supporters has had the effect of making the King or the institution he represents bear all responsibility for the success or failure of the policies of successive governments during the Panchayati decade. Although it may sound plausible to theorize that the Panchayat system is based on the presumption of indivisibility and complete identity of interests between the King, the administration and the people, such a complete identification of the monarch with the actions and policies of the government, which are always likely to displease some sections of the people, is untenable.

Samuel Huntington has discussed various options open to a traditional monarch who wishes to play a modernization role. However, the conclusion he has reached in his paper on the subject is
that there is no future for traditional monarchies on a long term or permanent basis unless they gradually and consciously transform themselves into modern constitutional monarchies such as those of the United Kingdom, Holland, Belgium and the Scandinavian countries.  

History demonstrates that the transition from absolute monarchy to anything like a broad-based government has been brought about either by revolution or by gradual evolution over a long period of time. This transition in several instances has resulted in a transfer of power to an autocratic oligarchy of a military type rather than to a popularly based constitutional government. What happened with Nepal’s Shah monarchy in 1846, the Ottoman empire in 1908 or in Thailand following the revolution of 1932 may be cited as examples. Egypt furnishes yet another instance of direct takeover by a military junta from a monarch in 1952. Although military oligarchies represent a slight broadening of the base of power and provide for relatively increased participation, they have never been able to secure the cooperation of a diversity of social groups. Nor has it been possible for such regimes to avoid violence and suppression, both in effecting the transition and also thereafter. The circumstances surrounding the transfer of power from the monarchy to a military oligarchy in Iraq in 1958 and the bloodshed and violence in its aftermath could be cited as a prime example.

The evolution of the political process in Nepal should be of great interest to students of developmental politics and political modernization. In the course of a little more than two hundred years, Nepal has witnessed various forms of political transformation in a remarkable sequence. The transition from the absolute Shah monarchy, responsible for the original unification of the country during the 1769-1806 period, to the Rana family oligarchy of a military type took place in 1846. The erosion of royal power and prerogatives was a gradual process, largely the result of the passing of power to minors and a succession of weak and vacillating Regent Queens during the first half of the nineteenth century. The ‘revolution’ of 1951 marked a change from the Rana family oligarchy to constitutional monarchy of a sort with a multi-party system. But after the first-ever general elections of 1959 in Nepal, the political scene changed to a single-dominant party system. The net result of this was that with the exception of the main parliamentary opposition party, the Gorkha Parisad, together with the Communist party
all other minor parties, rendered politically ineffective as a result of their poor showing at the polls, looked to the King to be salvaged. Then after a brief experiment with parliamentary monarchy for eighteen months came the royal takeover, which put the clock back to the absolute Shah monarchy as it existed before 1846. It will be interesting to see whether the same cycle will be repeated, or whether new forms of political transformation will be witnessed in the future. Nepal has, in the course of a little more than two centuries, experienced the same range of political changes as other developing countries. If Nepal has not gone through the experience of the National United Front under a charismatic leader as in Sukarno’s Indonesia or that of a takeover by the army as in Ne Win’s Burma or Ayub’s Pakistan, it is only because in Nepal the vested interests in the army and the bureaucracy have in the monarchy a safe anchor to hold on to, even in fast changing times. What prevented King Mahendra from introducing a one-party system was the consideration that it might eventually provide a challenge to the King’s monopoly of power and that it might in the long run affect the non-partisan character of the monarchy as an institution. Again, a military takeover of the kind which Burma witnessed is highly unlikely in the Nepali context because the King had had no need for the help of the army to restore his position. Also, in Nepal, the King has remained Marshal and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Army since the abolition of the Rana oligarchy and has been directly responsible for promotion to the higher ranks in the army.

All in all, the safest course for a traditional yet modernizing monarchy such as Nepal’s is to ensure conditions in which the people can express their opinions freely and to create processes and institutions through which popular aspirations can be ascertained and translated into reality. Any kind of personal involvement of the monarch in the day-to-day politics of the country is apt to expose him as the main target of public criticism and render him open to uncalled-for risks in the future. Although this is simply a matter of plain common sense or practical wisdom, monarchs have seldom been capable of acting on it. One striking exception was King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah Dev, who proved himself to be a unique King by risking his life and throne in 1950-51 in order to secure democratic rights and freedom for his subjects. King Tribhuvan’s firm commitment to constitutional and democratic rule has brought
him acclaim as 'the father of the nation' and 'the chief architect of Nepali democracy'. His historic declaration of 18 February, 1951 expressed his desire and resolve 'that the government of our people be carried on henceforth according to a democratic constitution prepared by a constituent assembly elected by them'.

If the present King of Nepal, King Birendra, endorses his grandfather's solemn commitment to the people in some form or other and endeavours sincerely to fulfil it, Nepal may have stable and ordered progress as a modern nation. The people of Nepal should be able to evolve in due course a viable political structure on a trial and error basis by learning from their own experience and that of others. Such a course of action could ensure not only the permanent interests of the people but also those of the monarchy in Nepal.

The problem in Nepal is one of rebuilding a democratic political process together with a viable programme of economic development. The purely administrative approach is not sufficient. Such an approach may have initially achieved short-term progress in the case of Ayub’s Pakistan and Ne Win’s Burma where professional soldiers provided the problem-solving approach necessary to reduce corruption and promote efficiency within the administration. But in the long run, neither General Ne Win’s attempt to build a political process through recourse to ‘the Burmese way to socialism’ nor Field Marshal Ayub Khan’s much vaunted programme of ‘basic democracies’ succeeded in providing channels through which the regime could be made responsive to the people.

The administrative approach may be successful in implementing development programmes such as public works schemes where the problem is merely one of translating technological know-how into concrete measures of policy. But the administrative orientation cannot serve as a total substitute for the growth of a dynamic political system which provides for the articulation and aggregation of issues in such a manner as to make the regime responsive to the broader political order.

**Conclusion**

At the present stage of development of political science there does not exist a fully coherent theory of nation-building. It is unfortunate that neither students of social change nor the leaders of developing countries have been able to sort out precisely which of the traditional values must be changed and which of them can be preserved in
However, very many authors have, each in their own way, listed some of the essential aspects of nation-building. Four sets of categories recur continually in their writings and may be summed up as follows: (1) rationalization, (2) nationalism and national integration, (3) democratization and (4) mobilization and participation. In the light of our own examination of the problem of modernization and nation-building in Nepal, we may posit then that there are at least four basic prerequisites for the implementation of nation-building programmes. They are enumerated below in order of importance: (1) rational adjustment of the existing political process to present-day requirements. This means the creation of meaningful input structures such as associational interest groups of choice and political parties; (2) adaptation of the traditional political culture to modern rational values so that the regime may be made more responsive to the broader political order; (3) rationalization of the administrative apparatus so as to make it task-oriented and problem-solving, first in its functioning, and second in its habit of mind and attitude; and (4) creation of a new spirit of dynamic and constructive nationalism to mobilize the people in a common pursuit of economic and social goals.

The Panchayat system may have enabled King Mahendra to manipulate and use the traditional elites for his own purposes, but it did not facilitate the evolution of a political process on rational lines. The results of elections from the graduates' constituency have shown repeatedly that the new generation of educated youth is opposed to the Panchayat system. According to influential leaders of the student movement, the educated elite favours many changes which are by their nature inimical to the purposes and principles of the Panchayat concept.

The tentative nature of political experiments over the last twenty years as well as the frequent transfers and dismissals of civil servants in the name of administrative reorganization at the start of every new political experiment have prevented the growth of rational, task-oriented, administrative machinery. The low morale of the new bureaucratic elite is largely due to their insecurity of tenure and to the inadequacy of the existing reward and punishment system. The absence of a dependable, continuing, merit-based administrative apparatus has been a most serious obstacle to the modernization and development of Nepal. It is regrettable that despite all the talk of
development, the most frustrated among the new administrative elite are the technicians—the engineers, scientists and other experts who have spent much time and industry acquiring their professional skills abroad.

Nepal during the Panchayat decade and ever since 1951 has followed a self-consciously nationalistic policy which no doubt enabled it to withstand pressures from outside and also brought it greater recognition and prominence in the world. But such a policy alone has not been enough to secure positive gains in terms of increased welfare for the common people. The Panchayat system has not even been able to use the energy of the educated youth, without whose cooperation innovations cannot be brought about in any sphere of national life and activity. The growth of a spirit of constructive and dynamic nationalism is essential, but it cannot by itself ensure popular participation and mobilization in pursuit of common economic and social goals. What is needed is political machinery which, by evolving a unified system of communication, will reach to all parts of the country and to all the people, and which can generate popular energy and channel it profitably to attain ends of positive nationalism.

Table I

Registered Graduates: Subject-wise Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>No. of Graduates</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Liberal Arts</td>
<td>6,041</td>
<td>61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. General Science</td>
<td>1,267</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Commerce</td>
<td>1,135</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Medicine</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Engineering</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Law</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Education</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Agriculture</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Veterinary</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Ph.D.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,858</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table II

**Graduates by Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No. of Graduates</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Eastern Mountain</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Eastern Hill</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Eastern Plain</td>
<td>1,633</td>
<td>16.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Kathmandu Valley</td>
<td>5,940</td>
<td>60.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Central Mountain</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>VI. Central Hill</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>6.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Central Plain</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>6.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Western Mountain</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Western Hill</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>X. Western Plain</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,858</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table III

**Graduate/Population Ratio by Region, 1971**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Eastern Mountain</td>
<td>1 : 3,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Eastern Hill</td>
<td>1 : 2,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Eastern Plain</td>
<td>1 : 1,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Kathmandu Valley</td>
<td>1 : 124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Central Mountain</td>
<td>1 : 10,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Central Hill</td>
<td>1 : 2,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Central Plain</td>
<td>1 : 2,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Western Mountain</td>
<td>1 : 23,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Western Hill</td>
<td>1 : 6,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. Western Plain</td>
<td>1 : 2,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nepal</strong></td>
<td>1 : 1,029</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>No. of identified officials</th>
<th>Group's percentage representation of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>6.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhetri</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>12.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newar</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurung</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limbu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tharu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thakali</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marwari</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarai People</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Fractions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**  290  100.00


a. These percentages are based upon the information of the 1955 Census, in which information on caste distribution was provided. The population of Nepal in 1955 was 8,256,625. The 1963 Census indicates a population of 9,397,593, but no breakdown of caste distribution was provided. It is estimated, however, that the percentage distribution of the groups reported above have remained the same. Consequently, these percentages are accepted as approximately valid.
Table V

Background of Village Panchayat Chairmen

A. Occupational Pattern (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landowner</th>
<th>Owner-Tiller</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Ex-soldier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Pattern of Size of Land Holding (in percentages)\(^a\) (1 Ropani = 0.1256 Acres)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Above 50 Ropanis</th>
<th>Between 30 to 50 Ropanis</th>
<th>Between 15 to 30 Ropanis</th>
<th>Between 5 to 15 Ropanis</th>
<th>Below 5 Ropanis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Distribution of Income per annum (in percentages)\(^b\) (US $1.00 = Rs. 10.10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Above Rs 5,000</th>
<th>Between Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,999</th>
<th>Between Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,999</th>
<th>Below Rs 1,000</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Caste and Ethnic Composition (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brahmin</th>
<th>Rai</th>
<th>Kshatriya</th>
<th>Limbu</th>
<th>Newar</th>
<th>Tamang</th>
<th>Tharu</th>
<th>Gurung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Age Composition (in percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>25 and Below</th>
<th>Between 25 and 34</th>
<th>Between 35 and 44</th>
<th>Between 45 and 54</th>
<th>55 and above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) The average size of a landholding in Nepal is estimated to be 5 Ropanis.

\(^b\) The estimated per capita income in Nepal is Rs 750.


NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Lucian W. Pye, Aspects of Political Development (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), pp. 62-66. Pye lists six of what he characterizes as 'crises of development' which a developing country must resolve to achieve modern nationhood:
1. Identity. The people in the developing countries must, as individuals, identify with their country. In most of the developing countries the sense of a larger national identity has yet to be evolved, and the traditional manner of identifying with tribe, caste, family, ethnic or linguistic groups is still dominant.

2. Legitimacy. The question of legitimacy, which in simple terms implies the right to govern, relates to the nature of authority and to the proper duties of the government.

3. Penetration. This implies the effectiveness of the government in reaching down into society and prompting or inducing basic changes. According to Pye, the wide gap between the life and ways of the ruling elite and those of the tradition-oriented masses of the people is an important feature of transitional societies. The leaders of the developing countries must close this gap.

4. Participation. This implies increased popular participation in the processes of government.

5. Integration. Integration implies cohesion which is needed to organize power or to build a community. It refers to the welding together of various elements of national life and community—ethnic, religious, cultural and economic—into one social whole or unified body politic. Pye views integration as a means or mechanism of relating popular politics to governmental performance. He thinks of the entire polity as a system of interacting relationships among the offices and agencies of the government among the various groups and interests formulating demands upon the system and among officials and articulating citizens. The pull of various interest groups on one another and their relationship with the central government, as reflected in the demands they make upon it and the nature of the government’s response to them, is indicative of the extent and degree of integration. The lack of such integration is definitely a major problem in Nepal.

6. Distribution. This refers to the distribution of goods, services and values throughout the society and the influence of the central government in encouraging an equitable distribution. The questions that need to be answered with regard to distribution are: who is to benefit from the government, and what should the government be doing to bring greater benefits to the different sections of the society?

2. The Kot Massacre—In order to hold serious consultations and deliberations in times of national emergency, it was customary for the ranking officers of the State to assemble in the quadrangle of the Kot or the Armoury, which was consecrated and where regimental flags along with other ceremonial weapons of war were stored and worshipped. On the night of 14 September, 1886 a large number of Nepali noblemen with a long and outstanding family tradition of patriotic service and sacrifice were assembled in the quadrangle of the Kot or the Armoury at the command of the plenipotentiary queen, Rajyalakshmi Devi. The purpose was to conduct an enquiry into the murder of the queen’s favourite minister, General Gagan Singh. A critical situation suddenly developed out of the ill-tempered utterances and gestures of the all-powerful queen. Prime Minister Fateh Jang Shah’s indecision and apparent helplessness against her only made the situation worse. A sword-
battle broke out among the high officials assembled in the quadrangle of the Kot, where there stood several wooden posts to which animals were tied for sacrificial purposes on special religious occasions. On this occasion, the quadrangle of the Kot presented a gruesome spectacle of human blood and carnage in place of animal sacrifices.

This incident involving manslaughter on such a large scale is known as the Kot Massacre in the history of Nepal. Six thousand persons left the country as refugees in the aftermath of this mass human slaughter. The Kot Massacre paved the way for the emergence of a strong man as demanded by the chaos and uncertainty of the situation in the country. The massacre not only ruined the immediate hope and prospect for monarchy to reassert itself but also sealed its fate for upwards of a hundred years. Jang Bahadur Rana was appointed Prime Minister by the plenipotentiary queen Rajyalakshmi on the morrow of the Kot Massacre. He laid the foundation for the system of hereditary Rana Prime Ministers who ruled Nepal up to 1951 with a succession of Kings as mere figureheads. Jang Bahadur either physically liquidated or successfully suppressed all contending political groups and vested interests in the process of consolidating his newly acquired position and gaining supreme power. Jang Bahadur Rana centralized power into his family alone, where it remained for more than a hundred years.

3. Newsweek, 10 September, 1973, p. 64.
5. Participation implies sharing by an individual in the decisions of the political input structures such as parties and interest groups. In states where a single party dominates the political system, the citizen may be active despite the fact that the party and other interest groups do not provide real scope for sharing in decisions. In democratic countries the political participant has a more or less settled view of these political input structures and also of the part he can play in them. He can thus be said to have reached a high level of cultural secularization (or specificity). But in totalitarian and authoritarian countries, the input structures are highly diffused or have become differentiated without becoming autonomous. For further discussion on political culture and structure see Chapter III of Almond and Powell, Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966).
7. Articulation in a society with a differentiated structure implies voicing specific interests 'with quite definite but still limited political objectives'. Hence it has to do with the training of an informed and critical electorate. However, in a transitional or developing society the purpose of articulation may be said to be that of inculcating in the minds of the people new values and new attitudes. Pye, op. cit., pp. 81-5.
8. Aggregation implies the process of bringing together into a relatively coherent whole numerous and often competing political demands in such manner as to enable the political system to provide a number of policy alternatives to meet the demands. In the absence of such agencies as the party system, diverse and contradictory interests may overwhelm the political
system and render the government unable to convert into national policy divergent demands in response to the requirements and wishes of the vast public the government claims to represent. For an analysis of the functions of a political system, see Chapter V, 'Interest Aggregation and Political Parties' in Almond and Powell, op. cit.

9. Socialization is the process through which the citizen acquires a complex of attitudes, sentiments and information which help him understand and assess his environment and adjust to it. Political socialization implies the process of maturing politically. What a person feels about political life is distinct from, and yet related to, his religious, economic and cultural views. For an analytical study of the nature of political socialization, see Richard E. Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt, Political Socialization (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963) and also Dean Jaros, Socialization to Politics (New York: Praeger, 1973).


12. Lucian W. Pye, Politics, Personality and Nation Building (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 38, 51. The ‘problems of development and modernization are rooted in the need to create more effective, more adoptive, more complex and rationalized organizations. The ultimate test of development is the capacity of a people to establish and maintain large, complex but flexible organizational forms.’


17. The expression ‘political culture’ refers to an intricately woven social fabric of diverse strands, a multi-dimensional aspect of social reality. Political culture comprises, among other things, a traditional mode of authority and popular legendary heroes, the ethos of social institutions, the political outlook of the people, their political thinking and ideology and all the formal and informal processes of their politics. See also Dawson and Prewitt, op. cit. p. 26.

20. Pye, op. cit., p. 16.
27. Figures based on reports of the 1961 national agricultural census.
32. Pye, op. cit., pp. 94-100.
36. See Appendix I for a brief note on Social Mobilization.
38. Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Political Modernization of Traditional Monarchies', *Daedalus* (Fall, 1966); see Appendix II for a brief commentary on the modernizing role of traditional monarchies.
CHAPTER TWO

The Structure and Dynamics of Panchayat Politics

The royal takeover on 15 December, 1960 initiated a new phase of the kind of 'direct rule' which had been put into effect in Nepal from time to time during the post-Rana period between 1951 and 1959. There was, however, one very important difference—what used to be regarded in the past as a stop-gap measure at best, became a permanent feature of the new era. The political model that was adopted in Nepal after the 'revolution' of 1950-51 was that of parliamentary democracy under the aegis of a constitutional monarch. After 1960, the parliamentary system was publicly disavowed by King Mahendra who described it as an alien system unsuited to Nepal's tradition, history and objective conditions. The King was determined to devise a political system that conformed to conditions 'peculiar to Nepal'. Before the year 1961 was out, King Mahendra had embarked on new experiments with regard to the organization, functioning and even the theoretical and philosophical foundations of the entire political structure.

Although commissioned writers have sometimes claimed an important role for the Panchayats in the development of Nepal in the past, it is well nigh impossible to define the Panchayats in precise historical or political terms. Traditionally, after all, the Panchayat had been a council of elders drawn from a particular caste entrusted with the task of adjudicating minor disputes relating to caste matters. Even if the Panchayats fulfilled certain political and administrative functions at particular times, they were never known to operate as regular units of village or local self-government. What was introduced in Nepal in 1961 was in fact a time-honoured name with some prestige derived from the caste-ingrained traditions of the past.

*The Hangover of the Rana Period*

Difficulties encountered in introducing the Panchayats as units of
limited self-government in the last days of the Rana regime and also during the pre-1960 era of political experimentation bear ample testimony to the above statements. To look for a historical parallel for the present-day Panchayat 'system' in Nepal, one need hardly go beyond the 1948 Constitution. What was envisaged in 1948 came quite close to the post-1960 Panchayat system, especially in its inspiration and its attitude towards political parties. King Mahendra's denunciation of political parties sounded like a distant echo of what the second-last Rana Prime Minister, Maharaja Padam Shamsher, had said at the time of the promulgation of the 1948 Constitution:

We have tried to adapt the elective system of the west to the Panchayat system, which is an important feature of our tradition and culture. . . . It is the wish of the government to bring good, able and energetic elected representatives of the people to the centre so that they might cooperate with the administration, but it would be a misfortune if the introduction of elections should cause friction and disharmony in the country. . . . It is not the intention of the government to turn the country into a cockpit of political parties, and the government will favour the election of any candidate on the basis of his personal merit and qualifications rather than on the strength of the party-machine.¹

In the early fifties following the overthrow of the Rana regime, though a comprehensive Panchayat Act was promulgated, only a few Panchayats were actually set up. But the difference between the Panchayats then and the Panchayats as established in Nepal after 1960 lay in the fact that, in the past, they were merely intended as peripheral units of local self-government, whereas they now formed the very foundation of the entire national deliberative-cum-administrative edifice capped by the Rashtriya (National) Panchayat, the new parliament of Nepal. The new pyramidal structure with the Rashtriya Panchayat at the top, in practice caused confusion as a result of an overlapping of functions and jurisdiction between national and local governments, whose spheres must be kept distinct at least in major areas of both administration and policy, and decision making. At the highest level of the political process in the Panchayat system, decision-making powers are vested in the King and his advisors. The so-called decentralization granted a limited
measure of autonomy to the Panchayat institutions at local levels but, as Joshi and Ross have pointed out, ‘at the price of a complete segregation from national politics’. As a matter of fact, the risk inherent in the situation is that excessive preoccupation with local and parochial issues may cloud the vital need for national consensus and solidarity in a country which is not free from fissiparous tendencies caused by traditional, social, ethnic, linguistic and regional difference. In Nepal the Panchayat system, on the whole, is built, as will be seen, on backward-looking and revivalist foundations.

The Panchayat Structure

Before the 1962 Constitution was proclaimed, three independent but interrelated tiers of institutions had been created—first, a Panchayat framework consisting of the Town or the Village, the District and the Zonal Panchayats; second, the class organization structure, including the Women’s Organization, Peasants’ Organization, Labour Organization, Youth Organization, and Ex-Service-men’s Organization; and third, the Ministry of National Guidance to supervise the working and affairs of the Panchayats and the class organizations. Many sections of the 1962 Constitution suffered from a lack of detail, because the important institutions it provided for had already been set up by legislation and had been in existence for some time before the Constitution itself came into force. The Constitution sought to weld the already existing institutions and procedures into a coherent and integrated mechanism. However, the 1962 Constitution cannot be properly analysed and understood except in the light of the relevant supplementary legislation and the manner in which it has been implemented.

The four-tier Panchayat framework consisted of the Village Panchayat, the District Panchayat, the Zonal Panchayat (which was subsequently replaced by the Zonal Committee of the King’s nominees), together with their respective Assemblies or Sabhas, and the Rastriya Panchayat (National Legislature) at the highest level. The Rastriya Panchayat resembles an assembly in functions and character rather than the Panchayats at the lower level, which are essentially executive committees or councils. With the exception of the Village (Gaun) or the Town (Nagar) Panchayat which is directly elected by a Village Assembly (Gaun Sabha) compounded of the adult population in the village, all other panchayats or Assemblies in the Panchayat hierarchy were indirectly elected. District
Assemblies (Zilla Sabhas) were made up of representatives from the Village Panchayats, one from each village in the district. This Assembly elected from among its members an 11-member District Panchayat. All the members of all the District Panchayats in a particular zone constituted the Zonal Assembly (Anchal Sabha) whose members, together with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, formed the electoral colleges to elect members from various districts of the zone to the Rastriya Panchayat.

Although the Panchayat system, at least in theory, provided a structure on a popular base, it had an extremely limited range of political participation. The total membership of Nepal’s national legislature, the Rastriya Panchayat, was one hundred and twenty-five. It included 16 nominees of the King. Of the 109 elected members, 90 were elected by the 14 Zonal Assemblies as described above. There were 75 districts in the 14 zones of Nepal, and each had a representative in the Rastriya Panchayat. The 15 districts with a population of more than 100,000 were assigned one additional member each, making a total of 90. Fifteen members of the Rastriya Panchayat were elected by the officially recognized and controlled class organizations, four each by the Peasants’ Organization and the Youth Organization, three by the Women’s Organization and two each by the Ex-Servicemen’s Organization and the Labour or the Workers’ Organization. The remaining four members of the 109 elected members of the Rastriya Panchayat came from the Graduates’ Constituency.

The 90 Rastriya Panchayat members elected through the Zonal Assemblies (Anchal Sabhas) were directly elected by a simple majority ranging from 46 votes (in the case of the Mahakali and Karnali zones) to 98 votes (in the case of the Bagmati zone). Further, the electoral regulation provided that candidates for membership in the Rastriya Panchayat had to be members of the 11-member District Panchayat in the district where the Rastriya Panchayat seat was being contested. The candidates’ proposer and seconder also had to be among the 11 members of that particular District Panchayat. These restrictions limited the choice of candidates for membership of the Rastriya Panchayat to a maximum number of two to three from any particular district. What was worse was that, in that situation, it was possible for a candidate to get himself elected to the national legislature if he could win over to his side eight out of the eleven members of the Panchayat of the district from which he was
seeking election despite an almost complete lack of popular support in that district. Even the Rastriya Panchayat members who had actually contested elections through Zonal Assemblies were directly elected by an average of less than thirty votes. To put it in another way, ninety members of the Rastriya Panchayat were, even theoretically speaking, directly elected only by a fraction of a total number of 1,018 voters. The electoral arrangement which made the Zonal Assembly elect members from each of its districts to the Rastriya Panchayat also made it possible for a member with very little support in his own district to represent it in the national legislature. If he could secure a proposer and a seconder from his own District Panchayat, he could get himself elected with the support of a majority of members of District Panchayats other than his own. This method of election was undemocratic since the candidate elected as a representative of a particular district did not always possess a representative character. Further, the procedure for election discriminated against the people of the Tarai area in two ways: first, by allowing the Tarai districts with a much larger population the same voting strength as that of the hill districts, and secondly, by making it impossible for the Tarai candidates to be elected to the Rastriya Panchayat from his own district without the support of the members of the hill District Panchayats in that zone.

The representatives of the class organizations in the Rastriya Panchayat were for some time elected on the basis of Preferential Proportional Representation by the total strength of the Central Committee of these organizations, which, in each case, did not exceed 150 members. After 1972, the electoral colleges for election of members to the Rastriya Panchayat from class organizations were expanded to include members of the working committee of all districts, Chairmen of all the Anchal (Zonal) Assemblies, the members of the Central Working Committee and the sitting members of the Rastriya Panchayat from class organizations. But, even then, the total number of voters in the cast of the class organizations in the latest election was increased to only 861 in the case of the Peasants’ Organization, 860 in the case of the Women’s Organization, 861 in the case of the Youth Organization, 697 in the case of the Labour Organization and 569 in the case of the Ex-Service-men’s Organization.

Despite the limited nature of the franchise, the Graduates’ Consti-
tuency, composed of about 13,000 college graduates in the country, had proved to be the most representative of all constituencies under the Panchayat system. All registered graduates in the country elected directly from among themselves four members to the Rastriya Panchayat on the basis of Preferential Proportional Representation, and every college graduate could freely contest the election from this nation-wide constituency.

The Graduates' Constituency

Of the 22 candidates for the four graduates' seats in the 1971 elections, 17 agreed to run on a common platform that advocated several major changes in the existing political system: (1) that elections to the national legislature should be direct and based on the principle of universal adult suffrage; (2) that the Prime Minister be appointed by the King on the recommendation of the legislature; (3) that all restrictions on fundamental rights be removed; and (4) that the sessions of the legislature be made open to the public. There was nothing particularly new in this platform since many members of the Rastriya Panchayat, including all members elected from the Graduates' Constituency in 1967, had voiced similar demands previously. What was new was Prime Minister Kirtinidhi Bista's response. He denounced the 17 candidates as opponents of the Panchayat system and sought to mobilize the electorate against them through the government-controlled press and radio, and by a circular to all government employees instructing them to support his own four-man panel of candidates. Bista suffered an embarrassing setback when his candidates had run on the four-point 'opposition' platform. The regime's response to the demands of the most enlightened section of the society has been, to put it mildly, negative.

Even more embarrassing to the government was the spotlight placed upon the candidacy of Ramraja Prasad Singh, a young Supreme Court lawyer, who was the only candidate to advocate directly an immediate return to 'the golden era of parliamentary rule'—and thus, implicitly, the abolition of the Panchayat system. His victory in the election, while no immediate threat to the regime, was a moral defect for the government and a clear indication of the overwhelming support for parliamentary democracy among the educated elite in the country. The sense of uncertainty in the government was indicated by the series of events that followed: the reluc-
tance of the presiding officer of the Rastriya Panchayat to swear-in Ramraja Prasad Singh along with the other newly-elected members; his arrest in the lobby of the legislature in a highly provocative manner by plainclothesmen; his trial and conviction by a special tribunal; his release from prison under royal amnesty, and finally his swearing-in by royal command as a member of the Rastriya Panchayat.

The story does not end there, however, as after his release Singh continued to advocate a return to parliamentary democracy at a series of public meetings in various parts of the country. He was finally rearrested in October 1971 and then expelled from the Rastriya Panchayat, allegedly for having violated the legislature's code of conduct. Singh's contribution had been to test the flexibility of the Panchayat system and determine whether the present constitutional system could be amended peacefully in response to popular demands. The conclusion to be drawn, obviously, was that it could not. This was further confirmed by the more than year-long imprisonment under the Security Act of two other members of the National Panchayat from the Graduates' Constituency, who had stood for the four point platform.

Direct elections for the Village (Gaun) and Town (Nagar) executive committee Panchayats, although held by show of hands initially in 1961-62, were later held by secret ballot. Until 1967, elections were conducted and supervised by the regular Zonal and District Officers of the government civil service, but the 1967 amendment to the constitution provided for an independent election commission to prepare electoral rolls and supervise the conduct of elections both for various Panchayat bodies and for the different offices of the class organizations at all levels. The capacity of the government to influence the outcome of elections through their officers of various levels did not decline at, because, in practice, the Election Commission had to seek the assistance of the regular government servants in its work.

Administrative Confusion

The confusion in the working of the Panchayat system was caused by an attempt to replace a 'political process' with a 'bureaucratic process' as though these processes were interchangeable. On the one hand, King Mahendra repeatedly emphasized in the text of the constitution and in his public pronouncement that
decentralization was the most important feature of the Panchayat system. He did not, however, make it clear whether this would imply curtailment of his own royal powers in practice. On the other hand, there was a clear and unmistakable trend towards increasing centralization and concentration of all power in the hands of the King. The 1967 constitutional amendments provided for direct appointment by the King of the Anchaladhishes (Zonal Commissioner), Ambassadors and the Commander-in-Chief of the Nepal Army. The centralizing tendency was also manifest in the replacement of the former Zonal Panchayat by the Anchal Committee, which has the Anchaladhish as its Chairman and the elected Chairman of the representative Zonal Assembly as its Vice-Chairman. Again, at the level of district administration, the inherent conflict of powers and responsibilities continued as before between the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the District Panchayat along with its other members on the one hand and the government appointed Chief District Officer on the other, who was made to act as Executive Secretary to the District Panchayat. While the Chief District Officer was supposed to take orders from the elected office bearers of the District Panchayat, he was held responsible to the government in Kathmandu for the maintenance of law and order, and for the handling of other important affairs of the district. Later, apparently to solve the confusing lines of responsibility, the Chief District Officer was made to function independently of the District Panchayat as was the case before the arrangement was put into effect, and the Panchayat Development Officer took the place of the Chief District Officer as the government appointed Executive Secretary to the District Panchayat. But the old situation of conflict of powers and responsibilities between government officials and elected officials continued to plague district politics and administration.

The fact that the Zonal Commissioners were the King's political appointees while the Chief District Officer, like other District Officers, was a member of the regular civil service under various ministries of the government in Kathmandu, created practical difficulties in the evolution of satisfactory working relations between the two. The position of the Anchaladhish, the Zonal Commissioner, tended to be untenable because he had less administrative experience than regular civil servants at the district or zonal administration levels and also no local political influence comparable to that of the
District Panchayat. Thus, he was not in a position to command respect on his own by inspiring confidence either in the district and zonal level civil servants or in the district political elite. Whatever influence or standing he had was only because of his position as the King’s direct appointee.

The most serious problem that confronted the Panchayat system in the field of political and administrative decentralization was that of resolving the inherent contradictions illustrated above.

The Revival of Traditional Institutions

The inherent contradiction between a theoretical concept of decentralized political and administrative structure and the existence or maintenance in practice of a highly centralized political-cum-administrative structure was highlighted by the attempts to revive in a surreptitious manner the traditional institutions of old Shah and Rana despotism, such as Pajani (annual renewal of service), Daudaha (commission for a tour of inspection) and Salam or Darshan-Bhet (individual or group audience with the ruler), parallels for which could be found only in the medieval Mughal administration of India.

The frequency of the changes in administrative personnel, euphemistically described as ‘administrative reorganization’, was merely a revival in new form of the traditional practice of Pajani or annual renewal of service.

The Daudaha or commission for a tour of inspection was a temporarily appointed body which was sent to an outlying area with side discretionary powers to inspect all government offices, suspend higher level government officials and dismiss lower level staff. It had power to hold summary inquiries and trials, and dispense quick justice on the basis of on-the-spot investigation. It had judicial authority similar to that of a District Court (Zilla Adalat) and openly entertained petitions for justice. It was also authorized to look into the problems of economic development with a view to recommending new projects or suggesting changes in the on-going projects.

The Salam or Darshan-Bhet was the traditional institution of individual or group audience with the ruler to secure direct justice and a quick redress of grievances. The practice of Darshan-Bhet or Salam (Direct audience) in its traditional form and spirit was subtly resuscitated by King Mahendra’s much talked about tours in the countryside.
In addition to the above institutions, special tribunals, reminiscent of the Star Chamber and Courts of Commission in Tudor England, became the order of the day. However much these institutions might have suited the needs of absolute personal rule in the past, they were not only outdated in today's context, but were also antithetical to both the spirit and methods of institutionalization and modernization. These practices tended to interfere with the recently established legal and constitutional forms and to obstruct the healthy growth of due processes of law and democratic institution which were vital to the process of nation-building in the modern democratic sense. The renewal and prevalence of the traditional practice during the post-1960 era led many observers to believe that what King Mahendra had attempted since 1960 was to institutionalize his personal rule within the Panchayat framework.

**The Palace Secretariat**

No survey of the new administrative set-up in Nepal can be complete without a reference to the dominant policy and decision-making role of the Palace Secretariat, which is not defined anywhere in the law or constitution of the country. The Palace Secretariat has once again become the nerve-centre of the administrative and political structure, as it was during the pre-Rana period, (1769-1846). It has assumed the same key role and importance as the Bintipatra-Niksari Adda, or Prime Minister's private office for the disposal of petitions, and of the office of Khadga-Nisansa, for legitimizing the rulers' personal wish or command, even in disregard of the laws existing during the time of the all-powerful hereditary Rana Prime Ministers (1886-1950).

Today, the Palace Secretariat, which also includes the Investigation and Enquiry Centre (Janch-Bujh Kendra), functions not only as a relay-station between the King and the government, but also as a policy and decision-making body using the Central Secretariat merely as an instrument to implement policy decisions. This has led to the kind of situation characterized by Edmund Burke as 'double government', with the Government Secretariat in Singha Darbar directly responsible and accountable to the people for errors in implementation of the government's policy decisions, and the Palace Secretariat, screened from the view and criticisms of the people, in a dominant position to influence policies and decisions of the government.
After the accession of King Birendra to the throne the centre for Enquiry and Investigation (Janch-Bujh Kendra) has proved to be the King’s top investigative arm, something like what the high-powered Imperial Inspectorate Organization is to the Shah of Iran. The Centre for Enquiry and Investigation has the freedom to investigate anything and anyone including cabinet ministers. It has investigated charges of corruption in government and also handles many of the personal pleas for royal justice that come to the King by mail.

Decentralization?

The new Panchayat system does not reflect any real decentralization or deconcentration of political and administrative power. As pointed out by Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose, it is ‘an attempt to rationalize the administrative process by creating viable institutions in areas where a serious lacuna had previously existed, thus providing the basis both for a modernized administrative system and for agencies through which economic development programmes could be implemented.’

The Village Panchayats, the Town Panchayats and the District Panchayats have been given limited taxation and administrative powers. Their administrative functions include assisting development programmes, supervising and managing the village-, the district-, or the municipality-owned or controlled property, and maintaining certain records and statistics. The Village Panchayats are granted judicial jurisdiction in minor civil and criminal cases. The claim that the new Panchayat system represents decentralization of political power and functions is completely invalid inasmuch as the central government’s ultimate authority is maintained intact by granting the Panchayat Ministry discretionary power to suspend or dissolve a Panchayat and replace it with a provisional Panchayat authorized to exercise the same powers.

Zonal Committee

Until its abolition the Zonal Committee (Anchal Samiti), consisting of the office-bearers of various class organizations at the zonal level, had as its Chairman a Zonal Commissioner directly appointed by the King and as its Vice-Chairman the elected Chairman of the Zonal Assembly (Anchal Sabha). The 1967 amendment to the Constitution abolished the Zonal Panchayats in favour of the Zonal Committees. The Zonal Assembly, however, was retained as before
merely as an electoral college to elect representatives to the Rastriya Panchayat from each of the districts in a particular zone.

Slight confusion has been caused by a misleading use of the 'Panchayat' nomenclature in relation to both the Panchayats at the various levels and the Zonal Committee on the one hand and the Rastriya Panchayat on the other. The Panchayats at the village and the district level, like the Zonal Committee, are smaller executive committees intended for carrying on the administration of the village or the town or the district, whereas the Rastriya Panchayat is a national legislature and thus resembles the larger District or Zonal Assemblies or Sabhas in form and functions.

The Rastriya Panchayat

Although the Rastriya Panchayat had played a limited role in policy and decision-making on national issues and had served primarily as a rubber stamp for royal wishes, considerable political interest was centred on it. Frankly speaking, much of the activity and participation at the various levels of the Panchayat system and the class organizations seemed to be concerned merely with their character as means for election to the Rastriya Panchayat. The powers and privileges of the Rastriya Panchayat as outlined in the 1962 Constitution resemble those of Sallahakar Sabha, the Advisory Assembly under the Advisory Assembly Act of 1952 more closely than those of the parliament under the 1959 Constitution. This was true notwithstanding the fact that, unlike the old Advisory Assembly, the Rastriya Panchayat had mandatory powers in certain areas.

The Rastriya Panchayat could discuss any matter other than the conduct of the members of the royal family and the measures taken by judges in the exercise of their responsibilities. Laws could be passed without the approval of the Rastriya Panchayat, but royal assent had to be obtained at the final stage. The basic procedure was the same as in the 1959 parliamentary constitution. There was, however, a remarkable difference in the approach and attitude towards legislation. Although royal assent to laws passed by parliament was taken for granted under the 1959 Constitution, a more active role was visualized for the King in the legislative process in the post 1960 era, since he was the real head of the executive departments of the government under the new system. The King had a real and wide veto power which in the last resort could
not be challenged or overruled by the Rastriya Panchayat.

Furthermore, the King could require the legislature to ‘submit its opinion’ before the passage of any bill which was under consideration. The King could consider such opinion and, after that, give assent to the bill either in the form in which it was presented to the ‘Rastriya Panchayat or as altered’. Although the so-called principle of royal initiative was observed with ‘money’ or financial bills, and bills relating to the subject of defence in parliament under the 1959 Constitution, the Constitution did not require the cabinet to obtain prior consent of the King to initiate these bills. The 1962 Constitution made specific provisions in these matters.

The Council of Ministers

The relationship between the Rastriya Panchayat and the Council of Ministers was not clearly defined in the 1962 Constitution. While the Rastriya Panchayat apparently had some powers of control over Ministers, the Ministers could not be said to be entirely subject to the restrictions implied by the constitutional provisions. Ministers however, had to be appointed from among the members of the Rastriya Panchayat and if non-members were appointed they had to be elected to that body within six months of their appointment. The King appointed the Ministers, and there is nothing in the Constitution which required him to consult the legislature in making them.

Even the 1967 amendment to the Constitution merely indicated that, if the King wished, he might consult the legislature in appointing the Prime Minister in a manner to be determined by him. The King’s choice of Ministers was not limited in practice even by the constitutional provision that required Ministers to be members of the Rastriya Panchayat, since a fixed percentage of the membership of the legislature was composed of the King’s own nominees.

Furthermore, once a Minister was appointed, the Rastriya Panchayat had only limited control over him. Even the passage of a no-confidence motion by a two-thirds majority of the total membership of the Rastriya Panchayat would not lead to a Minister’s dismissal, since the Constitution left the final decision to the King. Thus the principle of ministerial responsibility which animated the 1959 Constitution was modified by the 1962 Constitution to permit the King to dismiss or retain a Minister without reference to the support he enjoyed in the Rastriya Panchayat.
Royal Prerogatives

The provisions of the 1962 Constitution show a considerable expansion of royal prerogatives compared to those contained in the Constitution. This was apparent, as has been pointed out, in respect of the relationship of the Crown with the Council of Ministers and the legislature, and also in respect of the wide 'emergency' and discretionary powers assumed by the King. According to Article 81 of the Constitution of Nepal, if His Majesty is of the opinion that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of the whole of Nepal or any part thereof is threatened by war, external aggression or internal disturbance, His Majesty by proclamation may suspend any of the Articles of the Constitution indefinitely until such time as His Majesty is satisfied that grave emergency no longer exists.14 The emergency powers of the King cover a very wide range, and the perfunctory legal restrictions placed on them are apt to be ineffectual, thereby leaving the King free to suspend, amend and abrogate the 1962 Constitution as easily or lightly as the 1959 Constitution. The 1962 Constitution has already been amended twice in 1967, and in 1975, every time centralizing increased authority in the King.

An example of the use of the Royal Prerogative concerns the selection of Ministers and Prime Ministers. The key ministers had usually been selected from the ranks of the nominated members to the Rastriya Panchayat and had been given important portfolios. After the 1963 elections, a nominated member became the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and also the Prime Minister for sometime. Four out of a total of five Prime Ministers during the last 12 years of the Panchayat era have been the incumbent Ministers, 'returned unopposed' to the National Assembly from their constituencies. Of the three Prime Ministers appointed during King Birendra's first four years' rule, the last did not even belong to the assembly before he was appointed Prime Minister. Critics have regarded this as a deliberate attempt on the part of the King to downgrade not only the office of Prime Minister but also the Rastriya Panchayat itself by making clear its subordinate position in the new political set-up.

The 1967 amendment to the Constitution limited the tenure of office of the Prime Minister to a maximum period of five years, although no Prime Minister has been elected or appointed in consultation with the Rastriya Panchayat up to now. Since the emer-
gence of strong men such as Bhimsen Thapa and Jang Bahadur Rana as Prime Ministers historically always presaged a decline in the royal powers, King Mahendra sought to prevent the growth of strong popular figures by restricting the term of elected Prime Ministers to a maximum period of five years.

On the other hand, King Mahendra frequently used the Rastriya Panchayat to serve his personal and propaganda interests by referring to it as the highest legislative body representative of the people of Nepal. For example, on the eve of his second State visit to the United States in the autumn of 1967, King Mahendra, in an effort to cement the nation's view on the desirability and effectiveness of the Panchayat system, persuaded the Rastriya Panchayat to endorse unanimously his own suggestion that the Panchayat system had become an integral part of the life of the people of Nepal and admitted of no alternative. Some of the members of the Rastriya Panchayat suggested in a guarded manner that it was not entirely up to them to give such a verdict, and that it should be better if a popular referendum were organized on the question. But no attention was paid to this suggestion.

Perhaps the King's attitude towards political parties and organizations as manifested by the 1967 amendment to the Constitution reflects the spirit of the Panchayat system more than anything else in the Constitution. The 1962 Constitution was faithfully silent on the question of political parties, which were banned in practice merely by the Royal Ordinance of 15 December, 1960. This later acquired the form of a law called the Control of Organizations and Associations Act.

Theoretically, the Constitution permitted parties, because it is an accepted principle of jurisprudence that what the law does not expressly forbid it permits. However, the 1967 Amendment to the Constitution, while granting the right to freedom of association, expressly forbade the political parties and such organizations as were motivated by political considerations. Thus a ban on political parties and organizations was introduced as a basic and permanent feature of the Panchayat system. Since no form of political alignment on the basis of certain agreed principles or details of programme is permitted even inside the Rastriya Panchayat, the effectiveness of the Rastriya Panchayat as a representative institution and legislative body has been seriously compromised.
The Legislature and in Camera Sessions

The constitutional provision that Rastriya Panchayat sessions be held *in camera* until such time as the King may deem fit to declare them open seriously undermined the influence of the Rastriya Panchayat as a popular representative legislature. In *camera* sessions prevented the legislature from acting as a bridge between the people and the government by depriving the people even of a chance to watch their representatives at work.

The plea advanced by King Mahendra in favour of secret sessions of the Rastriya Panchayat was that this would be a salutary check on the tendency of the members to play to the gallery. However, popular apathy towards the Panchayat system was partially caused by the fact that the people could not watch their representatives at work and could not even hear their views on national problems. Incidentally, it may be noted here that with the exception of Mussolini's Grand Fascist Council, no other legislature in the world in modern times has been known to hold its regular sessions in secret.

In *camera* sessions might have temporarily restricted disunity but could not have promoted real national unity on a wide popular basis. Politics in these conditions revolved around persons rather than programmes and consequently provided no scope for the development of political leadership at the national level. In a way, the Rastriya Panchayat proved to be less effective than even the advisory assemblies of the pre-1959 era, since the debates and deliberations in the Rastriya Panchayat do not have the same impact on Public opinion as those of the former assemblies.

The experience of rowdyism during the 1972 budget session of the Rastriya Panchayat, which resulted in the Prime Minister being beaten up by one of the members with the broken leg of a bench, had led the new King, Birendra, to change the Rules of Procedure of the Rastriya Panchayat and make them more restrictive by giving new arbitrary powers to the Chairman to admit or reject motions and expel members for lack of discipline. It may be noted here that the Rastriya Panchayat has not been able to assert its position as the master of its own Rules of Procedure, since it has not yet replaced the tentative Rules of Procedure given it by King Mahendra, rules which were intended to regulate the business of the legislature only until such time as may have been required by it to frame its own rules.

In September-October 1967, eleven members of the National
Panchayat made public pleas for the following reforms: (1) that the Rastriya Panchayat meet in open session as a rule, (2) that the representatives be elected from the district constituencies directly on the basis of universal adult suffrage, (3) that the King appoint a Prime Minister in consultation with the Rastriya Panchayat so that he might avoid being directly involved in the day-to-day administration, (4) that the Public Security Act or Preventive Detention Act be used sparingly and that certain restrictions be imposed on its application with a view to ensuring the conditions of the rule of law in practice, and (5) that elections be held in an atmosphere of freedom. Pleas for these reforms were first voiced on the floor of the Rastriya Panchayat itself, but as the introduction of a formal motion recommending the adoption of these reforms was not allowed by the Chairman of the Rastriya Panchayat, the demands were submitted directly to the King, for what that was worth. A petition to the King to grant those demands was handed to the King's principal secretary by two representatives on behalf of the eleven members, but no formal response was ever received.

The Dominant King

However, on another occasion, the King did officially respond to a joint petition sent to him by 64 members of the Rastriya Panchayat. This occurred following the arrest of a member under the Preventive Detention Act on 10 July, 1967, when the budget session of the Rastriya Panchayat was in progress. In the King's reply to this joint petition, communicated to all the members of the Rastriya Panchayat, the complaints of the members against the high handedness and arbitrary acts of the ministers were lightly dismissed. In addition, the petitioners were asked threateningly whether the very act of their collective sponsorship and signature of a petition was not prompted by a spirit of factionalism. The King's communication, although meant only for members of the Rastriya Panchayat and described as secret by the Rastriya Panchayat Chairman, meanwhile gained wide currency and became the subject of conversation among many of the politically conscious people of Nepal.

Incidents such as this make it quite clear that the future of the Panchayat system in Nepal depends on its flexibility and capacity to accommodate the many diverse political and economic forces that will inevitably be released by the process of modernization. The real test of the 1962 Constitution is whether it will succeed in con-
taining and satisfying popular demands for reforms when they arise. King Mahendra thought that political parties by their very nature were factional bodies and hence disruptive of national unity. He created the machinery for implementation of his ‘Back to the Village’ programme, and also the class organizations as a substitute for political parties in an attempt to mobilize popular energy and direct it along nationally profitable channels. Time alone will show whether these efforts have fostered national unity or national frustration. For the present, it has been even the official view that the class organizations and the ‘Back to the Village’ National Campaign have not been very effective in fulfilling their projected goals.

‘Class’ Organizations

The so-called class and professional organizations are obviously not based on economic classes. They were created to denounce the concept of class-conflict in favour of a kind of class-coordination which is the real motivation behind the Panchayat system. Before 1960 organizations similar to the present class organizations functioned, but merely as affiliations of the political parties. They did not have the same important role envisaged for them in the present Panchayat system. The class organizations now enjoy a sort of organizational monopoly in their respective spheres, since parallel unofficial organizations are not permitted by government regulations.

A number of students’ organizations and women’s organizations were forced to dissolve before the class and professional organizations of peasants, youth, labourers, women, students, children and ex-servicemen were set up in 1961. The new organizations were formed under the direct sponsorship and supervision of a government ministry, the National Guidance Ministry. Although the professed object at the beginning was to grant full autonomy to these organizations and leave them free of government control if and when they had grown up to their sense of responsibility, such autonomy was never in fact encouraged. Indeed, the government managed to increase rather than lessen its control over them after the National Guidance Ministry itself was dissolved. The class organizations in Nepal are not ‘representative’ but are ‘client-oriented’, the client being the government. As a matter of fact the members of the class organizations are not active at all and have not been able to develop even the subject-participant orientation
which characterizes the political culture of states where a single party dominates the system.

The students’ agitation from 1963 to 1965 for free students’ unions in colleges and in the Tribhuvan University forced the government to dissolve the government-sponsored students’ organizations which the overwhelming majority of students had had nothing to do with ever since their inception. The 1967 amendment to the Control of Organizations Act prohibited not only politically motivated organizations of every kind but also demands or agitation for them in any form.22

The Council of National Guidance

An extra-constitutional Council of National Guidance was formed in 1964 with the King himself as Chairman and some of the political leaders of the past (who had not taken part in the Panchayat system) together with leading ministers and workers of the Panchayat system as members.23 The Council could not, however, agree on any proposal for a new popular basis and programme for the class organizations. Serious differences arose between the section of the Council represented by the ministers of the day and the rest of the members over the question of the extent to which initiative and freedom were to be allowed in the class organizations, and also over the question of the extent to which political freedom should be permitted in the country as a whole. The section opposed to the ministerial group was in favour of implementation in a democratic spirit of the constitutional provisions relating to fundamental rights and the freedom of initiative, whereas the ministers of the government advocated a return to a strict construction of the constitution. The Council of National Guidance was completely deadlocked on this basic issue and became moribund until it was finally abolished in April 1957.

The ‘Back to the Village’ National Campaign

The ‘Back to the Village’ National Campaign was launched by the late King Mahendra through a message to the Rastriya Panchayat, Nepal’s national legislature, in 1967. The message along with the programme of the campaign was published in a booklet under a red cover with a blue border, which had a striking resemblance to Chairman Mao Tse-tung’s little red book. And also displayed prominently, perhaps as a conspicuous proof of Nepal’s non-align-ment, on a single page in that booklet itself, was a quotation from
King Mahendra which was in fact merely a literal Nepali adaptation of the late American President John F. Kennedy's famous sentence: 'And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.'

The following ten items are listed as the main planks of the programme for the Back to the Village National Campaign: (1) to strengthen and develop the feeling of nationalism and national unity, (2) to explain the importance of partyless Panchayat democracy which admits of no alternative, and to strengthen the partyless spirit, (3) to make one's conduct and behaviour conform to the country's non-aligned foreign policy, (4) to start a campaign with a view to ending corruption, injustice, oppression and unnecessary delay because of a 'red-tapes' mentality, (5) to create a sense of consciousness and dynamism among members of the rural community, (6) to help successfully implement the on-going programmes of land reform, reform of the legal code, social reforms and national reconstruction, (7) to promote the growth of the cooperative spirit and to propagate and develop cooperative (Sajha) programmes, (8) to explain to the people the importance of aforestation and the protection of flora and fauna, (9) to stress the value of the growth of agricultural production, and (10) to arouse on a nationwide scale consciousness of need to encourage and expand handicrafts and cottage industries suited to local needs.

Apart from some official enthusiasm initially shown in the implementation of the programme, the people were never enthusiastic about the Back to the Village Campaign, and because of the absence of trained and dedicated cadres, the campaign was altogether lacking in sustained drive. The ideals of voluntary service and simple and austere living could not be inculcated in the minds of the people merely through official propaganda. The life and conduct of those sitting in high places fell far too short of showing exemplary behaviour to the people. Hence the failure of the Back to the Village National Campaign even in emphasizing the value of manual labour and of conveying the message to the people that work is worthwhile.

The 1973 edition of the Back to the Village National Campaign booklet contains the latest amendments to its programme and work procedures and the scheme for the evaluation of the workers of the Panchayat system along with a message from King Birendra. The message seeks to highlight development as the object of politics and also emphasizes the moral obligation on the part of Panchayat
political workers to regard service of the people as the means of gaining popular trust and of rising to a higher position in the political hierarchy. While emphasizing the value of the Back to the Village National Campaign to the people of Nepal who live mostly in villages, the King has reaffirmed his belief in the campaign as the precursor of a society without exploitation, which is the proclaimed goal of the Panchayat system.

King Birendra intends the newly devised machinery for the conduct of the Back to the Village National Campaign, with its scheme for the evaluation of the worth of social workers to be the means of making people realize that the criterion for acting as popular representatives in future will be their actual contribution to the success of development programmes for their region or locality.

The Central Committee for the Back to the Village National Campaign, while continuing to be an extra-constitutional body under King Birendra assumed some of the functions which were assigned to the National Guidance Council until the mid-sixties. The work procedures of the Back to the Village National Campaign, together with its new administrative set-up. Proclaimed by King Birendra prior to the enactments of the 1975 Amendments to the Constitution of Nepal, were intended to mobilize popular energy for the formulation and implementation of development plans and projects. An eight-member Back to the Village National Campaign Central Committee, including a Secretary, was announced by the Principal Secretariat of the Royal Palace on 26 August, 1973. However, none of the members seems to have had any experience in Panchayat or pre-Panchayat politics at the national level. According to a by-law, a member nominated by His Majesty would function as Chairman for six months by rotation and the Prime Minister would be an ex-officio member of the Committee. The term of nominated members was to be four years, but they would be eligible for renomination. No member of the Central Committee, other than the Member-Secretary was authorized to evaluate the work of Panchayat and class organization workers in the zone to which he belonged.

Even the Chief Justice of Nepal and other judges were required to take part in the programme of the Back to the Village National Campaign, and so were the personnel employed in public corporations. Although numerous officials and semi-officials were thus
required to participate in the campaign, the common people remained unenthusiastic about the changes actually affected.

The 14 Zonal Committees of the Back to the Village National Campaign, each with a secretary of its own, were nominated by the King in September 1974. It seemed even then that the plan was to set up in due course a network of the Back to the Village National Campaign both at the district and the village levels with a view to reinforcing a unified system of communication on a nationwide scale. The Back to the Village National Campaign Central Committee and the Zonal Committees, whose members were to be paid by the government on a full-time basis were planning to recruit volunteers, cadres and workers in the name of the King and on his behalf. But the manner in which the Back to the Village National Campaign was organized (at public cost) from the top downwards with the Central and Zonal Committees nominated by the King, had already restricted both the scope and the opportunity for popular participation and for recruitment of new entrants for various roles in the Panchayat political structure. The Back to the Village National Campaign Committee, with its network of units at various levels, seemed to be clearly intended to carry on the same functions and activities in Nepal's partyless Panchayat democracy as political parties would do in other systems. It appeared that the Back to the Village National Campaign organization was merely another official agency designed to promote popular mobilization and participation. As such, it was foredoomed to failure, because this task could be secured only with the help of non-official and purely people-oriented agencies.

The Judiciary

Within limits the Supreme Court has, on the whole, acted as a guardian of fundamental rights as set forth in the Constitution. But the presence on the Supreme Court Bench of a number of judges with no formal education in law and jurisprudence, but with experience in the administration of justice of the traditional type, has been, on balance, a handicap rather than an asset to the development of the independence of the judiciary. The legal profession, which was almost non-existent until the mid-fifties, has of late been attracting some very talented young people. Since the 1962 Constitution expressly recognizes the King as the source of all power—executive, legislative and judicial — the principle of the indepen-
dence of the judiciary has been adversely affected both in theory and practice. Even according to the 1959 Constitution, the judges could only be removed by the King on the basis of a recommendation by a committee set up by him to enquire into complaints against them. There was no constitutional provision for their removal through the adoption of a formal motion of impeachment by the required majority in parliament. However, the 1962 Constitution provides that the King, on the basis of advice by a judicial committee appointed by him, could refer back to the Supreme Court for reconsideration any law suit that might have been previously decided. In a way, the King continues to be the final court of appeal in the traditional sense. There are a number of constitutional restrictions on the power of the court which do not appear reasonable in a modern context. For example, if the preamble to a particular law merely contains the expression ‘in the public interest’, the court cannot go into the question of whether the plea of public interest is valid in the case. Thus the court is debarred from considering whether the substance of that particular law is ultra vires of the spirit of the Constitution.

The Raj Sabha

The Raj Sabha (King’s Council or Council of State) is primarily an advisory body whose origin can be traced back to the traditional Bhardari or Council of Nobles. It has something in common with the British Privy Council and also with the Genro or the Council of Elder Statesmen in the Japanese Constitution of 1869. The primary functions of the Raj Sabha are to supervise succession in the event of the King’s death or incapacity and to serve as a consultative body. It is a large and heterogeneous body of 92 members which includes ex-officio members such as the highest judicial, administrative, military and religious officials together with some members of the royal family, and also a number of unofficial members from among those who have distinguished themselves in various spheres of national life. The body spans a wide range of Nepal’s national activity and represents its political cross-section, but it would be extremely difficult for it to arrive at any viable consensus on any issue without promptings from elsewhere.

Furthermore, a standing or permanent committee of the Raj Sabha, consisting of seven to fifteen members, is appointed by the King with the function of advising him on any matter on which he
may seek advice. The Standing Committee of the Raj Sabha is to act in conjunction with the Steering Committee of the Rastriya Panchayat during a period of national emergency and in giving effect to the constitutional amendment process. The 1967 and the 1975 amendments to the Constitution were routed through the Standing Committee of the Raj Sabha. The Standing Committee has enjoyed limited advisory powers and is reminiscent of the Rastriya Samiti (National Committee) which was set up under the chairmanship of King Mahendra’s younger half-brother, Prince Basundhara B.B. Shah Dev, during the period prior to the promulgation of the 1959 Constitution. The role of the Raj Sabha was in keeping with King Mahendra’s practice of establishing high prestige Councils with no specific responsibilities but only vague and general residual powers. King Mahendra had set up several such bodies even when he was ruling through a Cabinet on the parliamentary model.

**Directive Principles**

Directive principles, similar to those of the 1936 Constitution of Republican Spain and the Constitution of the Republics of Eire and India are a distinctive feature of the 1962 Constitution of Nepal. They are not justifiable or enforceable by courts of law but are of some value merely as guidelines for the policy of the state in the economic and social spheres. The directive principles of state policy in the 1962 Constitution of Nepal were initially based on those in the Constitution of Eire, but the 1967 amendment to Nepal’s Constitution has sought to cast them vaguely in the Panchayat mould by discarding the concrete and specific elements of the original version.²⁷

**Citizenship**

The section on citizenship is a new feature of the 1962 Constitution which was not contained in the 1959 Constitution. Article 7, Section 2, Subsection (D) of the 1962 Constitution had laid down a residential qualification of a minimum of twelve years for aliens to acquire naturalized citizenship, whereas for persons of Nepali origin only two years’ residence was required.²⁸ While retaining two years’ residence as the requirement for people of Nepali origin to become Nepali citizens, the 1975 amendment has laid down a minimal residence of five years for foreign wives of Nepali citizens.
and fifteen years for aliens. Double citizenship is prohibited. Any citizen shall forfeit his citizenship if he or she raises arms or incites an armed struggle against Nepal or commits any other crime against the state, and also if he or she will not respond to the call for national service at a time of war or national emergency. These provisions reflect Nepal's fear of being swamped by the teeming inhabitants of its populous neighbours. Nepal also fears the possibility that the neighbouring countries may incite certain elements of the Nepali population to take up arms against Nepal from their respective territories.

Constitutional Amendment Process

Apart from the distinctive characteristics pointed out above, the 1962 Constitution shares many other features in common with the 1958 Constitution. The only major difference is that what was implicit in the earlier version is made more explicit in the 1962 Constitution, specially with regard to royal prerogatives and the residual powers of the Crown. Although the 1962 Constitution provides for a unicameral legislative assembly, it cannot be considered less rigid than the 1959 Constitution in respect of the process of constitutional amendment. An amendment to the 1962 Constitution could be promulgated by the King after it had been approved by a two-thirds majority at a joint meeting of the Standing Committee of the King's Council (Raj Sabha) and the steering committee of the national assembly (Rastriya Panchayat). The Constitution could also be amended, if an amendment approved by the national assembly (Rastriya Panchayat), in the form of petition or address to the King, was approved by him on the recommendation of the standing committee of the national assembly (Rastriya Panchayat) and the Steering Committee of the King's Council (Raj Sabha) functioning as the Special Committee, in terms of the Constitution. The 1975 Constitutional Amendments reserve exclusively for the King the right to amend the Constitution by deleting Article 44 of the 1962 Constitution which, at least in theory, provided the members of the national assembly with the right to petition the King formally for constitutional reforms and other matters of consequence.

The Panchayat System under King Birendra

King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, who succeeded his father in January 1972, has introduced certain basic or substantive changes
in the Panchayat system. In his initial public statements immediately following his accession to the throne, he occasionally hinted that the Panchayat system afforded scope for certain changes in accordance with the spirit of the times. But his attitude on the question of allowing or initiating changes in the Panchayat Constitution seemed to grow rather rigid as has been evidenced by his more than year-long detention, under the Security Act, of former Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa together with three other members of the Rastriya Panchayat. All four were arrested during the 1972-73 budget session of the Rastriya Panchayat after they had demanded at an open-air public meeting broad-based elections to the Rastriya Panchayat, the opening of its sessions to the press and public and a wider measure of fundamental rights, Their characterization of the present regime as a dual government of the Central Secretariat plus the Investigation and Enquiry Centre, was said to have been, more than anything else, the reason for their imprisonment.

King Birendra's plea for politics, strongly oriented towards development, initially manifested itself in the setting up of the National Development Council on 13 April, 1972, and in an amendment to the origins Back to the Village programme in 1973.

National Development Council

The National Development Council is not based on an act of the Rastriya Panchayat nor is it derived from an ordinance subsequently approved and formalized by the national legislature as a law. It was brought into existence by a royal decree issued through the Palace Secretariat.

According to Gorkhapatra, 15 September, 1976, King Birendra reorganized the NDC, which had been formed on 9 June, 1972, under his own chairmanship. With the King remaining as Chairman, the Council now comprises all cabinet ministers; the chairman of the national assembly (Rastriya Panchayat), the standing committee of the King's Council or the Council of State (Raj Sabha), and the Central Committee of the Back to the Village National Campaign; three to five persons designated by His Majesty from among former Prime Ministers and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers; chairman of the committee of the national assembly (Rastriya Panchayat), members of the National Planning Commission, the Vice-Chancellor of the Tribhuvan University, the Governor of the State (Rastra) Bank of Nepal, the chairmen of
the twenty-five district executive committees (Zila Panchayats). These are to be chosen by rotation for one year each, in such a manner that the fourteen zones, the Tarai, hill and inaccessible regions, are equitably represented, as also the chairman of the federation of chambers of commerce and industry, and three to five members who have gained reputations in different fields. It is further provided that each quadrennial session shall be attended by the chairmen of all the seventy-five district executive committees (Zilla Panchayats) by rotation.

The Council's first meeting from 26 to 28 February, 1973, was presided over by King Birendra himself. The meeting reviewed the mid-term progress of the Fourth Plan (1970-75) and examined the basic principles underlying the Fifth Plan. The second meeting of the Council, which was held in Kathmandu from 24 to 26 September, 1973, examined the progress reports of various ministries for the fiscal year 1972-73 in the light of the Planning Commission's reaction. In addition, the ministers were called upon to answer questions regarding errors of omission and commission for which their respective departments were responsible. At the end of the second meeting King Birendra as President announced the setting up of two subcommittees to give final shape to the recommendations contained in the working papers prepared by the National Planning Commission. The first committee was to implement the establishment of a Development Pioneer Corps which would station in each of the four Regional Development Centres a 150 to 200 man pool of high-level, middle-level and low-level experts and technicians. The second committee was to implement the expansion of the Sajha (cooperative) sector of the economy. Further, the King asked the Evaluation and Recommendation Subcommittee to study whether changes in the targets of the plan were necessary in view of the experience acquired so far from its implementation. He also authorized the Evaluation and Recommendation Subcommittee to investigate the idea of a system of rewards and punishments for higher echelon officers in their work in implementing the plan.31

The National Development Council and Rastriya Panchayat

The working relationship within the operational framework of the Panchayat system between the National Development Council,
an extra-constitutional body, and the Rastriya Panchayat, Nepal's parliament, has implications for the evolution of the Panchayat system in the future and is, therefore, of considerable interest to a student of comparative politics. As the National Development Council seems to have the full backing of the King and also consists of a cross-section of the membership of the National Panchayat itself and other Panchayat bodies, there seems to be no visible sign of tension between the Rastriya Panchayat and the National Development Council. But it will be interesting to see whether the Rastriya Panchayat, when and if it comes into its own as a national legislature in the real sense, will allow its rightful role in economic development to be transferred to an extra-constitutional body such as the National Development Council as a Development Parliament.

In his introductory statement at the opening of the second meeting of the National Development Council, Dr Harka Bahadur Gurung, then Vice-Chairman of the National Planning Commission, rightly pointed out that 'it was the responsibility of the political units at the national level to reflect the people's aspirations in the formulation of development policies.' However, whether or how far the existing political units at the national level may be able to represent popular aspiration is a different matter. In the course of his remarks, Dr Gurung added that 'if everyone engaged in the task of preparing development plans could be given clear instructions and directions by these units, it would go a long way in making the Fifth Five Year Plan more people-oriented'. This is indeed a very big 'if', in view of the fact that the general calibre and intelligence level of the personnel of the political units at the national level, not to mention the method of their election, would not seem to equip them for giving clear and precise instruction to the framers of the plan.

Regional Development Centres

King Birendra has sought to forge his own instruments to accelerate the pace of development on which he has laid great stress ever since becoming King. The National Development Council is the primary body the King intends to employ for development purposes. This Council has already acquired considerable prestige because of the King's personal and direct association with it as Chairman. It appears that the National Development Council will
Figure I. Fused Political and Administrative Structure of Nepal under the King

Standing Committee of Raj Sabha (King's Council) — The King — Palace Secretariat

Raj Sabha (a 97-member body)

Cabinet

Political Structure

National Planning Commission

Administrative Structure

Rastriya Panchayat (National Legislature) consisting of 135 members including 23 royal nominees. 112 members elected from among members of each of the 75 District Panchayats (Executive Committees) by their respective District Sabhas (Assemblies) along with members of other District Executive Committees in the zone to which the District belongs.

Central Government Secretariat

Anchaladhisas (Zonal Commissioners) and Anchal Samitis (Zonal Committees) and other zonal level officers of various social and technical ministries and departments at the centre, such as Public Health, Public Works, Agriculture, Irrigation, Cooperatives, Land administration, Forestry, etc.

N.B. The heavy lines indicate that the bodies are directly appointed by the King

*BVNC=Back to the Village National Campaign

75 Zilla Panchayats (13-member District Executive Committees) consisting of 4 nominees of the Zonal Committee of the *BVNC and 9 members elected by their respective Zilla Sabha (District Assembly)

75 Zilla Sabhas (District Assemblies) consisting of chairmen and vice-chairmen of each of the Gaon Panchayats (Village Executive Committees) in a particular district along with representatives of the town panchayats in its area, whose number will be equal to that of the municipal wards in the town.

Approximately 3,330 Gaon Panchayats (Village, Executive Committees) consisting of 2 nominees of the District Committee of the BVNC and 9 members elected by the 45-member Gaon Sabha (Village Assembly), one from each of the nine 5-member ward committees, elected by the 9 wards into which every village or group of villages with a population of 5,000 is divided, and 19 municipal committees.

Judicial Committee

Supreme Court

Regional Courts

Zonal Courts

District Courts

Back to the Village National Campaign (Executive Committees) consisting of 2 nominees of the District Committee of the BVNC and 9 members elected by the 45-member Gaon Sabha (Village Assembly), one from each of the nine 5-member ward committees, elected by the 9 wards into which every village or group of villages with a population of 5,000 is divided, and 19 municipal committees.
eventually have important ramifications throughout the country. Considerable stress has been laid on regional development, and the country has been divided into four development regions—the eastern, the central, the western and the far-western development region. Four regional development centres have also been set up at Dhankuta, Kathmandu, Pokhara and Surkhet.

King Mahendra had originally planned to use the elected District Panchayats and the Rastriya Panchayat as media for developmental purposes. When he was not satisfied with their role in promoting development the King then thought of another device, namely, a Zonal Committee consisting of a few nominees from the District Panchayats with the Zonal Officer or Anchaladhish as Chairman and the elected Chairman of the Zonal Assembly as Vice-Chairman. The Zonal Committee merits comparison with the National Development Council in one substantive respect. Both of these bodies are based on a combination of the principle of election with that of nomination. King Birendra is seeking to apply these principles on a wider scale, and it is perhaps too early to predict the results. However, it would seem that there is eventually bound to be an overlapping and duplication of jurisdiction and functions between the various hierarchies of the Panchayat organization and those of the National Development Council at all levels, unless something is done to define and demarcate their respective functions and jurisdiction clearly and in precise terms.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

5. Majority systems of electing representatives are not truly proportional. To take the example of two parties contesting an election, it would be possible for the candidates of one party to win each seat by a narrow majority, making the final representation 100% from that party, and leaving nearly half of the electorate unrepresented.

In the various forms of proportional representation wasted votes, such as those which fail to return a candidate, and excess votes, i.e. those which a candidate has in excess of those he needs to be elected, are, up to a point, balanced and taken into account.

Preferential proportional representation first presupposes a multi-member constituency and, second, implies that it is not enough for a candidate to gain what is called a relative or an absolute majority but, in order to be elected, it is necessary for him to obtain a result just over the total number of votes cast, divided by the number of seats.

The system of preferential proportional representation in the form of a single transferable vote with weighted preferences is used in the election of four-members to Nepal’s national legislature from the nationwide Graduates’ Constituency.

The Droop method of calculating the quota or the minimum of votes needed for election is followed in Nepal:

\[
\frac{\text{Total Number of votes}}{\text{Number of seats}+1} + 1 \quad \text{and not just} \quad \frac{\text{Total Number of votes}}{\text{Number of seats}}
\]

If there are four seats to fill and 10,000 votes, the quota needed will be \(\frac{10,000}{4+1} + 1 = 2,001\) and not \(\frac{10,000}{4} = 2,500\). This is the method used in Nepal for election to its national legislature from the nationwide four-member Graduates’ Constituency. It is not necessary for us to examine here the mechanics of calculation in this system: suffice it to say that in redistributing second, third, fourth and up to nth preferences if necessary, one has to take into account the distribution of these preferences even among already elected or eliminated candidates, which makes the process somewhat cumbersome but still possible with the help of electronic equipment. On the whole the STV (single transferable vote) system, as intended by its promoters, can be worked without parties. In fact, it actually works against parties since voters mark preferences independently of parties and the preferences will be redistributed in the order given by the voters.


9. Ibid., 86B, p. 47.


15. Ibid., Articles 1 (2) and (2a).

16. Ibid., Article 42 (6).

17. Privately published statement of eleven members of the National Panchayat, signed by Rishikesh Shaha (Graduates' Constituency), Ramhari Sharma (Peasants' Organization), Birendra Keshari Upadhyaya (Graduates' Constituency), Prayag Raj Singh Suwal (Graduates' Constituency), Ratna Prasad Kharel (Bagmati Zone), Tilak Raj Shahi (Seti Zone), Pitambar Dhwaj Khati (Lumbini Zone), Bam Bahadur Kathayat (Youth Organization), Dambar Bahadur Basnyat (Sagarmatha Zone), Ang Dandi Lama (Sagarmatha Zone).


*Literal Translation of the Late King Mahendra's Reply to the Collective Petition by 44 Members of the Rastriya Panchayat*

No. 48/R.P./026
Principal Secretariat
Royal Palace
Nepal

*For Rastriya Panchayat Alone*

The Rt. Honourable Chairman,
Rastriya Panchayat, Singh Darbar.

When the undated collective petition, presented to His Majesty the King by some honourable members of Rastriya Panchayat including Mr. Chaitu Lal Chaudhari, was placed before His Majesty, His Majesty's reaction was as follows:

It was a pleasure to read and hear (the members' statement) that 'it has been the tradition of the Rastriya Panchayat as a permanent legislature and of its members in their individual responsibility within its framework to extend cooperation to the Ministers in solving the problems of the country in a collective manner'. It was, however, a surprise to read that 'at this time when it was necessary for all the members of the Panchayat bodies to contribute collectively their goodwill and cooperation to the solution of problems on the basis of the Panchayat democratic gains achieved by this system so far, efforts to create division in various Panchayat bodies including the Rastriya Panchayat are clearly in evidence as a result of ill-intentioned action by the Ministers.' The reason for this statement is that even the members of the highest body of the system have for some reasons failed to realize that the present system of our country is the unexceptionable partyless democratic Panchayat system which does not admit of any alternative. There is no place in this system for anyone who wishes ill to Nepal, the Nepalis and the system. This has caused [us] no pain but mere surprise. On the other hand, it is for the conscious and knowledgeable members themselves to consider whether their act of collecting signatures for a joint
letter can or cannot be called factionalism or partisanship. And if the
members ponder the matter carefully, they will be ashamed.

And apropos the following suggestion:

‘There is a feeling of uncertainty among the members of Rastriya Pan-
chayat, the highest body of the system, about their own security and dig-
nity. As there is no evidence of any intention on the part of the ministers
to give up the ill-will and prejudice and we are not also sure whether the
interests of the system will be served even if we prove that the Rastriya
Panchayat is not at one with the ministers, we have placed the matter before
your Majesty.’

At present, there does not appear to be any emergency in the country,
nor has there been any illegal action, but if the implication is that no advance
salary or quota has been received as from the previous ministry, it is not
clear, and such an attitude will not speak well for anyone. The Rastriya
Panchayat is permanent, and it is quite clear that a mere change of persons
is no solution to the problem. That all adherents of the system and especially
members of the Rastriya Panchayat who are popular representatives should
give others a chance to ridicule them unnecessarily is something which does
not reflect credit on Nepal and the Nepalis. As commanded by His Majesty,
I am informing you of all this with thanks.

As some honourable members, after the aforementioned petition without
date had been received, admitted to His Majesty that their signatures were
obtained by deception, threat and intimidation, it is with regret that I am
conveying this fact to you for information of the members of the Rastriya
Panchayat.

Copies forwarded

to the Honourable

Signed Sardar Hansaman Singh
Chaitu Lal Chaudhari
Principal Secretary
and other members of

26/4/17/6
Rastriya Panchayat at Singh Darbar

The quotations in the King’s reply from the collective petition of sixty-
four members of the national legislature and His Majesty’s sharp and spirited
reaction to the legislators’ pleas will provide readers with a rare insight
into the mental attitude of the King and the legislators within the opera-
tional framework of Panchayat politics. It should also help them form an
idea of the Panchayat style in politics. The letter may also enable readers
with a different political and cultural background to understand why the
legislators, instead of simply asserting their right as a majority on the floor
of the legislature, felt constrained to appeal directly to the King in a private
petition for the redress of their grievances against the ministry of the day.
Above all, this letter will serve as a lasting commentary by the founder
of the Panchayat system on the ethics and achievements of the Panchayat
ministry after it had functioned for nine years under his own direct leader-
ship with minor reshuffles of individuals from time to time.


21. In his book, *The Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1960), Adam Ulam has sought to demonstrate that the Leninist revision of Marxism did not merely provide a powerful incentive for a revolution against the evils of capitalism but also the ideological foundation for a thoroughgoing and rapid industrialization and modernization of the society. Since the goal of the communist party elites was to achieve the maximum growth of industrial and military strength, the entire political substructure of party, interest groups and media of mass communication was converted into a kind of ‘mobilizational bureaucracy’. These agencies, usually known for generating conflicting demands and alternative programmes are, in communist societies, employed to secure not only compliance with the programmes of the elite but also to mobilize active support. For this reason, A. Almond and Sidney Verba have referred to the political cultures of the communist systems as ‘participant-subject’, and the average citizen is said to develop what is described as a ‘participant-subject’ orientation.


25. Articles 17 (1) and (2) of the Constitution of Nepal.


29. Ibid., Article 82 of Part 16.

30. Ibid., Article 44.


32. Ibid.
CHAPTER THREE

International Relations and Domestic Policy I

General Factors of Foreign Policy

Of the factors which condition a country’s foreign policy, its geographical position is probably the most important because it is the most permanent and least variable. It is mainly geography that decides a nation’s war potential, organizes its defence and alliance system, distinguishes its likely friends from its potential foes and finally determines its role in international politics. But besides the geographic and strategic factors, political obligations, economic necessities and historical bonds such as those of race, religion and culture are vitally involved in the shaping of the foreign policy of a country.

History is inseparable from its geographic setting. History is not only a function of natural conditions but also of man’s faith, ideas and morals. There are always limits set by climate and history, economics and culture of a nation. These material facts, together with the psychological and objective factors in the make-up of the people, inspire its hopes and fears from generation to generation. Time and men themselves cannot altogether change these factors; nevertheless they must be understood and appreciated if one is to grasp the roots of a nation’s foreign policy.

It is not possible for countries to live in isolation or seclusion from their neighbours. Neighbouring countries, their political and economic systems, their beliefs and their religious and cultural aspirations are bound to have an impact on a nation’s life. Furthermore, in today’s world that has virtually shrunk into a global village because of rapid strides in science and technology, no country, however small and remote, can escape the strains and stresses of the global and regional systems of power politics.

A nation is guided by both positive and negative considerations in striving to achieve its vision of world order. The negative fear of an anarchic existence and the positive hope of enjoying the benefits
of international cooperation in economic and other spheres are the primary motivations behind the efforts of nations to establish a workable international system. Despite the attempts of the exponents of the school of realpolitik to explain international relations merely in terms of the balance of power, a growing community of states based on a positive awareness of the need for mutual cooperation is a reality which cannot be ignored. It is being increasingly felt by nations, both large and small, that it is not only possible but has also become necessary to reconcile in practice their national interests with the larger welfare of the international community as a whole.

Foreign policy in the contemporary world does not concern itself merely with regulating relations between different countries, but has acquired a positive significance in promoting international peace, cooperation and welfare. The primary object of every country’s foreign policy is to protect its political independence and territorial integrity and to promote, within the framework of a world order, what it considers its national interests, which include economic welfare, national development as well as security and defence.

There is general agreement that ‘national interest’ ought to be the basis of foreign policy. But hardly any consensus exists on what constitutes or should constitute national interests. The concept of ‘national interest’ serves plausibly as a universal and static goal of foreign policy, but the actual national interest as perceived by a particular state is specific and dynamic. The formulation or making of foreign policy is indeed an exercise in the choice of ends and means on the part of a nation state in an international setting.

The setting of a goal in broad but clear terms will help to impart a sense of purpose and direction to foreign policy. It is not necessary that the goal remain static in content. As a matter of fact, it must not be static. What is needed, at least conceptually, is a long-term goal to which short-term objectives and strategies can be adjusted. In the absence of such an arrangement, purpose-oriented foreign policy cannot be formulated either on a short-term or on a long-term basis. The result will be confused and loose thinking, which will inevitably lead to a policy of drift with emphases changing from one issue to the next. The adjustment of short-term objectives and strategies to long-term goals is the essence of the foreign policy making process.

The internal and external setting of decision making in foreign
policy consists of the nation's human and non-human environment and resources, its political culture, world view and ethnic composition, its social structure and behaviour, its institutional and value orientation and social processes. The strategy of foreign policy is conditioned not only by the international milieu but also by the whole process of foreign policy making inherent in the domestic political structure comprising organized economic interests, pressure groups, parties, parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Cabinet. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister or sometimes the Head of State himself are the main actors on the international stage.

**Apparatus for the Making of Foreign Policy**

Although several constitutional and extra-constitutional processes and bodies are involved in foreign policy decision-making, the making of foreign policy *per se* is entrusted, in most countries in the world, to the permanent machinery of the government represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with its worldwide network of embassies and legations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs receives regular reports from its embassies and legations abroad and is generally responsible for the collation and assessment of information received by it directly or through other ministries, such as those of defence, finance, trade and commerce. At the next stage, an attempt is made on a lower administrative level to coordinate the policy of various ministries on foreign policy issues through a joint meeting of the representatives of the ministries concerned.

Equipped with the benefit of advice and suggestions from the concerned ministries of the government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs then proceeds with the task of formulating a brief for the government's policy on the question under consideration. The policy brief is finally placed before the cabinet with the approval of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Consideration of the matter by the cabinet ensures coordination of the government's policy between and among different ministries at the highest level and affords the Minister of Foreign Affairs a chance to remove the doubts and fears of other ministries, if any, in the course of a face-to-face discussion with his cabinet colleagues. In Nepal, the King presides over important cabinet meetings regardless of whether the Prime Minister is present or not.

After the cabinet decides its policy on a question, the decision is
transmitted to all ministries for their information and guidance. Armed with the authority of the cabinet and the government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proceeds with implementation of the foreign policy decision. The reaction of other governments to the different aspects of a particular decision is reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by its embassies and legations abroad, and sometimes directly by other governments through their embassies in Kathmandu. This serves not only as a feedback process for the correction of the government's attitude on the question in the future but also affords practical guidelines to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for adjusting or accommodating policy implementation to the trends of response by different members of the international community.

Nepal, like many other developing countries, is seeking to design a modern apparatus for the making of foreign policy. But decision-making in foreign policy cannot be considered independently of the policy and decision-making process for the domestic affairs of a country. The decision-making power in Nepal's Panchayat politics is concentrated almost entirely in the hands of the King. The foreign policy briefs are generally sent to the King through the Palace Secretariat before they are even discussed in the cabinet, and at times suggestions for new initiatives in foreign policy are informally handed down to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Palace Secretariat. The Palace Secretariat's role in the making of foreign policy is thus much more than that of a clearing house. It has at times been more crucially important than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself. However, the authority for making foreign policy decisions is theoretically vested in the King-in-Cabinet so that decisions are made public through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Once a year the Minister of Foreign Affairs is supposed to explain the implications of foreign policy decisions to the Social Committee of Nepal's national legislature, which is composed of one-third of its total membership. This is a device to involve the legislature in foreign policy decisions without, however, giving it any authority in the shaping of the policy itself. Ever since the inception of the Rastriya Panchayat in 1963, there has been no general debate on foreign policy as such on the floor of the legislature except for casual references to foreign affairs in the general debate on the annual speech from the Throne, or at the time of taking the vote on the demands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the
budget session. Through the mechanism of questions to the Minister of Foreign Affairs or through non-official motions on specific issues, foreign policy has occasionally been discussed in the legislature.

But on the whole, the government has succeeded in avoiding debate on the live and delicate issues of foreign policy by putting forward the plea of protection of national interests. The government’s contention has also been that matters involving relations with foreign countries require sophisticated handling by knowledgeable persons trained and experienced in the art of diplomacy. Such pleas were not seriously challenged even during the time when Nepal’s nationalist legislature met in camera and its meetings were not open to the press and the public. Although public debates on foreign policy issues were avoided as a rule, differences with India were occasionally deliberately played up in the public debates inside and outside the legislature with a view to influencing or pressurizing the Government of India. The employment by Nepal of the usual communist or totalitarian tactic of using its own controlled public opinion to gain advantages from other states at times miserably failed to produce the desired results; for example, as at the time of the Trade and Transit Treaty negotiations with India in 1970-71.

Nepal’s World View

King Prithvinarayan Shah (c. 1768-75), the founder of modern Nepal, described the Kingdom of the Kathmandu Valley in these words: ‘This throne of Nepal is a fort. . . . A fort built by God himself.’ These words could be used even today to sum up what may be regarded as Nepal’s world view.

Closed off from their neighbours to the south and north by dense tropical forests and the perpetual snows of the Himalaya, the hill people of Nepal have lived in isolation for centuries in their rugged mountainous terrain. Despite their flexible religious and social traditions, their physical isolation has tended to make them distrustful of external influence. They are basically inward-looking. Their world view even today is not based on a broad perception of political trends and events in the world as a whole, but is largely conditioned by a subjective perception of Nepal’s role vis-a-vis its colossal neighbours to the south and the north — India and China.1

Despite the imposing barrier of the Himalaya that separates South
Asia from Central and East Asia, the division between these two vast Asian regions in terms of ethnic, cultural and socio-psychological factors is not nearly as rigid and definite as is sometimes made out. The Nepali territory that lies in the trans-Himalayan zone between the main Himalayan crestline and the Tibetan border mountains is largely reminiscent of Tibetan landscape and culture. There are within Nepal several centuries-old subcultures of diverse origin with considerable influence over some sections of the present-day population. These are related mostly to cultural patterns that have been traced back to Central Asia or the highland communities of South-East Asia. The Manjusri tradition, for example, is said to have come to Nepal from Central Asia where it is still alive today. And some of the communities in Nepal are practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. The intricate multi-faceted nature of Nepal’s cultural heritage has deeply influenced the Nepali world view, which sometimes tends to regard the country as an intermediate or twilight zone between South and Central Asia, touching both regions but not exclusively attached to either.

Apart from the staggering difference between Nepal and both of its immediate neighbours in size and population, India’s influence has been so dominant in all spheres of Nepali life that the Nepali people, by way of reaction, feel exercised to appear different from Indians at every possible opportunity. This is seen as almost essential for purposes of national identity.

Nepal’s fear of absorption into the Indian mother culture has been heightened by the tendency of Indian leaders to over-emphasize Nepal’s cultural identity with India. In their zeal to counterbalance this tendency, Nepal’s intellectuals are inclined to misrepresent the nature and impact of Nepal’s relationship with China, which has been intermittent and never as close as Nepal’s relationship with India.

Nepal’s physical distance from central China and the succession of weak governments there for centuries before 1949 inclined Nepal in the past to think that India’s interference and intervention in Nepal’s affairs was a greater probability than China’s. Nepal for this reason always sought to use even the shadow of ‘tributary’ relationship with China as a means of protection against British India’s encroachment. Nepal, because of its intimate relations and frequent dealings with India at present, is inclined to question the motive of everything India says or does in reference to Nepal. On
the other hand, the Nepalis, because of their minimal contact with
the Chinese, are still observing Chinese overt behaviour vis-a-vis
Nepal with equanimity, and seem reluctant to question Chinese
motives merely on the basis of what China has done to others.
This largely explains Nepal’s initial and uncritical attitude towards
China at the time of the Sino-Indian armed conflict of 1962.

**Historical Perspective**

Nepal faces one of the classic questions of foreign policy and
international relations: how does a small country, situated between
two great and powerful neighbours in a strategic region of the world,
maintain its independence? Nepal’s geographical position in the
Himalayan region of Central Asia, bordered on the north by Tibet
under Chinese suzerainty during most of the nineteenth and the
twentieth centuries, and on the south by British India, later the
Republic of India, has taxed to the utmost her skill and resources in
manipulating her relations with her neighbours. Nepal’s problem in
this respect has been further complicated by the fact that several
empires have risen and fallen both to the south and to the north
of her borders throughout history.

**Policy of Isolation and Exclusion of Foreigners**

Nepal’s own solution to this precarious situation was, for a
century and a half, close to that advised by Prithvinarayan Shah.
He said: ‘The Kingdom is like a yam between two stones. Maintain
friendly relations with the Emperor of China. Great friendship
should also be maintained with the Emperor beyond the Southern
Seas (i.e. the British), but he is very clever. He has kept India sup-
pressed, and is entrenching himself on the plains. One day that army
will come. Do not engage in offensive acts. Fighting should be con-
ducted on a defensive basis.’

Before the Rana period, and even during it to an extent, Nepal
followed a policy of physical isolation and exclusion of foreigners,
coupled with balance of power politics. It was the established
policy of the Nepali government to keep the country free from
contact of any nature with British India as far as possible. Nepal also
from time to time sought to play off her southern and northern
neighbours against each other in order to avoid being absorbed
into either country.
Bulness of Power Policy

Faced with the imminent danger of Chinese invasion as a reply to Gorkha military incursions into Tibet in 1788 and 1791, Nepal concluded the Treaty of Commerce and Friendship with the East India Company's government in March 1792. Although Nepal expected the treaty to bring British military assistance against China, all she really received was a belated offer of mediation from the East India Company's government when war broke out in 1792. The enthusiasm of Nepali authorities for the treaty cooled as soon as the compelling circumstances that had produced the treaty disappeared; and after they made peace with China in October 1792 without British mediation, they let the treaty fall into disuse.

Internal political developments following the abdication of King Rana Bahadur Shah (1777-99) and the enthronement of his infant son, Girvana Yuddha (1799-1816) led to Rana Bahadur's flight to Varanasi in 1800. This provided the East India Company administration with a golden opportunity to press Nepal for concession in trade and other matters, and for the implementation of the provisions of the commercial treaty of 1792.

The Regency at Kathmandu under Queen Subarna Prabha (April 1800—February 1803), afraid that Rana Bahadur might restore himself to power with British assistance, agreed to sign the Treaty of 1801 with the East India Company. But as a result of vacillation on the part of the Nepali authorities, it was not until April 1802 that W.O. Knox, the first British Representative or Vakeel in Nepal (April 1802—March 1803) could set up his residence in Kathmandu. However, Knox withdrew himself from Kathmandu in March 1803 following his differences with the new Regency under Queen Rajarajeshvari (February 1803—March 1804). The treaty of 1801 was abrogated by the British Governor-General, Lord Wellesley, in January 1804 and Rana Bahadur returned triumphantly to Nepal later that year.

Nepal's non-adherence to the treaties of 1792 and 1801 prevented it from being absorbed into the Subsidiary Alliance with the East India Company's government. Subsidiary Alliance provided for the presence of a subsidiary force in a state, paid for by it, but controlled by the East India Company's government, as protection for the ruler of the state and his heirs against internal rebellion or disorder and also for the defence and security of his dominion against external
attack. The Alliance had the effect of making the Company’s representative in the State, who was called Resident, actually more powerful than the ruler himself.

The British Parliament’s criticism of Governor-General Wellesley’s policy of bringing the Nawab Wazir of Oudh and the Nawab of the Carnatic into the Company’s Subsidiary Alliance in 1799 and 1801 respectively stopped Wellesley (May 1798–June 1805) from forcing Nepal into a similar relationship. This was fortunate as the chaotic conditions that led to the exile of Rana Bahadur Shah in Varanasi, and the atmosphere of insecurity and uncertainty that prevailed in Nepal in the wake of the withdrawal of the Knox Mission in March 1803 would have otherwise provided a tempting opportunity for British intervention.

When Nepal found itself at war with the Company’s government in 1814, it appealed unsuccessfully to China for military assistance against the British. A detachment of Chinese troops did show up on the Nepalese frontier at the conclusion of the 1814-16 war between Nepal and British India, a situation which Nepal hoped to use to maximum advantage in dealings with the British.

The British Minister was told that the Chinese were profoundly disturbed by the presence of the British representative in Kathmandu and also by the discontinuation of the Nepali quinquennial missions to China. At the same time, the Nepali government also subtly suggested to China that Nepal might have occasion to look to the British for protection in case the Chinese exerted too much pressure. As it happened, British mediation was never formally sought.

On the whole the Chinese were satisfied with the peace treaty concluded between Nepal and the British, though they continued to chide Nepali officers for committing aggression against foreign territory and for soliciting the Chinese Emperor’s aid after signing the treaty. On Nepal’s insistence a Chinese officer wrote to Lord Hastings: ‘This is a matter of no consequence; [but] if you would out of kindness towards us and in consideration of his friendship, withdraw your Vakeel from there, it would be better, and we would be expressly grateful.’ It is clear from the records of the Company’s government’s confidential deliberations that, if the Chinese had seriously objected to the British presence in Nepal, the Resident would have been withdrawn, because the Company’s government was in no mood to endanger the long-term interests of Anglo-Chinese maritime trade by giving offence.
Long-term Effects of War with China and British India

The 1792 war with China had little or no influence on Nepal’s political structure or its military strength, although it did have a long-term effect on Nepal’s foreign policy. Although the Gorkhali skill in diplomacy and on the battlefield made a lasting impression upon the Chinese, the war engendered in the minds of the Chinese officials in Tibet a sustained basic distrust of Nepali intentions. This kind of attitude was responsible for the failure of every attempt by the Nepalis to involve the Chinese in countering British expansion in India. As a consequence, in the decades following the 1791-92 war, Nepal played a losing game in its efforts to balance the Chinese against the British in India. China paid little or no heed to Nepal’s offers of help and requests for assistance during the first half of the nineteenth century.

For Nepal, the isolation policy proved to be more successful in the long run than the policy of balance of power, which could not be effectively pursued after 1846 as a result of the rapid decline in China’s power and prestige following the Opium War (1840-42) and the Taiping Rebellion (1850-65). During the period before 1846, however, Nepal’s pretension of vassalage to China helped deter the British from absorbing the buffer state of Nepal into the British empire in India.

Even after the serious decline in China’s power, and long after the establishment of the system of hereditary Rana Prime Ministers, who followed a policy of conciliation and cooperation with the British, the Government of Nepal would talk about its obligation towards China whenever it had any difficulty or difference with the British. For example, Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana (c. 1846-77) turned strongly to China for a while after 1858 to show his displeasure with the British government, apparently because the latter had not granted his request for the retrocession of all land ceded by Nepal to Britain under the treaty of 1816 but also because the British had shown a lack of warmth to his idea of usurping kingship. Even Chandra Shamsher, who later as Prime Minister (1901-29) became the greatest ally and friend of the British, was reported to have said openly to the British envoy as late as 1890 that since Nepal was subordinate to China, it could in no way be subordinate to the British Government of India.

Nepal’s desire to pretend or affect vassalage to China arose from
two considerations. The first was that it connected Nepal with a great country whose opulence and power the Nepalis were prone to overestimate for a long time. Second, the Gorkhas, in view of the growing might of the British in India, were guided by the practical consideration that when it came to the question of choosing between subservience to the Chinese or the British, the former was preferable in as much as the distance between the two countries, capitals and the slackness of the Chinese administration would probably have allowed the Nepalis greater freedom in managing their affairs. Furthermore, in history, whenever the Chinese army had come to Tibet to protect it against Nepal or even for punitive action against Nepal, the Tibetans had always had more to lose than the Nepalis.

The 1814-16 war with the British in India meant to Nepal a loss of one-third of its then existing territory as well as subsequent willing acceptance of British advice on certain vital matters of policy. The war compelled Nepal to sue for peace with the East India Company’s government on terms of the treaty negotiated at Sugauli in December, 1815.

The Treaty of Sugauli obliged Nepal to cede all of its territory to the West of the Kali or the Mahakali River along with the whole of the Tarai from the Mahakali in the west to the Tista River in the east. It also stipulated that the East India Company’s government would pay Nepal a sum of two hundred thousand rupees annually. This sum, at rates fixed by the King of Nepal, was to be used to compensate individual Nepali officials affected by loss of their jagirs, that is, land grants made in lieu of cash payment for salaries. However, the above provision was modified by the Memorandum of December 1816 and Nepal was allowed to possess at least the part of the Tarai land between the Rapti and the Kosi rivers in return for cancellation of the provision for cash payment in the Treaty.

The Treaty further required Nepal to accept British arbitration in its dispute with Sikkim. Nepal also undertook not to employ any Europeans in its service without the prior consent of the Company’s government in India. The treaty put a decisive check on the expansion of Nepal towards the west, and enabled the Company’s government to keep a constant and close watch over the machinations of Nepal against it in league with other powers in the subcontinent, such as the Sikhs and the Marathas who were not even then entirely subjugated.

At the same time, as a dark shadow was being cast on the new
nation by its defeat in the war with the British, the national energy was being dissipated in a factional struggle for internal supremacy between the two leading families of the time, the Thapas and the Pandes. Other elite families including the royal family itself involved themselves in the scramble for power by siding with one or the other of the factions led by the Thapas and the Pandes. The Thapas were held responsible for the conclusion of peace with the British in India in 1816 and had thus become identified with a cautious though not entirely subservient policy in relation to British India. The Pandes, on the other hand, were vociferously anti-British and advocated a resumption of war, if possible with the help of China, to recover the lost territories. In an attempt to forestall the demand of the Pandes for more strenuous measures, the Thapa Prime Minister, Bhimsen Thapa, who established the primary influence of his family while holding office from 1806-37, pursued a cautious policy designed to satisfy the bellicosity of the Pandes and the army without being excessively provocative to the British in India.

But after the downfall of Bhimsen Thapa in 1837 a seemingly perpetual state of unrest and uncertainty began. This was characterized by frequent intrigues, bloodshed and violence arising from internal feuds among the elite families, not only over the control of the government but also over succession to the throne. Fortunately Nepal’s geographical position, the ruggedness of her terrain and the reputation of her men in fighting, together with the British military preoccupations elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent and an apprehension of adverse effects on Anglo-Chinese maritime trade, combined to make the British leave Nepal alone during the first half of the nineteenth century, despite tempting opportunities for intervention.

With the decline of Chinese power in the latter half of the nineteenth century Nepal was not in a position to pursue a balance of power policy since there no longer existed an approximate balance of power between China and British India. After the middle of the nineteenth century Nepal could not have maintained her independence without the concurrence of the British government in India who followed the same kind of policy towards Nepal as towards other frontier states such as Afghanistan and Iran. Thus Nepal became an integral part of the 'buffer state' system developed on the Indian borderland, designed as the first line of defence against any power, particularly Russia, that might cherish designs on India.
British policy in relation to the 'buffer' states was not to incorporate them into the Empire but rather to allow them a full measure of internal freedom or autonomy in exchange for a preponderant influence in their foreign policies. However, it should be noted that Nepal on her own declared war and concluded peace with Tibet in 1854-56, and continued the practice of sending the quinquennial embassies to China until 1906, after which she discontinued the practice on the pretext that China had become a republic.

The policy of the hereditary Rana Prime Ministers towards British India was motivated by fear and distrust as well as by a healthy respect for the superior strength and intelligence of the British in India. The Rana also believed that the best guarantee of Nepal's independence lay in maintaining formal and friendly relations with the British India government while at the same time keeping Nepal closed as far as possible to outside influences. The *raison d'être* of the policy of the Rana government is frankly and succinctly stated in the following excerpt from the record of a conversation between the Prime Minister, Maharaja Jang Bahadur Rana (1846-77) the founder of Rana rule, and the British Resident on the subject of permitting a British merchant to carry on private trade in Nepal: 'You say we are independent; the British government tells us that it has no desire to interfere...with our internal affairs and not even to advise us respecting them. We attribute the independence solely to our own peculiar policy (you may call it selfish if you like but we cannot alter it to please you). We know you are the stronger power, you are like a lion, we are like a cat; but the lion would soon kill the cat. You can force us to change our policy, you can take our country if it pleases you to do so; but we will make no change in that policy, by the strict observance of which we have preserved our independence as a nation to the present time, unless you compel us to do so. We shall not allow Mr Cameron to come into the country, except as a private gentleman and your guest and upon your assurance that he will not attempt to engage in trade or make any enquiries into the resources of the country.'

A strong case is also made for the policy of isolation and the exclusion of foreigners in the following statement which was recorded as Jang Bahadur's spontaneous reaction to the British account of how the detention by the Raja of Sikkim of Dr Campbell and Dr Hooker, who were engaged in biological research in Sikkim, had compelled the British to occupy the kingdom of Sikkim in 1849-50:
'Well! but if they had not gone there to gather rhododendrons that would not have happened and the Raja of Sikkim would not have lost his country. How do I know that some of our officials through ignorance, or perhaps, through enmity to myself, might not ill-treat some of the British subjects and then you would take half if not the whole of the country. All other native states have either fallen entirely under your rule, or you interfere with the management.'

The most important reason why Nepal was not brought under British rule at this time was that after the mid-nineteenth century the British got everything they wanted from Nepal without having to exert themselves further. The Rana rulers of Nepal were convinced that Nepal could not hope to match the British in a trial of strength and hence made themselves, as rulers of an independent country, so useful to Britain that there never arose any real need for the British to bring Nepal under direct rule. Nepal proved to be a source of British military strength in Asia, and the British Empire found the services of Gorkha troops invaluable in times of crisis. For upwards of a century, Nepal had diplomatic relations only with Britain and Tibet and, in 1934, London became the only capital in the world where Nepal maintained a permanent diplomatic representation.

The Interregnum: 1947-51

This state of affairs continued until 1947 when the British withdrew from India and the probability of Chinese suzerainty in Tibet loomed large on the horizon. The government of the Ranas at the time did not enjoy popular support and was a house divided against itself. Their fear and suspicion of the new Indian leaders inclined them to look for support elsewhere, but when they found that it was not forthcoming, they concluded a new treaty with India in 1950. The following excerpt from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's speech in the Lok Sabha on 6 December, 1950, reflects his concern for the situation in Nepal at the time: 'Our interest in the internal conditions of Nepal has become still more acute and personal, because of the developments across our borders, to be frank, especially those in China and Tibet. Besides our sympathetic interest in Nepal, we were also interested in the security of our own country. From time immemorial, the Himalayas have provided us with a magnificent frontier. Of course, they are no longer as impassable as they used to be but they are still fairly effective. The Himalayas lie mostly on the northern border of Nepal. We cannot allow the barrier
to be penetrated because it is also the principal barrier to India. Therefore much as we appreciate the independence of Nepal, we cannot allow anything to go wrong in Nepal or permit that barrier to be crossed or weakened, because that would be a risk to our own security."

If one ponders these lines carefully, one is inclined to feel that Prime Minister Nehru was thinking of the security of India along more or less the same lines as the British India government of old. Until the first decade of the present century, the threat posed to India by the expansion of Czarist Russia into Central Asia rendered Nepal’s position extremely delicate. The original British view that any invader who could bring Nepal under its control would have surmounted the primary obstacle to entry into India still persisted in the ruling circles of India.

Nehru faced a dilemma in as much as he had all his life championed the cause of freedom and independence of all nations, big and small, while at the same time, as Prime Minister of India, he had acquired a deep concern for the security of India’s frontiers. In his relations with Nepal as with other countries on India’s periphery, he found it difficult to resolve the dilemma in a practical and expeditious manner. It may be that Nehru, in spite of his idealism, vision and basic distrust of the outlook of the members of the old British Indian Civil Service, could not prevent his policy from being influenced by the civil service in the process of its implementation in practice.

Looking back on the years 1947-55 and on India’s record in foreign policy, one regrets that India could not formulate a well-informed and imaginative policy towards the countries on its periphery, including Nepal, by practical demonstrations of her regard for their nationalist aspirations as well as for their desire for economic development. Nehru’s leadership in India was not lacking in imagination or vision and was quite capable of articulating the kind of policy suggested, but policy implementation in practice was hindered by the ingrained attitude and outlook of the Indian civil service who continued to look at the problems through British glasses. It was also hindered by the traditional patterns of behaviour and attitudes of the Indians living in peripheral countries as merchants, traders, money-lenders and landowners.

Nepal’s closed-door policy with regard to the outside world underwent a noticeable change after India became free. As the British were transferring power to Indian hands, the Rana rulers of
Nepal were attempting to establish new international contacts in an effort to protect and perpetuate their rule. They were quite naturally fearful and suspicious of the new Indian rulers, who were natural allies of the nascent democratic forces in Nepal. But the fate of Rana rule was closely bound up from the very beginning with the fate of British imperialism in India. Prior to the conclusion of the treaty of 1950 between Nepal and India, as well as for some time following conclusion of the treaty, pro-Rana groups in and outside Nepal disseminated mischievous propaganda to the effect that India had definite designs on Nepal's political independence. Such propaganda did not cut much ice anywhere, however, since India's sympathy for the nationalist and democratic political forces in Nepal were too well-known to be misconstrued.

Despite India's well-meaning advice the Ranas refused to change with the times and associate the people with governmental administration in any vital way. Free India was committed to a policy of helping the cause of nationalism and democracy in Nepal. In a very real sense, the movement for democracy in Nepal had its origin on Indian soil and, to a large extent, the Indian nationalist movement served as a model and an inspiration to the Nepalis. Many a Nepali had cast his lot with the Indians in their struggle for freedom. Furthermore, at a time when the Rana rule was faced with the greatest crisis in its history, caused by the withdrawal of the British from India, the hereditary Rana Prime Minister of Nepal proved incapable of the courage, foresight and statesmanship demanded by the circumstances. The 1948 Constitution was the only practical and constructive step devised by the Ranas to meet the problem created by the changed situation. However, it was rendered ineffective not by lack of cooperation from the Nepali people but by want of sincerity of purpose on the part of the Ranas themselves. As the people were denied any fundamental rights inside the country, the democratic movement in Nepal itself had to be organized under serious limitations. The leaders had to be away from the main sphere of political action, and in the early days of the movement there was little or no opportunity for them to have open mass contact with the people.

Movement for Democracy in Nepal

Taking advantage of India's attitude towards political reforms, the democratic movement of Nepal, which was at that time being
organized from India, strove to mobilize Indian public opinion in its support. Inside Nepal, King Tribhuvan became the centre of the hopes and loyalties of the democratic forces. His sympathies for the popular struggle against the Rana regime were an open secret to the Nepali people. Tribhuvan had already been implicated in a plot against the Ranas in the 1940s.

Matters came to a head in September 1950, when the Rana government announced the unearthing of a plot to assassinate the Prime Minister and a number of high officials. On 6 November, 1950 King Tribhuvan sought asylum in the Indian Embassy at Kathmandu. Two days later, despite the efforts of the Rana government to contact him and prevent him from leaving the country, he was flown to India. This even coincided with the launching of a popular insurrection by the Nepali Congress. In the meantime, Tribhuvan’s three-year-old grandson, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, who was left in the palace by the royal family, was proclaimed King by the Rana government. The Indian government continued to recognize Tribhuvan rather than his grandson as Head of State. The Government of India pressed diplomatically for Tribhuvan to be returned to the throne and for constitutional reforms to be introduced immediately to make the Nepali government more representative of the people. Maharaja Mohan Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana, the Prime Minister, felt compelled to meet these terms only after he was faced with a serious decline in support from the Rana family itself.

The events of the autumn and winter of 1950-51, i.e. the abolition of the rule of hereditary Rana Prime Ministers and the Royal proclamation pledging constitutional rule to the people, brought Nepal into the world arena in the context of the changing pattern of politics in South Asia. The process of change in Nepal in 1950-51 was accelerated by China’s establishment of control and authority in Tibet, where China before had had merely a shadow of sovereignty sometimes described as suzerainty. India’s moral support for the cause of a broad-based regime in Nepal, as against the autocratic rule of the Rana family, was based on the consideration that a democratic Nepal would be a greater asset to India and the world in facing the global challenge of communism and the danger of Chinese communism in particular.

Internal Political Developments, 1950-60

The Government of India played an important role in the nego-
tations that were subsequently conducted in New Delhi among the Ranas, the King and the Nepali Congress following the armed insurrection started by the Nepali Congress inside Nepal in the winter of 1950-51. Under strong pressure from the Government of India and King Tribhuvan, the Ranas and the Nepali Congress finally accepted a compromise plan for an interim coalition government in February 1951.

The compromise plan provided for an amnesty for insurgents, the restoration of King Tribhuvan, the inclusion of popular representatives in the cabinet on the basis of parity with the Ranas and the holding of elections to a constituent assembly by 1952 on the basis of universal adult suffrage. King Tribhuvan returned to Nepal and issued a proclamation on 18 February, 1951, declaring his resolve that his people be governed according to the provisions of a democratic constitution framed by a constituent assembly elected by the people on the basis of universal adult suffrage.

During the eight years that followed this declaration, political instability and confusion reigned supreme in Nepal. The country was ruled by cabinets composed of individuals hand-picked by the King from different political parties. Nor was the Government of India able to follow a firm and imaginative policy towards developments in Nepal. The situation that prevailed during this period was frustrating for both India and Nepali political leaders.

The Government of India took an ambivalent attitude, at times supporting the political parties and at other times the King. It was not clear what India really wanted in Nepal: stability or democracy. The same political parties sided with the King or with India, or against the one or the other or both at different times. Instead of building up their strength among the masses, they relied on the King or on the Government of India to attain a position of power or vantage. Disenchantment with the democratic process and increasing apathy towards politics and political parties were the inevitable reactions of the Nepali people.

The net result of all this was a steady decline in the powers of the democratic institutions and offices established after 1950, and a corresponding rise in the trend towards traditional absolutism of the King. King Tribhuvan died in March 1955 and was succeeded by his son, King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev. By 1959, King Mahendra found himself in a position to back out of his father's commitment to hold elections for a constituent assembly and made
the political parties accept the terms of a constitution to be granted by himself.

Royal Decrees Leading to the 1959 Constitution

It may be noted here that the Interim Government Act of Nepal (1951) or Nepalko Antarim Vidhan (Vikrama Samvat 2007), promulgated by King Tribhuvan, has in retrospect proved to be the most progressive constitutional document or fundamental law in Nepal, approximating to the standards prevailing in other democratic countries of the world. The subsequent amendments of the Interim Government Act of Nepal have had the effect of detracting from its democratic substance rather than adding to it.

On 1 February, 1958, King Mahendra made a momentous Royal Proclamation, which from the viewpoint of the evolution of Nepal’s constitutional history is as important as King Tribhuvan’s historic declaration of 18 February, 1951. The proclamation of February 1958 held political instability responsible for lack of development in the country for seven years and as remedial measures proposed the early establishment of (1) a constitutional Drafting commission to draw up a constitution providing for a bicameral legislature, (2) a nominated Advisory Assembly in the interim period before the elections, and (3) a Council of Ministers without a Prime Minister, consisting of independent persons as well as representatives of political parties.

Consequently, in February 1959, King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev announced the replacement of the Interim Government Act of 1951 by the 1959 Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal under which the King retained supreme executive, power and extensive discretionary and emergency powers. The Constitution of 1959 changed the concept of popular sovereignty on which the 1951 Act was based and also adversely affected the authority of the first-ever elected Government of Nepal, which came into power in May 1959.

Nepal’s First General Election

Nepal’s first general election was held in the spring of 1959 under the new constitution. The Nepali Congress Party led by B. P. Koirala, which stood for the attainment of socialist objectives through democratic and parliamentary means, won 73 out of 109 seats in the lower House of Parliament. The success of the Nepali Congress Party disproved the belief and predictions of many that
no party would be able to secure a working majority. On 9 May, 1959, Nepal's first elected government was formed under the Prime Ministership of B. P. Koirala.

For a while the future of the parliamentary experiment in Nepal looked bright. Nevertheless, it was clear to those conversant with affairs in Nepal that the success of the experiment depended on cooperation between the King, who derived his position of leadership and authority from the time-honoured institution of monarchy, and the newly-elected Prime Minister, who symbolized popular hopes and aspirations but had yet to create popular tradition and institutions to sustain his democratic passion and ideas.

The Royal Takeover: 15 December, 1960

The experiment in Parliamentary democracy proved to be short-lived. On 15 December, 1960, King Mahendra in exercise of his emergency powers on the ground of preservation of 'unity, national integrity and sovereignty' dissolved both houses of the Legislature and imprisoned Prime Minister B. P. Koirala and other members of the nineteen-month-old elected government.

The helplessness of the Nepali people against the King's action may be partly explained by the failure of the modernizing political elite in Nepal to adapt a modern western form of government to a social milieu which lacked the necessary economic and political infrastructure of democracy.

'A Setback to Democracy'

After 1951, India's declared policy had been to help Nepal establish a stable popular government, capable of evolving a sound administrative and social system, and strong enough to withstand the pressure of internal and external forces. The royal takeover of 15 December, 1960 shocked and surprised Prime Minister Nehru. He expressed disapproval of the action by describing it in public as 'a setback to democracy'. Arthur Lall, who once held high positions in the Government of India and its diplomatic missions abroad, offers the following well-considered comments on Nehru's reaction to the royal takeover in Nepal: 'Those were the lofty sentiments of a true democrat, but they were totally out of place, for they constituted public criticism of the head of a friendly and neighbouring state. They resulted in a very considerable cooling of relations between India and Nepal, and obliquely contributed to the difficulties of the
continuing process of discussion on many matters of interest both to India and its Himalayan neighbour. (Italics supplied)

Following the royal takeover, Nepali politicians organized a movement for the restoration of democracy from their base of exile in India. By the end of 1961, armed raids across the border into Nepal had become frequent. An all-time low in Nepal-India relations was highlighted by an anti-Indian demonstration on 26 January, 1962 in front of the Indian Embassy at Kathmandu, following an unsuccessful attempt on the late King Mahendra’s life at Janakpur in the eastern Tarai. On 17 April, 1962, a pamphlet issued by the Publicity Department of the Government of Nepal charged that rebels operating from Indian bases were conducting raids into Nepal territory.

Nepal’s Diplomatic Counter-moves

The present author had been until 1 July, 1962 Minister for Finance in the National Emergency Government headed by King Mahendra himself. On that day he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs and asked by the King to try to do something about easing the tension caused by the raids. As soon as he became Foreign Minister the author held a press conference, pointed out that open recriminations on both sides must cease and made a plea for quiet diplomacy between Nepal and India. For this he was bitterly criticized by a jingoistic section of the Nepali press. Nevertheless he wrote to Prime Minister Nehru that he would like to come to Delhi to discuss the outstanding problems between the two countries. Nehru replied that he was willing to receive the author in early September but added that he had become reluctant to advise Nepal because advice was misconstrued as interference.

The author spent the first two weeks of September in Delhi, talking with Prime Minister Nehru and other members of his cabinet and addressing meetings of members of parliament, the Indian Council of World Affairs and the Indo-Nepal Friendship Society. The need for India to develop a sympathetic understanding of Nepal’s problems was emphasized, and pleas made for frequent contacts between Nepal and India at various levels, and for an exchange of visits between the heads of government with a view to easing the tension caused by the raids. But all that could be obtained from Prime Minister Nehru was vague assurance that the chief ministers of the three Indian states adjoining Nepal would be asked
The author’s original plan was to go to New York from Delhi to attend the United Nations General Assembly session but instead he decided to go back to Kathmandu and give the King a first hand report on the attitude of the Indian leaders. The King decided to relieve the author of his position as Foreign Minister. Next, as Special Ambassador with Cabinet rank, the author was sent to New York to lead the Nepali delegation to the 1962 General Assembly session. In Washington D.C. the author met President John F. Kennedy and his Special Assistant, McGeorge Bundy and, on behalf of the King, requested them to urge moderation on Prime Minister Nehru.

Meanwhile in October 1962, Marshal Ch’en-yi, Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister of China, had publicly offered support to the Nepali people in the event of overt aggression by any foreign army. By the time the author returned from New York in November the Sino-Indian armed conflict had already started and he found his friends in New Delhi only too eager to convey to King Mahendra the assurances he needed. The author asked them to consider how much better it would have been if they had given this reassurance a month and a half earlier. After conveying the reassurances of the Indian leaders to the King the author went to China, towards the end of November. There he was reassured by the Chinese Premier, Chou En-lai, and the Vice-Premier, Marshal Ch’en-yi, that China wanted Nepal to be friendly with India without being hostile to herself (China). In January 1963, King Mahendra told the press that Nepal-India relations were good and rapidly improving.

Reasons for Failure of Nepali Congress Tactics, 1961–62

The tactics of armed raids with the connivance of the Indian authorities thus failed to repeat the success it had had against the Ranas in 1950–51. By 1961–62, China had already consolidated its authority in Tibet and was in a position to provide countervailing weight to the Indian support of the rebel cause. Another important factor was the Royal Nepali Army which, thanks to the Indian military mission, was better trained and equipped than the army of the Ranas. King Mahendra therefore trusted it more readily than did the Ranas to deal with the situation created by rebel activities.

King Mahendra also took full advantage of the anti-Indian feeling among Nepalis, which was engendered by India’s paternalistic and
patronizing attitude towards Nepal in the years immediately following King Tribhuvan's restoration. During this time King Mahendra projected a popular nationalist image by withstanding Indian pressures and expanding Nepal's contact and relations with different countries. In all this, his father's as well as his own association with the popular struggle against the Ranas made King Mahendra's action in suspending the government less suspect in the eyes of the people than would otherwise have been the case.

Last but not least, the Chinese military attack on India in the autumn of 1962 necessitated a change of attitude on the part of the Government of India without any quid pro quo. King Mahendra thus had reason to feel grateful to China for relieving him of the pressure of armed raids from India.

In the wake of armed hostilities between India and China, India quickly abandoned the unofficial policy of a partial economic blockade of Nepal which it had maintained for some time. Almost overnight normal trade was resumed across the border. The Nepali Congress leader, General Subarna Shamsher, presumably on the advice of the government of India, suspended the movement in November and formally stopped it for good by the end of 1962. Thus, King Mahendra withstood both Indian economic pressure and firm and resolute action by his main domestic adversary, the Nepali Congress, without making any real concessions to either. Although the release of B. P. Koirala and the simultaneous pardon of Subarna Shamsher and some of his associates in October 1968, came belatedly and under some pressure from India, the late King Mahendra's gestures were made to appear largely as proof of his own generosity and large-heartedness.

What Made Nepal Turn to China?

What perturbed politically conscious Nepalis was the impression created by the Indian Press and Indian politicians in the post-1950 years that Nepal was some kind of an area of Indian influence and that India must oversee Nepali independence and sovereignty. The Government of India at times did not even seem to regard Nepal as an equal and independent country. In September 1951, the Chinese Premier, Chou En-lai, suggested a tripartite conference of China, India and Nepal to discuss the question of Tibet. However, India ignored the suggestion without even the courtesy of informing Nepal about it.11 Nepal's fear of India was strengthened by the
cultural definition of Greater India during the first flush of India’s independence. The state of relations between India and Bhutan at the time aggravated Nepali fears even further.

On 23 September, 1954, the Chinese Premier in the course of his statement before the National People’s Congress on the programme of his government stated that China was ready and willing to establish diplomatic relations with Nepal on a footing of equality. It was obviously intended as an overture to Nepal, but the Nepali government of the day did not go beyond welcoming the gesture with a vague and general statement that the matter would be further considered upon the return of King Tribhuvan from Europe, where he had gone for medical treatment. But King Tribhuvan was not to return. He died in Switzerland on 13 March, 1955. Nepal first made contact with the leaders of the new China later in 1955, when both Nepal and China attended the Bandung conference. The first official announcement made on 1 August, 1955 with reference to the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and China declared, ‘The two governments believe that the establishment of diplomatic relations will also promote further developments in cultural and economic cooperation between the two countries.’

The establishment of a strong government in Peking had meanwhile altered the nature of relations between China and Tibet. When China established her authority in Tibet, both Kathmandu and Peking realized the need for revising the 1856 Nepali-Tibet Treaty. Accordingly, 100 years later, on 20 September, 1956, a new agreement was signed on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. The agreement abrogated all existing treaties and documents between Nepal and China including Tibet, and made provision for the establishment of trade agencies and consulates in each other’s territory. Nepal thus forfeited the special rights and privileges in Tibet which she had secured under the 1856 treaty, but which had become untenable with the march of time and events.

King Mahendra’s decision to establish diplomatic relations with Peking in 1955 had been no doubt precipitated by the need to regularize relations with Lhasa following the assertion by China of its full authority in Tibet. However, the disenchantment with the paternalistic attitude adopted by the Government of India during the post-1951 period was perhaps an even more important factor influencing this decision.

To the Nepalis, disenchanted with India, China was the obvious
country to turn to, and wishful thinking attributed to China all the qualities which were found lacking in India. China’s response was eager; consequently Nepal-China relations were strengthened, and continue to grow in scope and warmth, although an effort has been made to confine them to the official level. There has been no serious attempt in Nepal to probe Chinese intentions and designs. Obviously, China is judged only by what it does in relation to Nepal.

Historically, Nepal’s relations with India have been much more intimate than with China. But while China is judged by its overt actions, India is judged more by its externally projected psychological image. What Nepal thinks India is doing is more important than what India actually does.

Looking back on the developments of 1961 and 1962, one cannot help feeling that the Governments of Nepal and India lost sight of reason in the midst of the fears and anxieties each had of the other, and that the steps each government took to assuage its own fears merely served to confirm the worst suspicions of the other. Nehru’s reaction to the royal takeover, seen in the light of India’s role in the successful overthrow of the Ranas just ten years previously, blinded Nepal to the fact that India’s policy towards the states on her north-eastern frontier was not guided by consideration for their political ideology. If India could support royal autocracy in Bhutan and Sikkim, there was no reason why she could not have supported the same kind of regime in Nepal. Be that as it may, in 1961, alarmed at the pressure of India-based armed raids organized by the Nepali Congress elements, Nepal signed the Kathmandu-Lhasa road agreement with China and obtained China’s public assurance of support against aggression by any country.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, China has presented an image of reasonableness. On economic and boundary issues it has been generous. It even tendered an immediate apology and paid compensation when one member of the Nepali border patrol party was killed in the course of a border incident in June 1960. A Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed between Nepal and China on 28 April, 1960 and in August of the same year a Chinese Embassy was formally established in Kathmandu.

The most notable achievement in the field of Nepal-China relations in the post-1956 period has been, however, the settlement of outstanding boundary problems between the two countries. An agreement was signed between Prime Minister B.P. Koirala and
Prime Minister Chou En-lai in March 1960, under which the two countries agreed that the entire boundary would be scientifically delineated and formally demarcated through friendly consultation on the basis of the traditional and customary line. It also provided for the establishment of demilitarized zones of twenty kilometres on either side of the boundary line with a view to ensuring a friendly and peaceful atmosphere on the border.

The difference between Nepal and China over the question of the possession of Mt Everest first came to light when the maps were exchanged after the signing of this agreement. The Nepali map initially showed Mt Everest on the boundary line between Nepal and China whereas the Chinese map showed it entirely within China. When B. P. Koirala, then Prime Minister of Nepal, pressed his claim to Mt Everest, Chairman Mao Tse-tung expressed his willingness to accept the position of Mt Everest as shown on the Nepali map. In other words, Chairman Mao was prepared to accept that the northern half of Mt Everest belonged to China and the southern half to Nepal. Despite the fact that the controversy on the question of Mt Everest was for some time played up by interested parties in the press both inside and outside Nepal, the matter was amicably settled between Nepal and China in the manner described above and with the understanding that China would control the northern access to Mt Everest and Nepal the southern access.

A joint Nepal-China Boundary Committee, after holding sessions in Kathmandu and Peking and conducting spot inquiries, finalized the Nepal-China Boundary Treaty which was signed in Peking by King Mahendra and Chairman Liu Shao-chi in October 1961. Subsequently, pillars were installed all along the border thus delineated, putting an end to the boundary problem once and for all. As King Mahendra declared at a civic reception at Kathmandu on 27 October, 1961. 'The Boundary Treaty with China had delimited the boundary between the two countries in a definite manner, thus bringing to a happy conclusion the exchange of views and controversies which had been going on for eighteen months.... This too has helped consolidate the friendly good relations existing between the two countries.... By the northern boundary treaty, the Kingdom of Nepal has gained three hundred square miles, and I feel that all the Nepalis experience a sense of glory when I state that Sagar-matha, on which the eyes of the world seem to be focussed, continues to be as it has been, ours and within our territory. It may also be
mentioned in connection with the border area and Sagarmatha that
the northern boundary area dispute, which had been going on since
the time of Bhimsen Thapa’s premiership, has been solved in such a
manner as to benefit Nepal...

During King Mahendra’s visit to China in 1961, Chairman Mao
Tse-tung spoke of the possibility of a big country like China injuring
the feelings of small neighbours such as Nepal out of sheer ignorance
and arrogance. According to King Mahendra, Mao Tse-tung gave
full assurance that China would be more than careful to respect
Nepal’s national sentiments. Thus China won over Nepal, while
Indian economic and political policies continued to seem, to the
Nepalis, inimical to their independence and sovereignty.

Despite the manifestation of good relations described above, the
Sino-Indian armed clash of October 1962 caused grave concern
among the Nepalis about China’s real intentions towards neighbour-
ing countries. Nepal reacted by refusing to take sides and by bring-
ing pressure to bear on both countries to solve their differences
peacefully. But an effort was made to keep open the option to move
closer to India in the event of a Chinese threat to Nepal’s own
territory. Except for this mental provision for a hypothetical situ-
tation Nepal’s policy of freeing herself from India in every possible
sphere continued. India was expected to adjust to this inevitable
trend.

Understandably, Nepal’s policies caused considerable concern
and debate in India, especially after November 1962. Misunder-
standings mounted between the two countries, particularly after
Marshal Ch’en-yi’s statement of 5 October, 1962 that ‘in case any
foreign army makes a foolhardy attempt to attack Nepal...China
will side with the Nepalese people.’ Nepal’s friendly relations with
China were noted by the Indian press with growing alarm, whereas
Nepali political leaders considered them as nothing more than a
routine renewal of Nepal’s age-old economic and cultural ties with
China. The Indian press failed to understand that Nepal was simply
trying to assert its national identity and to extricate itself from the
need of relying too heavily either on India or on China. It is note-
worthy also that during this period Nepal established diplomatic
relations with a large number of countries.

India’s indignation over Nepal’s lack of reaction to the Chinese
attack on India added to Nepal’s fear of and resentment against
India. India felt perturbed that its sizeable economic and political
aid had generated no goodwill or gratitude in Nepal; on the contrary, Nepal was drifting away from India, and wooing her enemies, China and Pakistan. On the other hand, the asylum and encouragement given by India to Nepali rebels, whose avowed purpose was to overthrow the post-1960 regime, angered Nepal more than any other aspect of Indian policy.

Naturally both sides overstated their case, magnifying isolated developments. Unfortunately, there was no determined attempt on either side to deal with the misunderstandings. India was understandably preoccupied with bigger problems, and Nepal did not seem anxious to initiate a reconciliation. However, it is probably true to say that the Sino-Indian conflict helped to jolt both India and Nepal into a sense of reality with regard to their mutual problems. What the Sino-Indian hostilities taught Nepal was that she should so orient her policy as to emphasize her national identity. Only by so doing could she stay away from conflicts herself and follow a policy of friendship with other countries. Nepal's policy of friendship with China has continued into the present period and can be expected to continue further, and one might hope that alarmism on the part of Indian leaders will subside as they gain empathy with the Nepali viewpoint.

The Sino-Indian hostilities of 1962 enhanced the importance of Nepal for both India and China, and forced Nepal to become circumspect and non-aligned in its relationship with both countries. Previously, Nepal had refused to consider itself a buffer state in the military sense, but after 1962 it inescapably found itself in the role of an ideological buffer.

The Panchayat Constitution and Non-Alignment

In 1963 a new constitution came into force in Nepal. This was King Mahendra's Panchayat Constitution of 1963, which was introduced with the justification that parliamentary democracy was not suited to the objective conditions in Nepal and to the genius of its people. The Panchayat system was, at least in theory, designed to combine the merits of both the parliamentary and communist systems in such a way as to prevent the people of Nepal from being too greatly swayed in the direction of either India or China. The new system also led to a redefinition of Nepal's concept of non-alignment itself.

If Nepal's concept of non-alignment in the past had merely
implied compatibility with India's foreign policy on major international issues, the concept in 1961 apparently acquired a new dimension, in as much as it was interpreted to mean equidistance from India and China, and equal friendship for both. This redefinition inevitably raised such basic questions as the following: is it possible for a non-aligned country to have equal friendship with both an aligned neighbour and a non-aligned one? If so, what is it that non-aligned countries have in common with one another except the name? Apart from theoretical preoccupations, Nepal has definite practical considerations to reckon with in implementing its present concept of non-alignment. What is Nepal going to do about her basic understanding with India on the matter of mutual security and defence? Apart from considerations of close cultural and religious ties between the two countries, is it possible for Nepal to change the pattern of trade and economy which leans so heavily on India? The policy of balancing diplomatic feats between India and China as demanded by the exigencies of the situation may have served Nepal in a way during the nineteen-sixties, but it has not provided an answer to the basic problems posed by the long-term objectives of Nepal's foreign policy, which may be briefly summed up as internal and external security, economic welfare and national development.

If one extends Nepal's changed post-1960 concept of non-alignment to its logical conclusion, a new alternative to Nepal's foreign policy might suggest itself, namely, the possibility of an international guarantee of Nepal's neutrality in the event of war between India and China. Ideally this would assume the form of a United Nations guarantee similar to that with Austria, or an internationally binding instrument signed by both China and India. But no government of Nepal has so far shown a real interest in pursuing this alternative seriously.

Aberrations in Nepal-China Relations

Notwithstanding the visit of King Birendra as Crown Prince to China in June, the year 1967, which was the high point of the cultural revolution in China, witnessed a few unusual incidents in the relationship between Nepal and China. The *Peking Review* of 10 March, 1967 published a poem by an unnamed Nepali poet extolling Mao as 'the leader of all exploited people'. And according to the 2 June, 1967 issue of the *Peking Review*, Nepalis in attendance at the formal
inauguration by King Mahendra of the Kathmandu-Kodari Road on 26 May, 1967 applauded 'the great leader Chairman Mao' as 'the red sun which shines most brightly in the hearts of the people of the world'. Subsequent criticism of these two events in a section of the controlled Kathmandu press indicated official dissatisfaction with the Chinese publications. The Nepali officials were also not happy with the Chinese practice of showing movies to rural populations in the areas where Chinese construction teams were working, and especially with the distribution of communist literature and Mao buttons in those areas.

Since the royal takeover in 1960, there had not been a single instance of public dispute between Nepal and China until 1967. Yet a third incident occurred during this year, which, apart from showing the touchiness of the Chinese Government to a minor incident, indicated how frail relationships are when based on a 'balancing act' only. In July, at a 'fun fair' organized at Kathmandu to celebrate King Mahendra's forty-eighth birthday, the Chinese stall was attacked by a crowd of Nepali students on the pretext that there was no picture of King Mahendra beside a large portrait of Chairman Mao on display inside the stall. Upon being dispersed by the police, the demonstrators marched to the heart of the city where they stoned a Chinese Embassy jeep and caused damage to the Nepali-China Friendship Association Library.

In a strongly worded letter of protest, dated 5 July, 1967 the Chinese Government warned that the 'imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries' who encouraged such activities 'will break their own skulls' and those who follow them 'will suffer from the consequences of their own actions'. The following day, the reply from the Nepali Permanent Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied the charges as false and baseless. A New China News Agency report of 9 July, 1967 accused U.S. 'imperialists', Soviet 'revisionists' and Indian 'reactionaries' of having instigated the Nepali 'hooligans' who had perpetrated 'this vile anti-China outrage'. The statement also accused the Nepali authorities of having 'approved and supported this anti-China outrage' and of having banned Nepalis from wearing Mao buttons and carrying the Mao 'quotations' handbook. The Chinese government's reply of 21 July to Nepal's reply to the original letter of protest rejected the Nepali explanation and reaffirmed the charges. After this, however, nothing was heard about the incident in public and the Nepali government ascribed the angry
allegations to China's internal developments only remotely connected with foreign policy.

Aberrations in Nepal-India Relations

In an exclusive interview published in the official English language daily, the Rising Nepal, on 25 June, 1969, Nepal's then Prime Minister, Kirtinidhi Bista, more or less contradicted Nepal's traditional foreign policy of maintaining with India specific understandings and assurances about mutual security by expressing Nepal's inability to accept any restrictions on its sovereignty 'for India's so-called security'. He also denounced unilaterally the January 1965 arms agreement. In the same interview Bista stated that since India had not consulted Nepal either at the time of the 1962 Sino-Indian armed conflict or during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, the commitments with regard to mutual security based on the 1951 Treaty of Peace and Friendship had fallen into disuse and by the same token were no longer binding on either party. These suggestions were accompanied by the demand for the immediate withdrawal both of the Indian 'wireless operators' from the checkposts on the Nepal-China border and of the Indian Military Liaison Group. This interview temporarily gave indications of a serious turn in Nepal's foreign policy.

Bista's unilateral denunciation of the 1965 Arms Agreement with India should be viewed in the light of the fact that King Mahendra had earlier explored the possibility of securing military assistance from countries other than India but had succeeded in obtaining merely a limited quantity of military assistance from Britain and the United States on a short-term basis in 1964. The texts of Nepal's agreements with the United States and Great Britain in 1964 and with India in 1965 for military aid have never been made public. However, it has been widely publicized that the United States gave Nepal merely military transport and communications equipment whereas Britain supplied a number of automatic rifles and light bren guns with ammunition. It is alleged that Nepal's 1965 arms agreement with India, while recognizing Nepal's right to buy arms from other countries, clearly provided that Nepal would do so only when India was not in a position to meet Nepal's requirements. It is also believed that all these agreements were discussed at the time among all the four countries concerned. Since 1965, however, India has assumed its traditional role of supplying arms and ammunition from any other source.
At the outset, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs pretended not to take notice of Bista’s press interview. A spokesman of the Ministry invited formal communication from the Government of Nepal to ‘discuss’ the points raised in the Prime Minister’s press statement. But, almost immediately after Bista’s interview was published in the Rising Nepal, Yadu Nath Khanal, then Permanent Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, when passing through Delhi on 5 July, 1969 took the opportunity to explain the real purpose and significance of the Prime Minister’s statement. According to Khanal the statement was meant to strengthen Nepal-India relations and ‘not to weaken them’ by removing confusion created by the press about the joint communique following Indian Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh’s visit to Nepal in June 1969. In September 1969, Yadu Nath Khanal further led a formal delegation to India to clarify matters. In the course of talks with the representatives of the Government of India, the need for continuance of understanding and assurance between Nepal and India on mutual security was reappraised in the context of India’s threat to close the border as a reaction to Nepal’s demand for the withdrawal of the Indian Military Liaison Group from Kathmandu and the Indian wireless operators from the military checkposts on Nepal’s northern border with China. Dinesh Singh had earlier threatened to close the border for security purposes should Nepal insist on going back unilaterally on the existing understanding and assurance about mutual security. The joint statement issued at the end of the talks with the delegation led by Khanal emphasized the existence of ‘an identity of interests’ and of mutual ‘understanding, trust and confidence’ between the government and the people of Nepal and those of India. The statement reinforced a plea for strengthening cooperation between the two countries for mutual benefit. It was on the basis of this understanding that, in September 1969, the Indian Military Liaison Group and the Indian wireless operators were finally withdrawn from Nepal by August 1970. Neither of the governments has taken the people into confidence about the actual nature of the understanding and assurance about mutual security concluded in September 1969. Bista himself went out of office in mid-April 1970 after his term as a member of the national legislature expired.

**Expiry of the 1960 Trade and Transit Treaty**

Kirtinidhi Bista’s anti-Indian posturings during his first term
of office in 1969-70 and King Mahendra’s open and public demand at the wedding ceremony of Crown Prince Birendra, and subsequently at the Lusaka non-aligned conference in 1970, for ‘justice’ for Nepal in accordance with the principles of international law applying to landlocked countries had both been intended to pressure New Delhi into granting concessions in the 1960 trade treaty which was due to expire in 1970. In an exclusive interview with a representative of the *Times of India* on 19 October, 1970, King Mahendra was reported to have said that Nepal and India had agreed to exchange ‘military information’ about developments harmful to each country. The King was said to have further stated that Nepal had agreed to the Indian proposal for stationing senior military personnel at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu for ‘an agreed period and job.’ This was intended to placate the Indian government on the matter of mutual security arrangements with a view to gaining concessions in the new trade treaty.

The 1960 Treaty of Trade and Transit between Nepal and India expired on 31 October, 1970. Negotiations proved fruitless and there was no treaty by the end of the year. The Government of India had initially offered to extend the 1960 Treaty for one year. The Nepali government was reluctant to accept the Indian offer at that time. But when the Nepali government asked for an extension of the treaty after it had actually expired, the Government of India expressed its inability to extend it on technical and procedural grounds. As the end of 1970 approached, anti-Indian demonstrations took place in Kathmandu and in some of the important district headquarters on the Nepal-India border. To counter the Nepal government’s move to whip up anti-Indian feeling on a popular level, the Government of India unilaterally declared its intention of continuing the supply of essential commodities to Nepal as before, even during the period when there would be no treaty. The Government of Nepal continued vigorous efforts to apply every kind of pressure on India until the Indian parliamentary elections of February 1971 returned Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to power with an overwhelming majority.

The tactic of rousing popular feeling against the Indian government boomeranged on the Nepali authorities inasmuch as the common people in Nepal had begun to hold their own government responsible for the stalemate in treaty negotiations. By mid-1971, the economy and trade of Nepal were so badly hurt that, on 15 August, 1971, the Government of Nepal was compelled to sign the
less favourable current treaty of trade and transit with India. Nine months had thus been wasted in futile bargaining and public recriminations with India. In retrospect, one cannot help strongly feeling that Nepal could have gained better terms from India for trade and transit had it played its cards more carefully and created a suitable climate for negotiations by taking care not to give offence to India at least for a year prior to the expiry of the 1960 treaty. But the Nepal government’s inept diplomacy resulted in the loss of even some advantages previously enjoyed under the 1960 treaty.

Assessment of the 1971 Treaty

Nepal’s primary objectives in the course of treaty negotiations were: (1) that there should be separate treaties covering trade and transit; (2) that there should be a trade route to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) through the Indian territory of Radhikapur in the Dinajpur district of West Bengal; (3) that qualitative and quantitative restrictions on Nepal’s imports from third countries and its exports to India should be removed; (4) that the customs procedures should be simplified; (5) that the additional warehouse space in the port of Calcutta should be treated as a free port zone and should be placed under Nepali supervision; (6) that there should be facilities for operating barges in the Calcutta port and for transporting commercial goods from the Calcutta port to their destination in Nepal by sealed container trucks, and (7) that there should be the same kind of treatment to ships with Nepali flags in Indian ports as that given to Indian ships.

In the end Nepal accepted a single treaty for both trade and transit and agreed to put off its demand for the overland trade route to East Pakistan via Radhikapur until a more favourable time. Nepal also undertook to abide by qualitative and quantitative restrictions on both its imports to and exports from India and third countries. The procedure for clearing Indian customs as accepted by Nepal in 1971 again, as before, subjects Nepal’s exports and imports to ‘sample’ inspection by Indian Customs with a view to checking on whether goods are of Nepali origin (in the case of exports) and on whether they conform to the particulars listed on the licence (in the case of imports).

Under the 1971 Treaty, India may refuse on several grounds to allow entry of Nepali goods into India even if they have a Nepali value-added content of over 50 per cent in capital and labour. Only
goods or articles containing not less than 90 per cent of Nepali materials or Nepali and Indian materials are now allowed entry into the Indian market free of basic customs duty. By restricting the freedom of transit to 'goods required by each contracting party and goods available for export from that party', India can legally stop transit to Nepal if in its opinion Nepal is importing more than its requirement or exporting more than its available surplus. The Indian government's policy of restricting drastically the meaning and scope of the expression 'goods of Nepali origin' was intended its requirement or exporting more than its available surplus. The Indian government's policy of restricting drastically the meaning and scope of the expression 'goods of Nepali origin' was intended to curb the tendency to export goods of Indian origin as Nepali products on terms contrary to India's overall trade policy. Besides raw jute and jute products, Nepal's overseas exports from 1965 to 69 consisted mostly of bristles, mica, curios and carpets. The words 'goods required' and 'available for export' did not occur in the 1960 treaty nor was the definition of 'goods of Nepali origin' as narrow and restricted as in the 1971 treaty. Also, the provision for the refund of excise on Indian imports in the 1960 treaty was more favourable to Nepal than the provision in the current treaty for the refund of customs duties on the basis of the customs rate charged on similar goods in Nepal. Under the 1960 treaty, Nepal was left free to levy its duty on Indian goods at the border, but the current treaty obliges Nepal not to collect customs duties on items on which central excise duties are paid in India.

The only gains Nepal has made in the 1971 treaty are increased warehouse space under Indian supervision in the Calcutta port, together with facilities for operating barges in the port and for trucking commercial goods from the port area to their destination in Nepal in sealed container trucks. The Indian side had always been more than willing to grant these facilities.

**Aberrations in the Operation of the 1960 Treaty and their Effect upon the Economy**

A stricter Indian control over Nepal's imports and exports was the price Nepal had to pay for its deliberate policy of exploiting the loopholes in the 1960 treaty for short-term, if lucrative, advantages for a small group of influential Nepalis and some Indian commercial interests.
Nepal's rapid expansion of overseas exports during the period between 1966 and 1969 was in effect made possible only by the scope that existed for clandestine trade in the form of re-export to India of Nepal's imports from third countries, contrary to India's basic import policy. For example, jute could be sold by Nepal in the international market at 50 per cent of its production cost, and with the foreign exchange thus earned, Nepali jute exporters could import luxury goods from overseas countries and resell them in India at a considerable profit even after making up their initial loss on jute. This pattern of import and re-export was further facilitated by the introduction of the Import Entitlement Scheme or the Bonus Voucher Scheme which enabled the exporters to import any goods from anywhere up to a maximum of 60 per cent of the value of their export earnings, depending on the nature of goods exported. Although the scheme may have provided an incentive to promote overseas exports, the indiscriminate use of the international gift parcel system with the connivance of the government resulted in the non-enforcement of legal restrictions on the use of the import entitlements. It also deprived the government of much internal revenue in the form of customs and import levels, since prior authorization for imports through licences was not required for gift parcels. The unrestricted use of bonus vouchers, which were in theory exclusively meant for the import of 'high priority' goods alone, moved Nepal's limited capital and trade resources into stainless steel factories and synthetic fabric mills which used stainless steel sheets and synthetic yarns imported from overseas countries. The Indian import levy on these industrial raw materials was so high that Nepalis could make high profits by importing the industrial raw materials and exporting to India finished and semi-finished goods manufactured from them. The government of Nepal, having itself provided the opportunity to private investors to treble and quadruple their capital investment in less than a year through the import and export of such luxury goods, could not possibly blame the investors for their unwillingness to invest in industries which would have yielded returns only after a considerable lapse of time.

All this had an adverse effect on Nepal's economy, since Nepal's limited capital resources were diverted from areas in which they would have yielded maximum benefit in terms of long range economic development. Again, if it was Nepal's intention to reduce its dependence on one country alone for trade, the above pattern of
trade with overseas countries did not serve its purpose and, if anything, increased Nepal's dependence on the Indian market. The entire edifice of Nepal's exports to hard currency countries was thus founded on a precarious and unsound basis. Further, the temptation to make a quick profit from import and export trade on easy terms made both the government and export traders neglect the vital problems of improving the quality of Nepali products for export such as jute, grains and cereals. The quality of these products was such that they could not be sold at competitive rates in the international market. It was not until 1969-70 that the Government of Nepal even started talking about initiating a scientific study to assess the prospects for Nepali exports in the international market and the possibilities of improving and controlling their quality. The recent establishment of a Trade Promotion Centre under the ministry of Industry and Commerce is a positive step in the right direction. But lack of coherence in policy formulation and bureaucratic indiscipline in its implementation may prove too large a barrier for a new orientation to break through.

The 1971 Treaty of Trade and Transit with India may prove to be a blessing in disguise if it forces Nepal to channel its resources to programmes that will prove more productive. It could, for instance, encourage the growth of agro- and forest-based industries within the framework of an industrial cooperative system between India and Nepal to the advantage of both countries. There is no doubt that Nepal's heavy dependence on India for trade and for transit facilities will continue to be a constant irritant between the two countries. The situation can only be improved if the two governments are able to evolve a modus vivendi under which mutually beneficial trade and tariff policies are evolved in consultation with each other.

Of the two countries, Nepal will have to depend on trade much more than India. India has a vast domestic market and an abundant variety of natural resources. Its continental geography enables it to pursue an austere and strictly controlled trade policy, since trade plays only a minor role in the expansion of its Gross National Product. Conversely, a stringent trade policy does not suit Nepal because it has a small domestic market and needs a liberal trade policy to promote its economy. For this reason, Nepal may always find some difficulty in harmonizing its economic policies with those of India.
Nepal’s failure despite all-out efforts to diversify her trade and aid sources over the last decade seems to have impressed upon King Mahendra’s mind the limits imposed on Nepal’s foreign policy by geopolitical and economic realities. The concrete evidence of this is the August 1971 Nepal-India Trade and Transit Treaty. After the conclusion of the treaty, both King Mahendra and Prime Minister Kirtinidhi Bista began to assert in public that relations with India were cordial and all the traditional ties including the treaty commitments were intact.

Developments since King Birendra’s Accession

After King Birendra ascended the throne on 31 January, 1972, Prime Minister Bista not only endorsed this assertion but even went to the extent of stating publicly that there had never been any misunderstanding between Nepal and India. Immediately after Bista returned from India in the late summer of 1972, he paid a State visit to China in the autumn. This would seem to indicate that King Birendra is also following the policy of seeking a balanced relationship between India and China. The King’s state visit to India in October 1973 was followed by his state visit to China in December, 1973. During his State visit to India in October 1973, King Birendra spoke warmly about traditional ties of race, language, religion and culture between the two countries and at the same time emphasized the need for cooperation between them in trade and economic development, with a plea for special consideration of the inherent difficulties of Nepal as a landlocked country. Further, the King, while stating that Nepal’s Panchayat political system was also basically democratic, stressed its non-party character as being suited to the objective conditions of Nepal.

In his reply to the address of welcome presented to him by the Nepal Council of World Affairs on 26 July, 1973 and also in his speech of 8 September, 1973 at the non-aligned summit held in Algeria, King Birendra advocated a policy of friendship with all and ill-will towards none. He stressed the characteristic features of Nepal’s traditional foreign policy such as non-alignment, peaceful co-existence, anti-colonialism and anti-apartheid. In addition, he made fervent pleas for sympathetic consideration of the inherent difficulties of landlocked countries. He also dwelt on the urgency of the problem of general and complete disarmament as the only guarantee of permanent world peace and spoke in favour of the
establishment of zones of peace as a means of reducing misunderstanding and tensions in the world and promoting international cooperation in the field of trade and development. King Birendra's interest in promoting friendship and understanding with all nations, and especially with Nepal's neighbours, as well as his deep concern for the independence of his country and his determination to preserve it at all costs, were manifest in the concluding remarks of his speech to the Nepal Council of World Affairs on 26 July, 1973:

'Before I conclude, Mr President, while we pledge friendship with all nations, we shall take special pains to cultivate friendship with our neighbours hoping earnestly that peace, cooperation and understanding based on a sober appreciation of each other's problems and aspirations shall prevail. Notwithstanding these fervent pleas, notwithstanding this sincere expression of goodwill, notwithstanding these endeavours, should ill-fortune ever overtake us, I hope and pray that the people of Nepal shall not lag behind to brace themselves with the last resource they have—courage; courage to prove to the world that force or contrivances are but feeble instruments to subdue the fierce spirit of a people whose lifeblood, through the ages, has been independence or nothing.'

Real Need for Nepal-India Co-operation

The continued need for close cooperation between Nepal and India can never be overemphasized. Their interdependence may not be equal in both directions. It may not consist of equal degrees of dependence. But an essential interdependence does exist, and this must be appreciated by both sides. The links between Nepal and India are many, various and strong. They range from complex recruiting and training arrangements for military personnel to participation in regional and non-aligned conferences. The two countries have a long and open border through which intercourse is frequent and considerable. The volume of bilateral trade is very high, and there is substantial Indian private investment in Nepal. Nepal and India have common problems of economic development, and their geographical proximity makes it possible for them to have such integrated schemes for their mutual benefit as multi-purpose river projects. The development and utilization of natural resources also comes under the scope of Nepal-India economic relations.

The history of Nepal and that of India touch each other at many points. Great intellectual and social, religious and philosophical
movements have criss-crossed the frontier. Politically, the treaties and agreements entered into by the two countries, although important, cannot express or explain the multiple points of contact. Indeed, there are possibly no two countries in the world whose histories, cultures and traditions have been so closely interlinked for such a long time.

It is not enough, however, to emphasize these ancient ties of race, religion and culture. There is a constant need to revitalize them in view of nascent Nepali nationalism and in view of the pattern of international economic cooperation brought about by the worldwide technological revolution. Nature seems to have ordained that Nepal and India live in amity sharing common problems of economic and social development.

Although permanent geographical, historical and economic ties have brought the two countries close together, occasional misunderstandings are bound to arise. When difficulties arise it is essential for both sides to show tolerance and understanding in handling them. Using various types of intergovernmental machinery, Nepal and India can and must evolve a pattern of consultation and negotiation on the whole range of bilateral questions.

This is a challenge as complex as any our ancestors faced. In meeting it both countries have to protect their national interests. But that need not stand in the way of working together for mutual advantage. The national interest can only benefit from intimate cooperation and can only suffer from an approach dominated by timidity and prejudice. The Nepalis are aware of India's disproportionate power and international responsibilities. They hope that the Indians will be aware of the growing Nepali awareness of the difference between cooperation and control, between persuasion and dictation.

The pattern of relationships between Nepal and India, already complicated and deceptive, is made even more difficult by the growth of narrow and impassioned nationalism in both countries. Nepal quite naturally aspires to tread a sovereign path, to realize her ideal of social and economic advancement. Nepal's economic interest at the present stage of her development is, to put it simply, diversification of the economy. When attempts to diversify trade, roads, agriculture and industries are actually made, a better appreciation of Nepal's point of view should be forthcoming from India.

Nepal's strong sense of nationhood is partly the result of her
never having experienced the trauma of direct colonial conquest and exploitation. Nepali nationalism has been fostered in recent years by improvement and diversification of the means of transport and communication between the various regions of the country.

In the period ahead, one might hope that Nepal and India will be able to work together effectively. No doubt they will continue to judge each other more critically than they judge other nations because they expect more of each other; however, they know that their friendship is strong enough to stand the test of criticism. It is essential that they show understanding and respect for each other’s views and recognize the overriding interest each has in good relations with the other. That is how they should cooperate in the period ahead when undoubtedly many changes will occur and many difficult decisions will be required. It is in this spirit that Nepal and India will be able to give to the world a unique example of good neighbourliness.

**Summing Up: Landmarks in the Evolution of Nepal’s Foreign Policy**

Beginning in 1947 Nepal decided to give up her traditional policy of isolation and exclusion of foreigners. She chose to expand her diplomatic relations with other countries and fully participate in international life. Like India, Nepal characterizes her foreign policy as independent rather than ‘neutral’ because the concept of neutrality in international law presupposes a state of belligerency and has no application in times of peace. Furthermore, Nepal has not, unlike Switzerland, decided on a policy of permanent neutrality in the event of war between other countries but has undertaken military obligations under the United Nations Charter. Hence her insistence on an independent foreign policy of judging every international issue on its merit without consideration of anybody’s fear or favour and without committing herself beforehand to the support of one bloc or the other. Non-alignment in reference to all the international military power blocs is the logical corollary of her independent foreign policy. However, it goes without saying that in actual practice the conduct of an independent foreign policy is influenced by ‘such considerations as would prevail in international life in any case’, to borrow an expression from the late Dag Hammarskjöld. In this vein, King Tribhuvan B.B. Shah Dev (1911-55) declared in 1954.
'It is an undeniable fact that no nation can in the context of the modern world have an isolated existence. The age demands that all nations, big and small, must draw close together and contribute to the welfare of humanity as a whole. It follows therefore that we must develop good and friendly relations with nations of the world without attaching ourselves to any particular power group. In such a policy alone lies our welfare.'

Special Relationship between Nepal and India

A second change in Nepal's foreign policy after the political revolution of 1951 was in relation to what was often referred to by the Nepalis as 'special friendship with India' and interpreted by other powers as 'paramountcy of India's interest and influence in Nepal'. India's influence in Nepal remained dominant up to 1955 because the King and the political elements which came to power in 1951 had an obligation to India because of her support of their bid for power in Nepal. There were of course certain practical considerations that favoured a foreign policy for Nepal compatible with that of India's. But, during this period, India was not very willing to let Nepal expand her diplomatic relations and contacts with other countries or permit her to participate fully in international life. That India considered it her responsibility at that time to advise Nepal in matters of foreign policy and defence was clear from what Nehru said in February 1952: 'On two occasions the Prime minister was here and the King was also here once or twice. We naturally discussed various matters and gave advice, and in two matters more particularly we are closely associated, in matters of foreign policy and defence, not by any formal agreement but simply because both matters are common to us.'

Persistent pleas were made for the coordination of Nepal's foreign policy with that of India's and it was suggested that, as a concrete step in this direction, Indian embassies abroad should be asked to look after Nepal's interests. Nehru told the Indian parliament on 18 May, 1954: 'Now since these changes have taken place in Nepal, we have been brought in fairly close touch with developments there. We have often discussed these things and it has been very clearly agreed to between us, and only the other day—about less than a few weeks ago when His Majesty the King of Nepal and some Ministers of the Nepal Government were here—it was again reiterated that the foreign policy of the Nepalese Government should
be coordinated with the foreign policy of India. That is so: there is
general agreement and even consultations with each other.'

India in fact adopted a paternalistic attitude towards Nepal which
aroused genuine suspicion in the minds of the Nepalis about India’s
intentions. Other foreign powers also tended to recognize in practice
India’s special relations with Nepal. India controlled Nepal’s trade
and tariff policy through the commercial treaty of 1950. China,
Nepal’s powerful neighbour to the north, did not begin to assert her
interest in Nepal vis-a-vis India for some years even after 1955. The
Chinese ambassadors of the time, who were concurrently accredited
to Nepal and to India, would not mention Nepal independently of
India in their public or private utterances, even inside Nepal. The
Nepalis acquired a feeling that the Chinese government consulted
with the Indian government in every matter relating to Nepal. There
was even suspicion that China and India might have struck a secret
deal as to their respective areas of influence at the time when India
relinquished certain privileges and interests in Tibet, which she had
inherited from the British.

*From Dependence on India to Relative Freedom in Foreign Affairs*

The state of affairs changed materially in due course after King
Mahendra’s accession to the throne in March 1955. Nepal took
part in the Bandung Conference of 1955 and became a member of
the United Nations in December 1955. Before 1956 Nepal had
diplomatic relations only with Britain, India, the United States and
France, though the latter two did not have residential embassies in
Kathmandu. It was only during Tanka Prasad Acharya’s Prime
Ministership (1956-57) that Nepal extended her relations to other
countries of the world, including China and the Soviet Union. All
of them started by having ambassadors concurrently accredited to
Nepal and India, but many subsequently established their own
embassy establishments at Kathmandu. Today all the great powers
of the world are represented in Nepal’s capital, France, the Federal
Republic of Germany, and Italy being among the more recent arri-
vals. Nepal now has diplomatic relations with fifty-three countries
and has also increased the number of missions and embassies abroad.
Today it might appear normal for a sovereign and independent
country, such as Nepal, to have diplomatic relations with most
countries. But in view of the special circumstances dictated by
Nepal's geographical position, historical background and economic dependence on outside assistance, it was by no means an easy task.

The expansion of Nepal’s foreign relations has brought upon her new obligations and responsibilities which she has successfully discharged so far. Nepal’s capacity for discharging these new commitments was fully tested at the time of the border incident near the Kor (La) Pass in the Mustang area on 28 June, 1960. It involved firing by Chinese troops on an unarmed Nepali border patrol in the demilitarized zone near the Kor (La) Pass, resulting in the death of one member of the patrol and the capture of seventeen others. B.P. Koirala’s government protested that the intrusion of a body of armed Chinese troops into this area constituted a breach of the border agreement and demanded a formal apology from the Chinese government as well as compensation. The Chinese government admitted that there had been carelessness on the part of ‘certain low-ranking personnel’ of the Chinese army and agreed to pay Rs 50,000 in compensation. Chou En-lai’s letter of July 1960 to B.P. Koirala stated that ‘it would be meaningless and unprofitable for the two sides to continue to argue over the place of the incident’, and, if such incidents were to be avoided in future, there should be embassies in each other’s capitals and direct telecommunication contact between the two countries. Nepal’s capacity for resistance against external pressure was further tested during the crisis created by the India-based border raids and hostile expeditions in 1961-62 following the royal takeover in December 1960. It is interesting to note in the latter case that Marshal Ch’en-yi, Vice-Premier of China in charge of Foreign Affairs, offered Nepal support on 5 October, 1962 in the event of aggression against Nepal, albeit in a vague and general way. However, the difference in Nepal’s reaction to India’s offer of support in 1960 and to China’s similar gesture in October 1962 lay in the fact that while Nepal thought it appropriate to react publicly to India’s offer of help and to set conditions for its acceptance; she quietly accepted China’s assurance of support without making any fuss.

The successful conclusion of the boundary treaty with the People’s Republic of China in October 1961 as well as aid agreements with a large number of countries of different political ideologies must be credited as positive gains of Nepal’s successful foreign policy of non-alignment and of peace and friendship with all countries. Thus
Nepal has moved from a position of utter reliance and dependence upon India in matters of foreign policy and aid to a position of relative freedom in manipulating foreign aid and policy matters.

Nepal’s desire to remain neutral in disputes and armed conflicts between neighbours such as India, China and Pakistan is understandable and soundly based. Her stand on the Indo-Chinese armed conflict in 1962 and on the Indo-Pakistan wars in 1965 and 1971 proved her well-meaning intentions. Even when Gorkha troops recruited among Nepali citizens for the Indian army were thrown into battles against China and Pakistan, both countries appreciated Nepal’s helplessness in the matter because of past commitments and did not question Nepal’s basic intentions. But good intentions may not always be the best guarantee of a country’s security, because intention is a matter of subjective interpretation by the other parties most concerned. Serious misunderstanding may be caused in the minds of neighbours unless Nepal makes a timely demarche to remove doubts about her stand in similar situations in the future.

If Nepal feels that the specific understanding with India on mutual security and defence is no longer necessary, she should seek release from obligations acquired through the exchange of letters accompanying the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India, which obliges both Nepal and India to devise effective counter-measures to deal with any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor. Further, the existing tripartite agreement on the recruitment of Gorkhas for the Indian and British armies should be annulled.

The maintenance of a balanced relationship with its two giant neighbours has been the very essence of Nepal’s traditional foreign policy and also conforms to the basic requirements of the Asian sub-system of the global balance of power. However, in view of the mid-twentieth century realities of power politics, it is not enough for Nepal to depend entirely on the traditional policy of a balanced relationship between two big neighbours. All countries of the world have come under the influence of the global system of the balance of power represented mainly by relations between the two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union. To this global balance of power the aforementioned sub-system of the regional balance of power is itself subservient. Nepal has, in response to changed circumstances, sought to reinforce its traditional policy of balanced relationship between two immediate neighbours by expanding diplomatic relations not only with all the major powers...
but also with other small and medium sized countries all over the world.

The increase in the number of states maintaining missions in Nepal is sometimes interpreted as evidence of the success of the policy of diversifying Nepal’s political, economic and cultural relations with countries other than India. However, contrary to Nepal’s initial expectation, the expansion of diplomatic relations has neither proportionately increased foreign aid and trade benefits from other sources nor has it substantially changed her dependence on India for trade, aid and security. The increase in the number of foreign missions in Nepal has merely reflected the growth of their political interest in the country rather than their increased desire and willingness to aid it or trade with it. Some of the more thoughtful Nepalis have already begun to ask seriously whether it is prudent and practical for a small country of limited resources such as Nepal to spend a substantial percentage of the tax-payer’s money on the maintenance of a large number of embassies abroad. Nepal had to close down its embassy establishment in Italy in 1968 so that it might have resources to start one in France. Previously there were too few embassies and foreign missions in Nepal. Now perhaps there are too many and the Nepalis, like the King of Siam in the musical play, *The King And I,* have already begun to be a little ‘confused about the conclusions they had concluded long ago’.

*Other Background Factors of Nepal’s Foreign Policy*

Nepal’s foreign policy has been influenced by two major concepts which also strongly dominated India’s attitude—Asian solidarity and independent non-aligned foreign policy. This, together with Nepal’s attitude towards the United Nations, forms the background of Nepal’s present foreign policy. Let us, therefore, examine these aspects in some detail.

*Asian Solidarity*

The 1947 Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi was the first international conference in which Nepal took part. The political change in Nepal in 1951 has to be viewed internationally against the background of the nationalist awakening in Asia during the post-war era. This brought Nepal into a new international arena and enabled her, fully conscious of the tremendous upsurge of the new independent spirit, to cast her lot with the new emerging nations in
It was only natural that when European colonialism had retreated or was retreating, Afro-Asian nations should seek to cultivate better understanding among themselves and strive for the achievement of Afro-Asian unity and solidarity.

The Bandung Conference of 1955 was a symbol of Asian and African resurgence. It was an attempt, as the late President Sukarno of Indonesia pointed out, to mobilize the 'moral violence' of two-thirds of mankind against the dark forces of war. Twenty-nine nations of Asia and Africa including Nepal met and exchanged views on some of the burning world problems. In spite of differences, Asian and African countries seemed to have come closer together. The final communique said little about armaments, nuclear or otherwise, but gave great moral courage to the nations of the third world.

However, in the first flush of success and in the exuberance of freedom, the Asian and African leaders failed to address themselves seriously to the problem of creating a lasting infrastructure of Asian unity and solidarity by encouraging greater trade and economic cooperation among themselves, and by solving problems of cross-national communication and understanding through cultural and educational exchanges. As time passed by, the fragile character of Afro-Asian solidarity and unity began to be revealed. Eventually, the failure to hold the second Afro-Asian conference planned for Algiers in 1965 made it clear to the world that it had never been more than a myth. This, certainly, would not have been the case if the leaders of the Asian and African countries had set themselves arduously and assiduously to the task of nation-building and encouraging cross-national trade and economic and cultural exchanges as they had planned to do in Bandung. As nothing of the kind was done, and as colonialism, the common whipping boy, gradually began to disappear, it was found that there was very little left to bind the Afro-Asian nations together. The inevitable result was that the former enthusiasts of Afro-Asian solidarity lost interest in regional cooperation and began to look for allies in other continents. The result of their efforts in this direction were the five non-aligned summit conferences in Belgrade in 1961, in Cairo in 1964, in Lusaka in 1970, in Algiers in 1973, and in Colombo in 1976, which served as nothing more than sounding boards for non-aligned political slogans.

The tendency of the non-aligned countries to act as a bloc mainly for the propaganda value of non-alignment is viewed with suspicion
by the rest of the world. Non-aligned countries argue that the existing military power blocs have endangered the prospects for a lasting peace and have vitiated the atmosphere for international cooperation in economic and social spheres. If this were so, there would hardly be any justification for adding another bloc to the existing international blocs in the world. Of course, the exponents of non-aligned conferences, at least some of them, are never tired of reminding the world that nothing is further removed from their thoughts than to form a bloc competing with the existing blocs. But their explanation does not carry weight with members of other inter-state relationships which are based on economic, military and, to an extent, ideological infrastructure, because the latter realize that the non-aligned countries do not have, and under the present circumstances cannot afford to have, as firm a base as the others already have, and that the non-aligned would also feel tempted to create a bloc if they only could or had the means to do so.

It was unfortunate that the basis for effective regional unity and cooperation in Asia was adversely affected by the deterioration in relations between India and China. Under the leadership of these two countries, Asia had in the Bandung Conference initiated a process of discovering and establishing its identity in the world. But this process received a serious setback when the relations between India and China began to show signs of strain. There was talk in the West for a while about the evolution of an Indo-Japanese axis against China as a solution to what was described as the Chinese menace in Asia. Now that China and the West have been drawing closer to each other in view of the widening Sino-Soviet rift, the enthusiasm for encouraging an Indo-Japanese axis seems to have died down. But the only hope for the future in Asia lies in meaningful cooperation between China, India and Japan with a view to raising all of Asia’s prosperity, power and prestige in the world. The rapid progress of science and technology has made the unification of the continent necessary for the development of international trade and cooperation.

Independent Non-Aligned Foreign Policy

An independent foreign policy seems to have a special attraction for the Asian countries that attained independence and freedom of political action only after the Second World War. These countries wish to remain independent of the two international power blocs so
that they may devote themselves entirely to the task of economic reconstruction and development. Their feeling is that they cannot, at least for the present, afford to waste any time or energy on cold war issues. They have lagged behind considerably in the march of progress and are, therefore, endeavouring to catch up with the advanced countries of the West in the shortest possible time.

Again, to Asian countries, the present-day preparations and propaganda for war appear to be largely futile since it is clear that, in a modern nuclear war, no side could expect to come out victorious. It does not seem to matter which side possesses a larger number of intercontinental ballistic missiles, when both sides have enough fire-power to burn up all life on earth several times over. No one seems to realize this better than the countries that are themselves engaged in gigantic defence preparations. There lies the rub, and this is precisely why many Asian countries are inclined to suspect a major power war scare not merely as unreal and Frankensteinian, but sometimes as a deliberate attempt on the part of the more advanced countries to call a master bluff on the less developed, in order to frighten them into joining military alliances. At the same time, the Asian countries are fully aware that the Asian outlook on these important questions must be conceived and planned in consideration of the trend of international politics as determined by the relations between the major power blocs.

Nepal values the ideals of peace and independence as the indispensable conditions of its own development and honestly believes that it can, in present conditions, help the cause of world peace best by following a foreign policy which does not commit it beforehand to support one or other bloc in the event of war. Such a policy does not imply a passive or negative attitude of neutrality. On the contrary, it acquires a positive sense of dynamism by enabling the country to assess every international issue on its merit and act in the light of its own free judgement. It is not necessary for all the non-aligned countries to agree on every international issue. Nepal should fall in line with other countries in Asia which follow such an independent foreign policy, for thereby she can strengthen the ability of Asian countries to assert themselves effectively and make their weight felt in the deliberations of the United Nations as well as on world opinion in general.

Critics of non-alignment have imparted to the concept ideological overtones which it does not in fact possess. Some of the exponents
of non-alignment itself, in their misplaced zeal to protect themselves from accusations of opportunism, have exaggerated the moral and ethical aspects of non-alignment to such an extent as to lay themselves open to the more serious charge of hypocrisy. It has been suggested that non-alignment may have served a constructive purpose at a time when the world seemed to be permanently and irrevocably divided into two hostile military and ideological camps. Now that the atmosphere of the cold war is being replaced by an all-pervasive spirit of detente, non-alignment may have outlived its utility. But this criticism seems to miss the mark because it does not take non-alignment for what it is. Non-alignment is simply a posture of policy which is intended to serve national interest. It is nothing more and nothing less. The third world countries which are economically backward and politically weak find that non-alignment gives them the optimal scope for freedom of action to promote their national interest. That is the reason they have opted, and in ever increasing numbers are continuing to opt, for non-alignment. The number of participants at the non-aligned summit has risen from twenty-five representatives and three observers from twenty-eight countries in the first conference in Belgrade to delegates from seventy-six countries in the fourth conference held in Algiers in 1973. K. Subrahmanyam describes it accurately when he writes: ‘By not committing oneself and shifting the alignment from time to time in both strategies, nations attempt to optimize their individual gains. While doing so, the non-aligned nations will understandably decry the balance of power doctrine just as the nations which are powerful enough to be actors in that game decry the non-aligned nations.’

Nepal and the United Nations

No account of Nepal’s foreign policy would be complete without a reference to Nepal’s attitude to the United Nations. To the people of Nepal, as to so many people in the world, this organization alone symbolizes the dream of one world. It is the only hope for peace in this war-weary world. Keen to join the United Nations, Nepal applied for membership in 1947 and was gratified to receive unqualified support from many member states in the Security Council. However, her application for membership of the United Nations came a bit late. The brief honeymoon spell in international relations among the victorious war allies immediately after the Second World
War had been followed by intense cold war tension and polarization of the great powers. In 1947, even the question of Nepal's admission to the United Nations became a part of the greater cold war issue which completely dominated the thinking of great powers at the time. However, in December 1955, eight years after she first applied for membership, Nepal was admitted to the United Nations with twelve other countries as a result of the so-called 'package deal'. Even the Soviet Union, which had doomed Nepal's previous membership application by veto in the Security Council, made it clear that she had had no objection individually to the admission of Nepal. Her objection had been that other similarly qualified countries were not allowed membership.

Nepal feels that to the extent to which the United Nations is made universal by the admission of qualified new members, international peace and cooperation can be guaranteed and the vision of the world community of man realized. Nepal looks upon the United Nations as a buttress of her freedom and rights and a bulwark against the encroachment of bigger powers. Nepal is aware of some of the serious limitations of the United Nations but she feels that everything must be done to strengthen and perfect this organization, since it is the only real hope for peace in the world. It is obvious that small non-aligned countries like Nepal need the protective umbrella of the United Nations more than the members of military alliances or the large and powerful members of the United Nations.

The phenomenal increase in the number of members of the United Nations cannot, however, be said to have made it more effective than before in handling the burning international events involving the very issues of war and peace, such as the wars in South-East Asia, the Middle East, and India and Pakistan during the nineteen-seventies, and the basic questions of disarmament and the limitation of strategic arms. The United Nations was more or less helpless against the emerging situation of war between India and Pakistan in late 1971, and was completely by-passed when the so-called end to the Vietnam war was negotiated in 1972. Again, the United Nations was only belatedly brought in, by the back door as it were, to help restore peace in the Middle East following the Yom Kippur war between Israel and the Arab countries in the autumn of 1973. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks are being bilaterally carried on between the super-powers outside the purview of the United Nations. Even the membership of China in the United Nations had to be first
settled through bilateral talks between the United States and China. The detente between China and the United States, as that between the United States and the Soviet Union, was worked out outside the scope of the United Nations, although the role and efforts of a large number of states inside and outside the world organization in the 1950s and the 1960s may be said to have paved the way for the all-round relaxation of international tension.

It is indeed a fact that the United Nations has suffered a serious decline in its effectiveness compared to its role and vitality in the second half of the 1950s. The United Nations had been instrumental in securing a peaceful settlement of war in the Middle East, the Congo and Cyprus, and also in preventing what had looked like an imminent crisis in Lebanon. While playing a meaningful role, the United Nations had successfully withstood the direct pressure of the permanent members of the Security Council and the super-powers themselves from time to time. At that time, the United Nations was also fortunate enough to have in the late Dag Hammarskjold a youthful and dynamic Secretary-General who combined a sense of diplomatic shrewdness with a rare gift of statesmanlike vision. Further, he was wholly dedicated to the cause of the United Nations and literally lived and died for it. But the prestige of the United Nations has suffered a steady decline ever since the 1960s and reached an all-time low by 1974.

Nepal feels that the United Nations' peace-keeping efforts should be long-range programmes aimed at eliminating the roots of war rather than at stopping wars after they actually break out. This view accords with the present budgetary priorities of the United Nations since fully 86 per cent of the ordinary budget of the United Nations today (excluding the budget for the emergency peace action in different parts of the world) is devoted to economic and social rather than political activities.

Despite all the efforts at international economic cooperation, foreign aid, and technical assistance, the fact remains that the rich nations are growing richer and the poor nations poorer. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is widening rather than narrowing. The developed countries have annual growth rates of 6, 8, or even 12 per cent, whereas forty of the underdeveloped countries have a meagre growth rate of 2 per cent per annum which in most cases is offset by their rate of population growth. This phenomenon is perhaps more threatening to peace in the world than either the
cold war or the conflict between capitalism and communism.

Bilateral, multilateral and international assistance programmes are designed to close this disparity in national income and growth rates but they do not have enough resources to attain this end. The resources available to the United Nations have been very small, almost negligible, as compared to the resources which have been expended by governments on a bilateral basis. In fact, given adequate resources, the end could be realized and the face of the world could be changed in a generation, and, moreover, astronomical figures would not be needed for the purpose. It would take only a small fraction of money that could be saved by achieving a breakthrough in disarmament to bring about miraculous changes in standards of living throughout the world. Today, billions of dollars go into the arms efforts of nations. And if international aid could only be channelled in a larger measure through the agency of the United Nations it would be free from the suspicion which is so often attached to bilateral assistance.

The expenditure resulting from peace-keeping operations have in recent years put the United Nations in serious financial difficulty. The crisis has raised not only the question of how to finance peace-keeping operations but has also reinforced the need for the reappraisal of what the proper role of the United Nations is or ought to be. The question that has to be answered is this: should the United Nations be just a forum for the exchange of views and the adoption of resolutions? Or should it be something more than that; an agency equipped to move directly into areas where its action is needed? Most of the smaller members of the United Nations would like to see the organization developed as an effective instrument of diplomacy and equipped to move swiftly into areas where its presence might help to safeguard peace. The late Dag Hammarskjold as Secretary-General of the United Nations enjoyed the solid support of the small members of the organization because of his ability to move the United Nations into situations which threatened the possibility of major power bloc confrontation, such as the Congo crisis in the early 1960s. The great powers, on the other hand, prefer the United Nations to be primarily a debating forum and a sounding-board for their policy initiatives. In other words, they do not want to develop the United Nations as a truly effective instrument of diplomacy or action because they cannot be sure that it will always promote their own interests and national policies. National
interests seem to weigh more heavily with great powers than the foundations of peace, international cooperation and welfare for which the United Nations stands.

However, the great powers have a special responsibility for peace in the world, recognized in the charter by the provision of a veto in the Security Council. Indeed the charter itself is based on the principle of great power unanimity and presupposes a modicum of trust and cooperation among the great powers. At times, when the great powers are at cross-purposes on major issues, the United Nations tends to be paralysed. After all, the United Nations represents the will of the nations that compose it and can be only as strong and effective as they make it. Both large and small powers have tried to use the United Nations as an instrument to promote their national policies from time to time and, when they have not been able to do so, they have found fault with the United Nations. A number of major powers in the world seem to have developed the feeling that votes in the General Assembly of the United Nations do not reflect the reality of the international situation in so far as even an overwhelming majority of its members may in fact represent only a small fraction of the entire economic and military power in the world outside. In other words, the votes of most members are out of all proportion to their real weight and influence in the world. If small and medium-sized states which form a majority of the United Nations' members do not take timely cognizance of this fact and stop acting as though their votes are going to change the pattern of power relationships in the world, the whole organization may become ridiculous.

Another cause for some dissatisfaction is the variable quality of international civil servants, experts and specialists appointed to fill positions in the Secretariat and special agencies of the United Nations and its other affiliates. Petty nationalism, even if somewhat vindicated by the charter provision for a balanced distribution of posts among the member states, must not be allowed to come before considerations of merit.

The United Nations must accurately reflect the realities of international politics if it is to succeed in meeting the global crises of the late twentieth century. The admission of China after her prolonged absence should assist in removing some of the limitations implicit in decisions taken without her, especially in relation to disarmament, a lasting political settlement in South-East Asia and the
Pacific. With the addition of new members such as China, the character of the United Nations naturally changes. In its early period, the United Nations was more or less a vehicle of East-West confrontation. Later, with the addition of many Asian and African countries, it became more of an East-Non-aligned-West organization. Now with the representation of China, it is even more complex and fluid. But there can be no doubt that the United Nations is in a better position to solve problems which could not have been solved without China's concurrence and cooperation. Former Chairman Nikita Krushchev of the Soviet Union often talked about the 'inevitability of communism', while President Kennedy of the United States once described democracy as 'the future destiny of mankind'. The United Nations should be able to provide the arena for the great debate on these themes, while at the same time ensuring freedom for small countries to evolve their own ways of life and systems of government without coercion or pressure from either of the international military power blocs.

Foreign Aid and Independent Policy

Democratic stability and progress in Nepal largely depend on her ability to meet the chronic problems of poverty, disease and ignorance. Political freedom and democracy cannot be made intelligible to the people of Nepal or to the people in other parts of Asia except in terms of higher standards of living and better conditions of life. Internal efforts alone may not be adequate for the elimination of want and poverty. As a matter of principle, it is obviously best for a country to endeavour to stand on its own legs as far as possible. Yet in this age of scientific and technological advance the scope for international cooperation in the economic sphere is great. Any kind of aid from outside—and especially from the more developed countries of the West—is apt to engender a sense of suspicion in the minds of the backward countries of Asia, partly because of the colonial records of the western powers and partly because of the vague suspicion that aid from one country to another is seldom inspired by philanthropic motives. In practice, however, Asian countries such as Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have from sheer necessity availed themselves of as much economic and technical aid as possible from outside.

Certain basic problems are raised by Western programmes of technical assistance to Asia. The generally accepted tenet of these
aid programmes is that raising the living standards of the people will automatically strengthen the stability and progress of democracy in backward countries and forestall their adoption of communism. It is often forgotten that democracy is not merely a political structure but also a state of mind.

The West forced itself upon the consciousness of Asia through violent and brutal methods of colonization. The colonial expansion was motivated by the most degraded system of political values. The image of the West which colonialism projected in Asia is vividly reflected in the saying, 'with the merchant comes the musket, with the Bible comes the bayonet', which gained much currency in Nepal during the last decades of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century.

The fear and distrust of the West have a distinct historical basis, and one embedded deep in the Asian memory. With the liquidation of the colonial empires, there has been some change in the way Asia and the West look at each other. But still, the West to an Asian is always preoccupied with power and concerned with the imposition of Western models on situations where they do not fit. This view arises perhaps because the West tends to explain every issue in terms of power. On the other hand, Asians still remain a 'fateful enigma' to the West and often appear as pro-Russian communists, or pro-American, or left-leaning neutralists, modern neutralists, Gaullists and so on—illusions and mirages of the subjective hallucinations of the West. Even with such illusions the West seeks to apply the knowledge and power of its science as a force to deal with human conditions which do not exist in reality. The result is that Asians are bewildered by Western policies they do not understand and which do not come to grips with facts as they know them.

Today Asia's position in regard to the advanced West is characterized by an attitude of ambivalence or ambiguity. On the one hand, there is a rational acceptance of the fact that the technological, scientific and intellectual aspects of Western culture are of universal significance and bear universal application. It is admitted on all sides that if Asian countries are to make any progress in this fast-moving world, they must master the tools and techniques of modern progress without delay. At the same time there is an emotional resistance against slavish imitation of the West or 'Westernization', because Asians are conscious of their own ancient heritage of civili-
zation and because the West is very much associated in the Asian consciousness with colonial exploitation. Asia does not want its traditional ethical and philosophical precepts eroded in the name of Westernization or modernization. However, Asian traditions in religion and philosophy, which have been characterized to some extent in the past by an eclectic spirit of tolerance and understanding, will necessarily have to permit the logic and demonstration of science to correct the archaic, obsolete and superstitious aspects of religious, social and cultural life.

The West for a long time enjoyed a monopoly of science and technology. The backwardness of Asian countries in technology made them lag behind in the march of progress and accounted for their stagnation for at least two-and-a-half centuries. It goes without saying that stagnation is inevitable if there is no change, but change in basic ideas, ideals and attitudes implies violation of traditions which are not easily uprooted. One very crucial factor in lessening the tensions that are building between the have and the have-not nations of the world is a deeper understanding by the West of the peoples of Asia in terms of their philosophical and religious ideals, attitudes and goals. This also presupposes a deeper Asian understanding of the West, not only in terms of its post-colonial motivations but also in terms of its actual respect for individual freedom, dignity of man and rule of law. This kind of understanding alone can bring about an easing of tensions between the developing and developed countries. The lasting friendship and trust of Asian nations can be gained in the long run not through purchase and salesmanship but through broadly sympathetic and imaginative policies, which embrace the concepts of human liberty and rights—policies to which Asian nations can rally without sacrifice of national pride and individual dignity.

The dichotomization of civilization into Eastern and Western seems to be meaningless as an explanation of international tensions and misunderstanding. Tensions do not arise simply from conflicting cultural viewpoints, but from uncivilized elements in cultures, such as irrational prejudices based on colour, caste, creed and religion.

**Politics of Foreign Aid**

The points to be borne in mind at the outset of this section are: first, foreign aid that truly and disinterestedly assists economic development is only a small fraction of the total figure listed as aid;
second, the portion that is channelled through multilateral agencies in a genuinely disinterested manner is a small part of total aid, and third, for the foreseeable future, aid will continue to be used more as an instrument of national policy in international relations than as an inducement to progress. There seems to be, at least for the present, little or no hope that the major donors will adopt such a mechanism as the International Monetary Fund’s Special Drawing Rights (SDRS) to ensure automatic release of funds to the deserving poor at regular intervals, thus relieving them of the agonizing sense of uncertainty in making long-term economic plans and freeing them from the legislative procedures of annual appropriations in donor countries.

During the period immediately following independence, the leaders of many of the newly-emerged nations in Africa and Asia laid so much emphasis on 'aid without strings' that the complex nature of foreign aid was gradually lost sight of in the barrage of propaganda. Despite vociferous statements by the leaders of both aid-giving and aid-receiving countries that foreign aid and trade had nothing to do with politics, aid and trade negotiations were seldom conducted on a purely economic, non-political level. It is important to realize, however, that there is nothing sinister or invidious about foreign aid and trade being politically motivated. Two factors, namely, the desire on the part of the leaders of the new nations to appear fully independent in the eyes of their own people rather than subservient to other countries, and, secondly, the competition among the aid-giving countries to be less vulnerable to the charge of interference, have encouraged the continuance of a myth about 'aid without political strings'. Against this background one must attempt to analyse the role of foreign aid in Nepal. It is important to illustrate the relationship between economic development and foreign aid in the nexus of the interaction of domestic and foreign policies and in conjunction with matters which are not even related to economic or development aid.

The table below shows the flow of aid (grants only) to Nepal in the last few years by major donors:
In addition to the four major donors there are fifteen or twenty others contributing smaller amounts of aid. It was difficult for Nepal to engage in long-range planning when most of the major foreign donors insisted on following their own approach even to the point of retaining the peculiarities of their own accounting procedures. This was hardly compatible with the interests and needs of Nepal. On the other hand, the aid-giving agencies found that the indigenous official procedures and machinery of accounting for governmental expenditure were too centralized and cumbersome, and therefore unsuited to speedy implementation of development projects; hence their initial insistence on following their own accounting procedure for the delegation of a fair measure of financial authority and responsibility to officers in the field.

The major aid-giving agencies in Nepal, such as the United States Agency for International Development (AID) and the Indian Cooperation Mission (ICM), began by following their own respective accounting procedures for all aid expenditures. Meanwhile, however, reforms were planned to modernize the Nepali government’s own accounting procedure and machinery with the help of American technical assistance. This was to be accomplished mainly through the training of personnel and the introduction of modern procedural and institutional changes as soon as trained personnel were available. But following two decades of talk about these much-needed reforms, expenditure on some of the Indian-aided projects is still being accounted for by the Indian Cooperation Mission through its
own procedure, independently of the Government of Nepal, which is merely supplied figures of total expenditure for inclusion in the Annual Development Budget. Complaints are also frequently heard about delay on the part of both the ministries of the Government of Nepal and the aid-giving agencies in approving expenditures on development projects. Consequently, lapse of the budgetary allotments for projects is more often the rule than the exception.

Apart from this, Nepal's inability to order her own priorities in planning and to invite foreign aid for suitable projects designed on her own initiative has led to a situation in which development projects often have to be modified abruptly to accommodate financial offers from external sources based on the foreign donor's assessment of Nepal's needs. For example, at the suggestion of officials of the Asian Development Bank coupled with a promise of financial assistance, a huge expenditure for expansion of airport facilities in different areas of Nepal was abruptly included in the Fourth Five Year Development Plan long after the plan had come into operation. Such a project may be highly desirable in itself, but the manner in which it was accommodated in the Plan was not such as to induce respect for the planning procedure in Nepal. In addition it was likely to create the impression that Nepal's national plan is no better than a catch-all bag for anything that is offered.

In such a situation, however much the Nepali people may claim to determine their own development priorities, they are determined in actuality by foreign donors. The only freedom that Nepal has to exercise as a last resort is to turn down the offer of aid itself. But having embarked upon her development programme relatively late and from a very low base, Nepal will need technical expertise and external financial assistance for a long time to come.

The role of foreign aid in Nepal's road-building projects illustrates the relationship between foreign and domestic policies. It is only natural for the Chinese and the Indians to be interested in the roads connecting Nepal with their own and each other's territories. The Indian aid for the construction of the Kathmandu-Raxaul road (Tribhuvan Rajpath) and Chinese aid for the construction of the Kathmandu-Kodari road (Arniko Rajmarga) can easily be explained in these terms. The Chinese do not mind working on roads in the north near Mongoloid-type people and are inclined to favour labour-intensive projects which will enable them to use local people as well as Chinese. The Indians are also interested in using their own
people on projects in the north in order to monitor closely the Chinese efforts. The Nepal government and the army in Kathmandu, however, would prefer to have a network of roads to facilitate the movement of troops in the hinterland with a view to dealing with situations of domestic unrest effectively should the necessity arise. Hence, the construction of roads is not always governed by the deliberate and purposeful choice of the recipient country but rather by an interplay of a number of factors, chiefly the foreign policy interests of the aid-giving countries.

Even the construction of the East-West Highway in Nepal, a project close to the heart of King Mahendra, in some respects reflects the issues involved in foreign aid. The late King initially gave a call for the execution of the project entirely on the basis of Nepal’s own efforts. Because of poor planning and ineffective supervision, a good deal of popular enthusiasm, as well as efforts and resources, were wasted. The project finally had to be abandoned despite the fact that it had been specially undertaken by a high-powered East-West Highway Committee, consisting of all Cabinet Ministers with King Mahendra himself as Chairman. Following this debacle Nepal approached China for the construction of the Janakpur-Biratnagar sector of the highway through the Nepal Tarai, and China expressed willingness to construct it. After China had actually signed the agreement to construct this section of the road, however, India, which all along had shown no interest in the project at all, came forward with an offer to construct most of the remaining sectors. Then the Nepali government requested the Chinese government to undertake another road in place of the Janakpur-Biratnagar sector of the East-West Highway. At present India is working on most of the sectors of the highway because it does not want the Chinese to work too near its border. This sequence of events in the name of foreign aid reflects the interests of political influence more than anything else.

The figures show that America was spending more than India on development programmes in Nepal from 1951 to 1965 and spent altogether Nepali Rs 114 crores and 10 lakhs by the end of March 1971. India, whose interests in Nepal are more vital than that of any other country, has topped the list of donor countries since 1965-66 and had spent Rs 125 crores by the end of March 1971. China started aiding Nepal only in 1956 and has so far spent approximately Rs 23 crores and 70 lakhs. If the amount of aid were
to be considered the primary index of the aid-giving country's influence in Nepal, the United States should have had more influence than any other country in Nepal, at least during the fifteen years after 1951. But a close examination of Nepal's foreign policy through the years will reveal that Nepal has in practice given greater weight to the attitude of India or China rather than to that of the United States in making foreign policy decisions. This is naturally true because of the predominant influence of the regional balance of power between India and China as the major factor in shaping Nepal's foreign policy.

The pattern of interrelationship between foreign aid and influence in Nepal becomes all the more complicated when we take into account the fact that there was a stage in the evolution of Nepal's foreign policy, roughly from 1955 to 1958, when China would not even mention Nepal independently of India. Strangely enough, during that period India tended to be more apprehensive of the growth of American rather than Chinese influence in Nepal, despite the fact that India and the United States, the two largest democracies in the world, should have had a common interest in the growth of democracy in Nepal. India's attitude may be partly explained by the bitterness towards the United States generated by the American move to include Pakistan along with other countries in the Baghdad Pact and the South-East Asian Treaty Organization as part of the United States' policy to contain communism in Asia. This also furnished an example of how the state of power relations on a global basis can affect international competition in terms of aid and influence even in a remote, small country like Nepal.

Another example of the influence of global power politics upon the aid policies of donor countries even in reference to small, marginal receivers may be seen in the case of Nepal's Road Transport Organization (RTO), established in the 1958-60 period by a tripartite agreement between Nepal, India and the United States. The ostensible purpose of the Road Transport Organization was to facilitate the rapid survey and construction of key roads in Nepal. In actuality, however, the Road Transport Organization was established as a conscious effort to thwart the allegedly expansionist tendencies of China which had already caused the Dalai Lama to flee from Tibet. The tripartite Road Transport Organization was dismantled in 1961 on the plea of the irreconcilability of the approaches of the three parties to the problems of road-building in
Nepal. The real reason for its abolition, however, was that the goals and policies of the three parties vis-a-vis Nepal’s development and external relations were no longer compatible after King Mahendra’s takeover of the government of Nepal on 15 December, 1960.

In the long run, China seems to have gained influence in Nepal by the default of others without doing much on her own. However, since 1966 there has been an appreciable increase in Chinese foreign aid to Nepal. In terms of aid given, China was behind India and the United States till 1967-68 and second only to India from 1968-69. It still remains to be seen whether or not this pattern of foreign aid to Nepal will stabilize as a more or less permanent feature of the regional balance of power between India and China which is itself, of course, conditioned by power relations between the United States and the Soviet Union on a global basis.

The direct interests of the United States and the Soviet Union in Nepal seem to be on the decline, at least for the present, as the competition between India and China for influence tends to intensify. Russian aid to Nepal has been nominal all along notwithstanding the fact that she has been the fourth on the list of donor countries. Britain, with which Nepal allied herself in the two World Wars, and which still recruits soldiers from Nepal for her army, maintains only a minimal interest which is mainly connected to the supply of Gorkha soldiers. With the increase in the number of foreign residential missions in Nepal, more and more countries have come forward to ‘aid’ Nepal in some way or other. But their aid has not been substantial enough to produce a significant change in the pattern of aid and influence outlined above.

NOTE AND REFERENCES

2. Yogi Narahari Nath and Babu Ram Acharya (eds.), Rastrapita Shri 5 Bada Maharaja Prithivinarayan Shah ko Divyopadesh (Divine Counsel of the Father of the Nation, Five Times Illustrious Great Maharaja Prithvinarayan Shah), (Kathmandu: Prithvi Jayanti Samaroha Samiti, 1951, pp. 15-16.
4. Ibid., 29 August, 1856, Nos. 55-63; also see Kanchanmoy Mojumdar, Anglo-Nepalese Relations in the Nineteenth Century (Calcutta: Firma K.L.


6. See Appendix III for the creation of the office of the Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung, and the Roll of Succession to Prime Ministership.

7. Foreign Political Proceedings, A Category, August 1864—No. 51.


10. On 5 October, 1962, Ch'en-yi, then Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister of China stated at a Peking banquet in celebration of the First Anniversary of the Nepal-Chinese Boundary Treaty: 'In case any foreign army makes a foolhardy attempt to attack Nepal...China will side with the Nepalese people.' (New China News Agency Report, 6 October, 1962.)

   The timing of the statement was significant as it coincided with a serious crisis in Nepal-India relations brought about by the armed raids into Nepalese territory by the Nepali Congress rebels based in India.

11. Nehru told the Lok Sabha on 25 November, 1959 that Chou En-lai had in the course of informal conversation with the Indian Ambassador sometime in September 1951 stated something along the following lines:

   'The question of stabilization of the Tibetan frontier was a matter of common interest to India, Nepal and China, and it could best be done by discussions between the three countries'; See Narendra Goyal, *Political History of Himalayan States—India's Relations with Himalayan States since 1947* (New Delhi: Cambridge Book and Stationery Stores, 1964), 2nd ed., p. 29.


14. See Appendix IV for a historical perspective on the existing accord between Nepal and India on mutual security and related matters.


21. See Appendix V for the public exchange of views between the Prime Ministers of Nepal and India following India's offer of help to Nepal at the time of the Kor La Pass incident on the Nepal-Tibet Border in 1960.

A. International Relations: Nepal as a Zone of Peace

Nepal’s attempt to have the country declared a zone of peace has been central to its foreign policy initiatives in recent years. To understand Nepal’s international personality therefore it is necessary to study in some detail the motivations and compulsions of this initiative against its background.

The proposal can be traced back to King Birendra’s statement at the Non-aligned Summit in Algeria in 1973. In the course of his statement on 8 September, 1973, the King said, ‘Nepal, situated between two of the most populous countries in the world, wishes within her frontiers, to be enveloped in a zone of peace.’

It is difficult to say whether Nepal’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the King’s Prime Minister and Foreign Minister had sounded out other governments beforehand on their likely reactions to the King’s proposal. None of the representatives of the powers attending the summit conference publicly responded to it at the time. Nor were there any further diplomatic efforts by Nepal to have the peace zone proposal endorsed by other countries until the King’s coronation on 25 February, 1975.

In his historic address at the open air public reception on the occasion of his coronation, attended by many foreign dignitaries, King Birendra once again expressed his wish that all friendly powers, and the neighbouring states in particular, would recognize Nepal as a zone of peace:

And if today, peace is an overriding concern with us, it is only because our people genuinely desire peace in our country, in our region and everywhere in the world. It is with this earnest desire to institutionalize peace that I stand to make this proposition—a proposition that my country, Nepal, be declared a zone of peace.
To underline his plea, the King added:

As heirs to a country that has always lived in independence, we wish to see that our freedom and independence shall not be thwarted by the changing flux of time when understanding is replaced by misunderstanding, when conciliation is replaced by belligerency and war.

The King’s overriding desire to immunize Nepal against the periodical ups and downs in the relations between its neighbours, and against the possibility of the ultimate breakdown of those relations, leads one to believe that what he has in mind is an international guarantee, more or less on the Swiss model, of Nepal’s independence, sovereignty and neutrality in the event of war in the region. The Motherland, an English language Nepali daily, which reportedly has close connections with the Palace, dropped a discreet hint about the nature of this concept of a peace zone by characterizing it as the ‘often-expressed but never seriously taken idea of making Nepal a Switzerland of the East.

External Reactions to the King’s Proposal

The Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., Tura Bai Kulatov, somewhat unwittingly became the first foreign leader to endorse the royal proposal. However, Soviet enthusiasm about the zone of peace seemed to suffer a subsequent decline and the Soviet Ambassador, K.B. Udumyan, at a press conference on 5 March, 1976, interpreted the initial gesture merely as Soviet support of Nepal’s policy of positive non-alignment and of the King’s desire not to allow Nepal to be an area of tension and a centre for hostilities against other countries. The change in the Soviet attitude apparently reflected an attempt to tie the King’s proposal to the oft-repeated Soviet demand that the allegedly anti-Soviet and anti-India propaganda conducted by the embassies of China and Pakistan in Nepal cease.

China and Pakistan took a little longer than the Soviet Union to express their approval of the royal wish to have Nepal accepted as a zone of peace but, in the course of only two or three days, they not only welcomed the zone of peace proposal but also pledged their full support for its implementation. The reaction of India’s two adversaries and competitors in the region was predictable. The proposal, if put into effect, would embarrass India by making
untenable some of the obligations and practices under the existing Nepal-India treaty.

As far as the other powers having diplomatic relations with Nepal are concerned, their endorsement of the royal wish to have Nepal as a zone of peace entailed no policy consequences or commitments for them. Hence, they appeared to be more than willing to gain the personal goodwill of the ruler of Nepal by lending verbal support to his proposal. India—whose interests would be affected by any change in Nepal's traditional policy of cooperation with it in military, political and economic spheres—hesitated to react quickly to the King's proposal.

As Edward Mirow, the outgoing Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, had remarked, if the royal proclamation about Nepal being a zone of peace were just a pious declaration of peaceful intent and purpose on the part of Nepal, the land of the birth of Buddha, the Enlightened, no one would or should have any objection to it. However, if this declaration is meant to be the first step toward the realization of a definite diplomatic goal by restructuring the existing pattern of regional interrelationships, it must be presumed that the King's government, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had already undertaken a full and detailed analysis of the impact of such a declaration on the existing treaty obligations and practices of Nepal, and had also examined Nepal's options in the changed context. If the King's government had done its homework, it should not have been difficult for it to explain to all concerned the practical consequences and implications of the change in the existing pattern of relationships in the region likely to be brought about by a general endorsement of the declaration. Any momentous declaration of this nature presupposes a broad range of diplomatic initiative and effort.

Nothing is known about Nepal's diplomatic activity and efforts in preparing the ground for the King's declaration of Nepal as a zone of peace. Had Nepal's tactic been to gain its diplomatic end in such a vital matter by a surprise announcement, it was foredoomed to failure. Following the King's coronation speech, his Foreign Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs appeared to be in great haste to solicit and secure endorsement of the proposal by as many states as possible. But unless the proposal is accepted by India it will have no significance in practical terms. Because of the geopolitical and economic reality which faces Nepal, India's
acceptance of the proposal is crucial to the attainment of whatever aims Nepal may have had in putting it forward. In an attempt to bring pressure to bear on India, Nepal sought and readily obtained verbal endorsement by some major powers in the world, such as the U.S.A., and by countries within the region itself, in addition to China and Pakistan. India does not seem to have responded to the pressure from Nepal so far.

According to the government-controlled newspapers and radio in Nepal, the Indian authorities were fully informed of all the implications of the zone of peace proposal immediately after the coronation. Again, neither of the governments revealed to the press or public even the barest outline of the proposal. It is not known whether this matter was discussed at the meeting King Birendra had with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the Autumn of 1975 in New Delhi, following the Nepali Foreign Minister’s ‘atmosphere building’ visit to India earlier in the year. It was only towards the end of January 1976 that the Indian Foreign Minister, Y.B. Chavan, visited Kathmandu at the invitation of his Nepal counterpart. No joint communique was issued at the end of this visit, notwithstanding the Indian Foreign Minister’s meetings with the King and the newly appointed Prime Minister, Dr Tulsi Giri. When Chavan was asked by the press about the result of his visit, he used the formula ‘instructive and useful’, often employed when little has been achieved.

The government of Nepal may have initially felt that Mrs Gandhi’s Emergency Declaration on 26 June, 1975, might facilitate the settlement of a wide range of long-standing economic and political differences for two reasons. First, because the Indian government might no longer find it convenient to connive at the anti-Nepal government activities of the Nepali democratic opposition in India; second, because in the post-Emergency era some of the India-based Nepali leaders would not be able to exploit their connection with certain political factions in India. Palace circles in Kathmandu expressed marked satisfaction at the similarity between Mrs Indira Gandhi’s arguments in support of her resort to Emergency powers and the late King Mahendra’s justification of his abolition of Nepal’s parliamentary system. However, as we shall see, despite the mutual recognition of the need for a re-definition of Nepal-India relations on more relevant terms, there has so far been no settlement of the outstanding political and economic issues. The restrained glee with which the Palace circles welcomed the Emergency in India is fast
giving way to a growing concern that, in the absence of democratic restraints, Mrs Gandhi might prove more intractable.

Immediately after his appointment as Prime Minister on 1 December, 1975, Dr Tulsi Giri said he would do everything possible to set Nepal's relations with India on a secure footing. He recommended a political rather than an administrative approach to the problem of improving relations between Nepal and India, and creating a stable basis of mutual understanding on all matters of common interest. It is not, however, clear what Giri precisely meant by a 'political approach' to the solution of the problem. Does his expression merely reflect a change in tactics by implying that the talks between the two governments should henceforth take place at the Ministerial or the Prime Ministerial level, or does it go further and embrace the broader question of achieving political understanding between the two governments on substantive issues? The issues on which political accommodation between the two countries are most urgently needed are, firstly, the present Nepali government's suspicion of India's inherent sympathy and support for the democratic movement in Nepal, and secondly, India's unease about Nepal's willingness to respect the existing treaty understandings in the context of future security threats. Dr Giri, an experienced politician known for his pragmatism and skill, was expected to play his cards adeptly in negotiating terms with the government of India during his visit to the country in April 1976. However, the atmosphere in the Nepali court, as reflected by editorial comments in the controlled press, seems to have hindered Dr Giri from achieving a real understanding with India on vital issues.

On the eve of Giri's April visit to Delhi, the media started finding fault with India's lack of warmth and support for the King's zone of peace proposal. Since the press was now operating under strict censorship in India, as a result of the state of Emergency, the following excerpt from Sunanda K. Datta Ray's article in The Statesman was taken by the Nepali press to reflect the official attitude to the proposal:

There is no reason to suppose that Nepal's geopolitical importance to India is greater than it is to China. Sino-Indian relations are hardly of a kind to permit Peking and New Delhi to set aside their differences and agree to underwrite Nepal's peace. The kind
of rapprochement that would permit an encouraging joint venture would surely wipe out the raison d'être for King Birendra's proposal: It hardly makes sense to suggest a zone of peace sandwiched between two friendly countries.\textsuperscript{6}

The Nepali newspapers have refused to accept the geopolitical reality as represented by this quotation. There is disagreement not only on interpretation but also on the facts themselves, as will be clear from the following excerpt from an editorial in \textit{The Rising Nepal} of 23 February, 1976:

Though the proposal for a zone of peace has won the support of a fairly large number of countries, including those in this region, there are, apparently, some reservations in India, judging from the fact that the proposal has still to be endorsed by New Delhi, and the sporadic comments published in the Indian press. Much of the hesitancy is due to the feeling that the proposal ignores the so-called reality that Nepal lies south of the Himalayas and that Nepal's geopolitical importance cannot be the same to India and China. But since Nepal's territory lies both to the north and the south of the Himalayas, \it{there is no reason to suppose that Nepal's geopolitical importance to India is greater than it is to China}. Prospects of institutionalizing peace in this region cannot certainly be less appreciable to one than to the other. In other words, there is certainly no cause for alarm or misunderstanding over the implications of Nepal's proposal for a zone of peace. [Italics supplied]

The Nepali language daily \textit{Gorkhapatra}, also government-owned, which has the largest circulation in Nepal, has been more explicit. It stated succinctly in its leader of 26 February, 1976, Nepal's reasons for advocating the zone of peace proposal:

Nepal may be involved in the current rivalry and conflict in the region because of its geopolitical situation. Nepal has been successful in remaining neutral in such regional rivalry and conflict in the past, and the proposal for a zone of peace has emanated from the desire to institutionalize peace in order to be free from worries in the future.

Another English language periodical tried to turn the tables on India by expressing surprise that India, which had itself sought
to institutionalize peace in the Indian Ocean by having that area declared as a zone of peace, should fail to see the reason behind the Nepali proposal. The *Weekly Mirror* pointed out that Nepal's proposal for a zone of peace was intended as an insurance against the extension of Sino-Indian conflict into Nepali territory. The editorial sought to commend the proposal to India by suggesting that it would relieve India of the responsibilities for protecting Nepal's 600-mile border with China, thereby leaving all the Indian armed forces free to be deployed entirely along the Sino-Indian border. All these arguments were put forward to counter the Indian contention, advanced in a *Times of India* editorial, that:

India's security is tied up with Nepal's in a way China's is not. While an Indian presence in the Kingdom cannot threaten China's security, China's presence can threaten India's security. The China-Nepal border is demarcated by the world's mightiest mountains but there is no natural barrier of any kind on the India-Nepal frontier.¹

As opinions expressed in the controlled press of both countries are likely to present official points of view, they deserve that much more attention. The differences between Nepal and India, as reflected in the press comments of the respective countries, can be reduced to three basic questions: (1) What is the geopolitical reality? (2) Are the security interests of Nepal and India indeed bound up together as recognized by the treaty? (3) Will the acceptance of the proposal for having Nepal declared a zone of peace perpetually free the region, or even Nepali territory alone, from being the scene of armed conflict?

To begin with discussion of the geopolitical reality. The fact that some of Nepal's high Himalayan valleys lie beyond the main Himalayan crest and are enclosed between it and the Tibetan border mountains does not mean that Nepal has an equal degree of interdependence with its neighbours on both sides. Virtually the entire population of Nepal lives to the south of the Himalayas, and the largest portion of Nepal's gross national income comes from the low-lying flat land of the Tarai region which is, geographically speaking, part of the Indo-Gangetic plains. Apart from the often-mentioned traditional ties of religion and culture between Nepal and India, there are two other compelling practical considerations
which are bound to incline Nepal, in practice, towards India, notwithstanding Nepal’s inherent psycho-political fears of Indian dominance. Nepal is bounded by Indian territory on three sides and has no access to the sea except through India. The Tibetan region of China, which borders Nepal to the north, is far removed from the centres of population, and of agriculture and industry in China. It is, therefore, not in a position to supply Nepal’s basic needs as promptly and economically as India can. The tradition of mutual understanding between Nepal and India on matters of security and defence, extending over a period of more than a century and a half, cannot be abandoned at will. Nepal may feel that it can defend itself without India’s cooperation, but India can exert leverage to make Nepal cooperate in India’s vital defence aims.

Nepal’s existing treaty relations with India respect tradition in matters of mutual security. The treaty of 1950, and the letter exchanged with it, as we have seen, require the two countries ‘to consult with each other and devise effective counter-measures in the event of any threat to the security of the other’. This provision has more teeth to it than the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 which provided merely for mutual consultation in the case of the emergence of a threat to the peace and security of either country. The Nepal-India Treaty of 1950 resembles the Soviet-Finnish Treaty of 1948 (which provides for joint action against foreign aggressors on Finnish soil), with the important difference that the former does not restrict joint actions against a foreign aggressor attacking on Nepali soil alone. However — to make a parallel with another Soviet treaty, that between the U.S.S.R. and Mongolia—the 1950 Nepal-India treaty, while envisaging possible Nepali-Indian joint action on Indian Soil, does not compel Nepalis to accept, ‘for their own protection’, Indian soldiers on Nepali soil.

Nepal’s attempt to have itself declared a zone of peace may require a change in mutual obligations and understandings. It may end the practice of allowing the recruitment of Gorkha soldiers for the Indian and British armies, regulated by the Tripartite Agreement of 1947 and periodically amended. Last, but not least, is the question whether general endorsement of a zone of peace will, in itself, ensure perpetual peace in Nepal and free it once and for all from involvement in armed conflict. In this connection, it is appropriate to consider whether Nepal is in a position to follow
Switzerland in having its permanent neutrality universally recognized.

Historically, the scant regard shown by the warring sides for their declarations confirming the permanent peace and neutrality of Belgium in the First World War points to the unreliability of such pious declarations as effective protection for a small country. In today's world the Charter of the United Nations itself extends to member states some kind of protection against aggression.

There are several reasons why Nepal is not in a position to copy the Swiss model. First, Nepal is not economically and militarily as strong as Switzerland. Second, Switzerland borders on three countries—Germany, Italy and France—and is economically interdependent with all three to approximately the same extent. Nepal borders on two giant neighbours but is more dependent on one, India. Furthermore, the historical antecedents in the case of Nepal and Switzerland are different. Switzerland has retained its freedom by compelling the neighbouring countries to respect its neutrality. Nepal, during the last century and a half, has maintained its peace and national independence by acting in concert with the stronger government of India.

Nobody can find fault with Nepal's desire to free itself from entanglement in potential armed conflict in the region. But Nepal successfully avoided being involved in the regional armed conflicts of 1962, 1965 and 1971 even without having any generally endorsed certification such as a zone of peace. If Nepal's experience in the past is to serve as a guide to the future, Nepal should rely on its diplomatic skill in manipulating its relations with its neighbours as the exigencies arise. No country can be immune to the pressure of ideas and events in neighbouring regions, least of all Nepal, one of the least developed countries. The changing pattern of interrelationships between the south Asian countries, particularly fluctuations in the relations between India and China, will no doubt affect Nepal in the future as in the past. While Nepal cannot be insulated from the effect of the state of relations between its neighbours, empty declarations of peaceful intent and purpose, and treaties of permanent neutrality are not a substitute for diplomacy. Nepal's purpose will be served by continuing to regulate its dealings with its giant neighbours on a pragmatic basis rather than by seeking to institutionalize a procedure based on an entirely theoretical concept. It is neither diplomatic nor politic for public
officials to arbitrarily define their nation’s ties to immediate neighbours whose goodwill they need in all circumstances.

Plea for Regional Cooperation

The overthrow of the pro-Indian Mujib regime in Bangladesh seems to have brought about an identity of outlook on the problems of regional cooperation between Nepal and Bangladesh. But it is doubtful whether their pleas for regional cooperation will help them gain economic concessions from India. In the changed context, Bangladesh belatedly endorsed Nepal’s proposal for a zone of peace. Nepal’s motivation in concluding a number of bilateral agreements with Bangladesh was to pressurize India into endorsing Nepal’s proposal and to gain greater concessions from her when the existing Nepal-India treaty of trade and transit came up for revision in August 1976. On 2 April, 1976, less than a week before Prime Minister Tulsi Giri’s scheduled official visit to India with Harka Gurung, Minister of State for Industry and Commerce, Nepal and Bangladesh signed four agreements on trade, transit, technical cooperation and air services. The agreements were negotiated by an important delegation under the leadership of Dr M. N. Huda, ministerial-level adviser to the President of Bangladesh. Dr Huda and other members of the delegation had arrived in Kathmandu on 31 March, 1976, and on the same day Nepal also announced the appointment of the retired Inspector-General of Police in charge of Intelligence, Harka Bahadur Thapa, as its first resident Ambassador to Bangladesh.

Nepal’s move to draw closer to Bangladesh would perhaps have been less suspect in India if it had preceded the assassination of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 15 August, 1975. At a press conference on the eve of his departure to India, Prime Minister Giri felt compelled to state: ‘Nepal cannot be concerned with whether India may be offended by the recent visit of the Bangladesh delegation to Nepal. As a sovereign nation, Nepal has the right to develop, in its national interest, relations with any country?’

Nepal had long desired additional access to the sea through the existing Indian railway-line to Bangladesh territory, via Radhikapur in the West Dinajpur district in the Indian state of West Bengal. In the mid-sixties the government of Pakistan had agreed to grant Nepal access to the sea through its ports in what was then East Pakistan. The government of India had also conceded to Nepal, at
least in principle, the use of the overland trade route to East Pakistan via Radhikapur. Nepal, in turn, subsequently sought to establish its prescriptive claim to the use of the overland route by sending loads of medicinal herbs on the backs of porters through this point of entry to what was then East Pakistan.

With the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan in 1965, Nepal postponed the enforcement of its claim until a more favourable time. Even the present moment may not prove to be entirely propitious for the culmination of Nepal’s efforts to gain an additional outlet to the sea. Serious strains began to develop in Indo-Bangladesh relations as a result of the replacement of Sheikh Mujib’s regime and the assumption of the presidency by Khandokar Mustaq Ahmed.9 The relations between India and Bangladesh further deteriorated with the cold-blooded murder of the four pro-Indian Bangladesh national leaders in the Dacca-Central jail, following the collapse of the counter-coup of 3 November, 1975, led by Brigadier Khalid Musharraf who was favoured by the Indian government.

Nepal’s plea for regional cooperation may not have yielded immediate results at that time, since Indo-Bangladesh relations, rather than improving, were again impaired after the Martial Law administration was established on 7 November, 1976, in Bangladesh.10 Notwithstanding these events, Dr Harka Gurung, Nepal’s Minister of State for Industry and Commerce, appealed for regional Nepal-Bangladesh agreements: ‘India, Bangladesh and Nepal should therefore consider the question of regional cooperation in exploiting Nepal’s abundant hydro-power.’11

The letter accompanying the 1950 treaty between Nepal and India, apart from containing mutual assurances about meeting foreign threats, establishes a Nepali-Indian ‘special relationship’, independant of the ties of either with third parties. It specifically provides for cooperation between Nepal and India in exploiting to mutual advantage natural and industrial resources in Nepal. As of now, more than ninety per cent of Nepal’s trade is with India and almost all foreign private investment in Nepal is Indian. However, Nepal has long felt that in its overseas trade it has not had a fair deal from India. Nepal has, therefore, always shown a keen interest in securing some kind of international guarantee for land-locked countries’ access to the sea. Any form of international guarantee of the rights of the land-locked countries in these respects cannot
disregard the time-honoured concept of sovereignty of the coastal state over its territory. Thus, Nepal will always, in practice, have to depend on bilateral agreements with India for a solution to its chronic problems of transit and trade with overseas countries. It is also apparent that India will always be in a position to apply political leverage by exploiting Nepal's dependence on it for transit facilities. The only reasonable choice open to Nepal, under the circumstances, is to evolve a system of economic cooperation with India on a mutually advantageous basis while, at the same time, continuing a mutually acceptable assurance that each other's security needs would be respected.

Assessment of the Nepali Prime Minister's Official Visit to New Delhi

Dr Giri, upon his return to Kathmandu from his official visit in June 1976, claimed complete success for his mission to India when he said to the press: 'My main purpose was to lay the policy framework for durable Nepal-India relations through free and frank discussions with the Indian leaders. This purpose has been achieved.' But the Kathmandu newspaper, including the government controlled and financed English language Kathmandu daily, The Rising Nepal, did not think that the visit had been entirely successful. The following is a typical comment: 'We have not, apparently, been successful in securing India's support for the peace zone proposal. Similarly, Indian press comments do not indicate that India had endorsed Nepal's proposal to separate politics from economics.'

Giri seems to have tried his best to gain the confidence of the Indian government by expressing his full faith in its verbal assurance that it would not help the efforts of B. P. Koirala and other Nepali leaders in exile to restore democracy in Nepal. Giri failed to secure Indian support for King Birendra's proposal for a zone of peace. However, he sought to assuage the feelings of his Indian hosts by saying that Nepal did not intend to press for the internationalization of this proposal. He regretted that the proposal 'had unfortunately got linked to some incidents like Sikkim'. The reference was to demonstrations in Nepal against Sikkim's incorporation into the Indian union in the 1973-75 period. With regard to seeking further economic concessions from India, Giri simply said that he was not wholly satisfied with the actual implementation of the
1971 Treaty of Trade and Transit but had nothing against its substance or contents.

In an exclusive interview published in the Arati Weekly of 21 April, 1976, Giri, in reacting to public discussion of these issues, is reported to have said:

The apprehension being raised about my press statements on Nepal-India relations are nothing but figments of the imagination. These statements were made in the best interests of Nepal, and do not, in any way, suggest any tilt towards any country. All I said was that Nepal-India relations are based on the principle of equality, as with other friendly countries, but the geopolitical compulsions were such that, at times, the impression is created that Nepal’s relations with India are somewhat different. However, it would be wrong to equate geographical proximity with a special relationship in the political sense of the term.

Asked, in the same interview, why the Indian side did not seem enthusiastic about Nepal’s projected zone of peace, Giri admitted that there were some Indian misgivings which the Nepali side had done its best to dispel. Giri, however, ended his statement on a hopeful note by saying, ‘I hope our efforts will yield good results’.

Some ten days later, Giri denied in an interview that he had visited India to discuss a new trade and transit treaty with India, stating, ‘I only drew the attention of India to the fact that the 1971 Treaty is not being properly implemented.’

Giri appeared to be on the defensive and once again the bogey of ‘special relationship’ seems to have been raised by vested interests for their own purposes. Tanka Prasad Acharya, a former Prime Minister in the pre-1959 era and openly pro-Chinese, adopted an unusually clear-cut stand on the question of Nepal’s relations with India in an exclusive press interview, carried by the Samaj, a Nepali language daily known to be sympathetic to him. While demanding the revision of the 1950 political treaty of peace and friendship between Nepal and India, Tanka Prasad said: ‘The letter exchanged at the time of the signing of the treaty in 1950 gives the impression that we have concluded a security pact with India. The letter also contains provisions which are not favourable to Nepal.’

Asked to comment on the view expressed by some people that
the 1950 Treaty had already lapsed, *ipso facto*, as their provisions had not been respected in many cases, Tanka Prasad said that Mrs Gandhi was quite correct in pointing out to Giri that 'Nepal's relations with India were unlike those with other countries? The former Prime Minister of Nepal further added that he completely endorsed Mrs Gandhi's interpretation of the treaty, and from what the Indian Prime Minister had said it was also clear that the 1950 Nepal-India Treaty stood intact. In answer to a question whether India would accept Nepal's proposal for a zone of peace, Tanka Prasad said: 'His Majesty's government should first initiate appropriate steps to revise the 1950 Treaty in order to give effect to the peace zone proposal put forward by His Majesty.'

If the government of Nepal shares Tanka Prasad's view on the 1950 Treaty between Nepal and India for mutual cooperation on security and economic development it should, as suggested by him, secure a release from the obligations acquired through the accompanying letter. As far as the Indian attitude is concerned, Mrs Gandhi has made India's position very clear. During Giri's visit to New Delhi she affirmed that the relations between India and Nepal were not of the same kind as their relations with other countries and recommended that Nepal should not take India for granted. She is reported to have also told Giri that 'Indo-Nepalese relations were different from those with such countries as China and Russia.'

Nepal has not given up its persistent plea for acceptance of its proposal for a zone of peace. Addressing a national youth seminar at Lalitpur on 6 May, 1976, the Nepali Foreign Minister, Krishna Raj Aryal, said:

In the light of the changing international situation, it is not adequate to declare the Indian Ocean area alone as a zone of peace. If Nepal, which has five hundred miles of frontiers, is declared a zone of peace, this will enable both of its neighbours to reduce the military expenditure which they have to bear at present in policing their borders with our own country. The justification of our proposal will become clear once the concerned countries realize the importance of our guarantees that our territory will not be allowed to be used contrary to the interests of any of our neighbours. His Majesty has made it clear that the peace zone proposal stems from Nepal's desire to institutionalize peace in
order to preserve its security and independence, and achieve political stability and economic progress. The proposal has not been made at the urging or under the threat or any other country. Our friends should understand that it is possible for nations to reach an agreement on some basic questions, not withstanding their differences over other issues.  

Contrary to Prime Minister Giri’s earlier assurance to the press in Delhi, this proposal for having Nepal as a zone of peace was in some measure internationalized by other interested parties.

Let us now consider the Chinese attitude towards the proposal. Speaking at the official banquet in honour of Pakistan’s Prime Minister Bhutto in Peking on 26 May, 1976, Premier Hua Kuo-feng of China said: ‘We firmly support the just stand taken by His Majesty the King of Nepal in declaring Nepal a zone of peace. We are ready to assume appropriate commitments arising therefrom.’

It was against this background that King Birendra’s visit to China acquired added significance. King Birendra visited the Szechwan and Tibetan regions of China from 2 to 9 June, 1976, on the invitation of the late Marshal Chu Teh, then Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, and Prime Minister Hua Kuo-feng of the State Council of that country. No ranking Nepali leader, or for that matter no foreign head of state, had previously been taken to this area of China, which directly borders Nepal. The visit was presumably planned to present the ruler of Nepal with an opportunity to see for himself what communist rule had been able to do for the backward people in those areas. Presumably, the Chinese also hoped to give him an idea of potential commercial and economic relations between Nepal and the neighbouring areas in China.

Possibly the first trans-Himalayan flight in the history of civil aviation took place on 2 June, 1976. The Boeing 727 ‘Yeti’ of the Royal Nepal Air Lines, serving as the Royal flag carrier, took King Birendra and his entourage from Kathmandu to Chengtu, capital of Szechwan Province of China—a distance of about 803 miles—in two hours and thirty-five minutes. According to reporters accompanying King Birendra, ‘the flight has underscored the geographical proximity between Nepal and the People’s Republic of China,’ and added that ‘the Himalaya, if it constitutes a barrier
at all, is an obstacle only to the rain-laden clouds coming in from the Bay of Bengal.\textsuperscript{21} At Chengtu Airport the royal party was received by the Chinese Prime Minister Hua Kuo-feng and the former Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan-hua and other dignitaries. At the official banquet in honour of King Birendra the same evening, the Chinese Premier welcomed the King on behalf of Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Marshal Chu Teh, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the Chinese Government and the Chinese people. He said, among other things, that:

The proposal put forward by His Majesty King Birendra to declare Nepal a zone of peace reflects the strong desire of the people of Nepal to safeguard their national independence and state sovereignty. The Chinese government firmly supports this just proposition. The Chinese people will, as always, stand together with you forever in the struggle against hegemonism and expansionism.\textsuperscript{22}

The Chinese Premier also complimented the King on his effective military operation against the Tibetan Khampa tribemen, who had operated as anti-Chinese guerrillas on the Nepal-Tibet border for more than a decade.\textsuperscript{23} In his reply to the toast, King Birendra referred to the age-old relations between Nepal and China, countries with a common border, and to a lasting tradition of friendship, understanding and mutual cooperation between the two, notwithstanding 'the whims of history'. Further, the King particularly expressed appreciation of Chinese support for his zone of peace proposal, and said, presumably with implied reference to the alleged Indian support of the underground movement for the restoration of parliamentary democracy in Nepal:

We will not allow the use of our soil for any activity hostile to any country, and we expect reciprocity in this matter. My proposal that Nepal be declared a zone of peace aims, in its essence, at institutionalizing this basic thrust of our foreign policy. Your prompt support for this proposal is deeply appreciated by the people of my country.\textsuperscript{24}

According to a pro-Soviet English language daily in India, \textit{The Patriot}, 'the King of Nepal has been shown unheard of courtesies
by the new Prime Minister [of China] who travelled all the way from his capital to Chengtu only to show him how strong the Chinese Army and Air Force is in Tibet.'

It is too early to say whether this visit will lead to the growth of permanent relations between Nepal and the neighbouring areas of China. However, in view of a slight improvement in the regional outlook, as indicated by the exchange of ambassadors between India and China, and the resumption of direct air communication and diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan, King Birendra’s visit to China was less likely to be misunderstood by India. Nepal’s future foreign policy may depend on Chinese military and diplomatic capability in the region south of the Himalayas and on what China has to offer in the shape of economic assistance to Nepal through those neighbouring areas.

Recently, King Birendra seems to have lost some of his enthusiasm for having Nepal recognized as a zone of peace, particularly by its immediate neighbours. At the Non-aligned Summit held in mid-August 1976 the King did not even mention that three years earlier, at a similar meeting in Algeria in 1973, he had for the first time expressed Nepal’s wish for a zone of peace. In Colombo the King did not ask the participating countries to support his proposal but did refer to it in passing, emphasizing peace as an essential condition for Nepal’s economic development.

One may speculate on the factors that may have contributed to the King’s stance in Colombo. He may have come to the conclusion that the Non-aligned Summit was not the proper place to pressurize India into endorsing his proposal which, after all, involved prior settlement of questions of mutual security and defence, based on long-standing bilateral understanding and treaties between Nepal and India.

Whatever his present attitude towards China, the King appears to be more and more willing to dilute the form and content of his original proposal, or at least to change its direction and thrust in an effort to draw closer to India. Only time will reveal the motivations underlying the King’s reference to the proposal at the Non-aligned Summit. After expressing his support for the declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace and for the Kuala Lumpur declaration of a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality for the ASEAN countries, His Majesty continued:
In February, 1975 I made the proposition that Nepal be declared a zone of peace. This proposition implies a desire, on our part, to look for the permanence of our country's destiny, when, free from turmoil or turbulence, we can work out our future in peace and freedom. For a country placed in a geopolitical situation that Nepal is, there is nothing unnatural in harbouring a desire for peace. Nepal wants no situation, either for the present or in perpetuity, that gives room for tension, fear or anxiety or instability. It is therefore only natural that she should wish to follow the principle of non-alignment scrupulously. This is not to suggest that the Nepalese have misgivings about other countries. Far from it, we have relations of peace, friendship and cooperation with all countries of the world, particularly with our neighbours, and our efforts to develop these relations further on the basis of cooperation and understanding, continue. . . . Being a small landlocked country, we hardly can afford to waste our resources on presumption. On the contrary, exigencies demand that we continue to intensify our efforts at economic development. Hence, the zone of peace proposition which, in our view, gives substance to our faith in the principles of both the United Nations and non-alignment.26

Obviously, King Birendra is desirous of showing how his proposal is consistent with the purpose and principles of the U.N. Charter, and of non-alignment and peaceful co-existence. Meanwhile, national propaganda to have Nepal recognized as a zone of peace continued unabated. The political resolution adopted by the national rally of Panchayat workers in September 1975, states: 'His Majesty's proposition that Nepal be declared a zone of peace constitutes additional evidence of the convergence of the desires and aspirations of the King and the people.'27

Interested foreign powers have demonstrated their interest in keeping the subject alive. Addressing the U.N. General Assembly in New York on 5 October, 1976, the former Chinese Foreign Minister, Chiao Kuan-hua, declared his country's strong support of Nepal's proposition.28 In an editorial captioned 'A Fine Gesture', Nepal's official English daily reported:

This is perhaps the first time that such an endorsement of Nepal's proposal for a zone of peace has formally been made at the
United Nations. The Chinese declaration comes after Premier Hua Kuo-feng's statement in May 1976, that China is prepared to assume appropriate commitments arising from its support to the proposition, and only a few months after His Majesty's successful and friendly visit to China in June, 1976. . . .China has thus helped to further internationalize the proposal, and thereby aided in its ultimate achievement.29

From Peking, King Birendra carried his campaign for international support of his proposal to Moscow. The King may have hoped to secure sufficient Russian support to influence India into endorsing the proposal, or at least to bring about a softening of the Indian attitude towards it. During his seven-day state visit to the U.S.S.R., the King was entertained at an official banquet, given by Nikolai V. Podgorny, President of the Standing Committee of the Supreme Soviet. In replying to the toast, the King referred to the zone of peace proposal as one inspired by a genuine concern for peace and progress, and an insurance that Nepali territory would not be used for hostility against other countries, nor territory of other countries against Nepal.30

Podgorny did not refer to the King's zone of peace proposal in his opening speech at the banquet, nor was there any reference to it in the joint communique issued at the end of the state visit.

In the course of his speech to the Soviet-Nepal Friendship Society in Moscow on 18 November, 1976, King Birendra expanded his ideas, prefacing his remarks with the statement that Nepal had mostly friendly relations with countries representing 'two of the important emergent forces of Asia' (presumably meaning India and China, representing republican democracy and communism). To what he had already said earlier, the King added that the proposal aimed in some measure at reducing areas of tension and brightening the prospects of peace. It was not conceived in a spirit of rivalry or power politics but to maintain for Nepal a durable sovereign identity which did not fluctuate with the degree of relationship among nations outside Nepal's frontiers.31

It is clear that the emphasis of the King's zone of peace proposal has shifted somewhat since its original enunciation. Possibly, India has used the political and economic leverage it has on Nepal to wean the King away from the initial form of the proposal. The King may have changed his stance upon receiving tangible and
concrete assurance that the Indian government would curb the activities of Nepali nationals in India working for the restoration of democratic freedom and rights in Nepal.

But the fact remains that Nepal's pressure tactics have had no effect on India. India has remained obdurate and refused to be bluff ed in a game in which it holds all the trump cards. There has been no softening of India's position towards either the zone of peace proposal or the trade and transit treaty negotiations. In October, India highlighted its displeasure with Nepal by restricting free movement of Nepali citizens across the border in certain designated areas. India wished to retaliate after Nepal had sought to curtail Indian surveillance of the 600-mile Nepal-China border on the north by restricting entry of Indian nationals into the area. India might also have been displeased by the introduction of citizenship certificates in Kathmandu and the Tarai—two areas where Indian nationals are concentrated. But in this game as well India has all the wild cards if one takes into account the fact that millions of Nepalis are settled in different parts of India, and tens of thousands of them, excluding seasonal migratory labour, are directly employed by the government of India in the regular army, armed police, constabulary and border security forces. It is understandable, in view of Nepal's vulnerability to pressures from India, that the reaction of the controlled press of Nepal against India's attitude should have become relatively mild. Despite King's close personal identification with Nepal's zone of peace proposal and the demand for greater freedom of transit, the government of Nepal may be forced to moderate its stand on the question, even at considerable loss of face.

The crackdown by the Indian authorities on the activists of the Nepali opposition in the summer of 1976, and the royal amnesty in December of some of the members of the dissolved parliament and other political leaders living in exile in India might have resulted from a prior understanding between the two governments. The King has also, as we have seen in his speeches in Moscow, reduced his zone of peace proposal merely to this specific: Nepal, on its part, will not allow foreign military bases in its territory, nor will it permit itself to be a centre for hostile propaganda against any country. In return, Nepal will expect the same kind of treatment from other countries in relation to it. This is not quite the same thing as an internationally binding, formal or semi-formal
guarantee of Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutrality in the event of war between its neighbours. Yet this recent change of emphasis in the zone of peace proposal will be a welcome development if it eventually opens the way for achieving a lasting understanding between Nepal and India on the manner and method of economic cooperation between the two countries in the future.

General conclusion

Notwithstanding the pious intentions and professions of the leaders of the nations concerned, the regional balance of power in South Asia is subject to the global balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union, as was clearly indicated by the outcome of the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. China's failure to come to the rescue of Pakistan in late 1971 exposed the limited economic, diplomatic and military capability of China south of the Himalayas. The rise of Bangladesh as an independent state in the face of Peking's determined—if only vocal—opposition is indicative of China's inability to directly challenge the major influence of India backed by the Soviet Union.

Throughout the nineteen-fifties and even in the early nineteen-sixties, the Soviet Union supported China, while the United States supported democratic India as a counterbalance to Communist China in Asia. At present, India seems to enjoy Russia's support as a counter to China's influence in South Asia, while the United States is making assiduous efforts to normalize relations with China and maintaining a low-key profile in South Asia. It may not be incorrect to assume that both of the super-powers, as well as China are, at least for the present, basically interested in the maintenance of peace and stability in south Asia, largely for economic reasons. This conclusion stands, notwithstanding China's occasionally strident gestures and the signs of a possible naval confrontation between the super-powers in the Indian Ocean.

To the United States, south Asia's continuing non-fulfillment of economic aims may indicate the futility of large investment in pluralist, free economies, whereas to the Soviet Union, the non-realization of economic targets in the region may mean the decline and eclipse of most groups that could lead underdeveloped societies into the socialist system. Thus, the United States and the Soviet Union are following similar and potentially parallel policies and are seeking to assist the economic development of the countries
in the region, although with different ends in view. In addition, the super-powers desire the stabilization of the strategic environment in South Asia. Hence their interest in Indo-Pakistani peace and in the maintenance of a relatively high level of Indian conventional military force as something of a counterweight to China.

Meanwhile, it is natural for China to be interested both in exploiting the rivalry between India and Pakistan and in the profitable opportunities for diplomacy with the states in the Himalayan region. Thus, Chinese policy, at least for the foreseeable future, will emphasize the role of Pakistan and the Himalayan states in South Asia and will continue to press any possible advantages against India. Nonetheless, it must be noted that China has also a stake in the maintenance of the existing strategic environment in southern Asia since it already controls disputed strategic locations on the Indian frontiers, especially the Aksai Chin salient in the western sector. From Nepal's point of view, an approximate balance of power in the Himalayan area, as well as between India and Pakistan in South Asia, would appear desirable. Most decisions with respect to these questions are, however, made elsewhere in the region and indeed, often even outside Asia.

Recent changes in the political scenario of South Asia have afforded each of the countries in the region new opportunities for foreign policy initiatives, though, in practical terms, these will have only limited political significance. The initial Indian response to the disintegration of Pakistan and the emergence of a mercurial new state in an area of major strategic significance to India was, on the whole, emotional rather than rational. There had always been a strong pro-Chinese sentiment, not only among the anti-Indian opposition elements, but also among the people of Bangladesh in general. A certain cooling-off in the relations between India and Bangladesh is already visible, both at the popular and the official level, because both countries have been, over the last few years, demanding from each other much more than could normally be expected from two independent nations in the reality of the present-day world situation. The psychopathic impact of the unusual experience shared by India and Bangladesh has impeded the growth of normal and healthy relations between them. Both Pakistan and China, after the first major coup d'etat in Bangladesh, sought to exploit the uneasy relationship between India and Bangladesh.

Nepal and Bhutan also stand to gain by having closer relations
with Bangladesh in trade matters. Nepal is naturally interested in acquiring an additional outlet to the sea through the Chittagong or the Khulna ports, which can be reached by way of Radhikapur in the West Dinajpur district of West Bengal in India.

The coronation of the Bhutanese king (Druk Gyalpo), Jigme Sengye Wangchuk, in June 1974, proved to be an international gathering similar to the late King Mahendra’s coronation in Kathmandu in 1955, which also had the effect of exposing the country to the outside world. Bhutan, like Nepal, is a modernizing traditional monarchy on India’s north-eastern frontier with a common border with China. While Nepal is a Hindu kingdom whose ruling family claims its descent from a Rajput family in India, Bhutan is a Buddhist kingdom whose ruler is connected with Tibetan nobility by ties of kinship. It will be interesting to see whether Bhutan will gradually assert its freedom in conducting its foreign policy in the same way Nepal has done in the past, or whether it will continue to seek India’s advice and guidance in its foreign policy as stipulated in the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of August 1949.

It is perhaps significant that at the time of his coronation the Bhutanese king spoke to the press very warmly about the friendly and cordial relations his country has always had with China. Nepal needs to develop relations with Bhutan on the clear understanding that it has no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of the latter and wants the people of Nepali origin resident in Bhutan to be entirely loyal to the state of their adoption.

India’s nuclear explosion, in mid-May 1974, provoked mixed reactions. Apart from Pakistan, countries in the South Asian sub-continent publicly accepted India’s profession about the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Those who had thought that China’s nuclear capability gave India a rather inferior status in the sub-continent were compelled to reconsider their position.

Let us now see how India and the smaller countries in the region view the question of their mutual relationships. According to the Indian point of view, ever since 1960, when it emerged as a major factor in South Asia, China has played a disruptive rather than a constructive role, encouraging opposition to the so-called Indian hegemony among the south Asian states. Political involvement by the major non-regional powers in the region has never found favour with India. Understandably, India does not appreciate the smaller countries’ desire to be buttressed by such powers in their attempts
to avoid New Delhi’s dominating influence. Since Nepal and Bhutan are, in practice, susceptible to India’s economic and political pressures, it is never difficult for India to gain its minimum objectives in these countries. Pakistan is still seeking a regional power balance and ultimately may find a future in a common alliance with Iran and Turkey, but will, all the same, remain an integral part of south Asia. On the other hand, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan, along with Bangladesh and India, are the integral members of the south Asian regional system and have to work out their destiny in cooperation with one another.

India and China hold a special position on the continent of Asia. Strategically, Nepal is so situated that their attitudes must be taken into account in considering any major problem relating to security and defence. Nepal’s freedom of choice is, obviously, limited by the exigencies of power politics. Whatever concessions may have been temporarily acquired by Nepal from India and China, through clever manipulation of its strategic position, will not amount to much in the long run in the absence of a peaceful and lasting compromise binding on all the parties concerned. Can a relationship be established in conformity with the norms of equality and freedom for every sovereign nation envisaged in the United Nations charter within the framework of increased international cooperation and harmony?

Nepal’s strategic location has afforded it scope for manoeuvring within certain limits. These limits are, in practice, set by what India and China consider to be their minimal interests in a given situation. As long as Nepal keeps within these limits it is free to manipulate in any way it likes its relations with immediate neighbours and other countries. Indeed, Nepal’s success in the conduct of foreign policy depends on its ability to assess, in practical terms, what India and China regard as their minimal interests in a particular matter at a given time and, on the basis of this assessment, to strive for concessions and gains from all parties. However, if Nepal is tempted to over-estimate its strength and loses sight of the practical limits of its capacity to manoeuvre, it may encounter real danger.

In the past, Nepal’s domestic politics have always been affected by developments both to its south and north, and it is not hard to establish linkages or correlations between domestic political trends and critical events in the adjoining region.

Successive waves of Muslim invasions of India led to a mushroom
growth of petty principalities all along the north-eastern hill area in the central Himalayan region, displacing indigenous tribal rulers in the process. Most of these principalities were founded by emigrant Hindu chiefs who had retired to remote mountain areas to escape religious and political persecution in the plains. The present-day kingdom of Nepal is a result of the regrouping and consolidation of a large number of principalities achieved by military conquest during the second half of the eighteenth and the first decade of the nineteenth centuries. While India was occupied with the wars and uncertainties characterizing the transition from the Mughal empire to the British during the eighteenth century, Prithvinarayan Shah, a ruler of a small principality called Gorkha, fifty-two kilometers west of Kathmandu, established the present Shah ruling house of Nepal in 1768-69 by conquering the Kathmandu Valley or the Nepal Valley Kingdom as it was then called.

Territorial expansion under the Shah rulers of Nepal to the north was checked by the 1972 Nepal-China War and that to the south, the east and the west by the 1814-16 war between Nepal and British-India. The 1972 War with China did not cause loss of territory to Nepal. But the Treaty of Sugauli, concluded at the end of the war with British-India, cost Nepal approximately one-third of its then existing territory, mainly to the west and to the south. The Shah kings have occupied the throne of Nepal since 1768, though they have not always concurrently ruled or exercised absolute authority.

The establishment of British authority in the Indian sub-continent, following the decline and decay of the Mughal empire and the subsequent subjugation of the regional ascendancy of the Marathas and the Sikhs, paralleled a change in Nepal’s domestic political structure. By the second half of the nineteenth century the British, for all practical purposes in control of the entire Indian sub-continent, would not have been disposed to tolerate unstable conditions in the sensitive area bordering the north-eastern frontier. However, the possibility of British military intervention in Nepal was averted by the rise of Jang Bahadur Rana, the powerful ruler who proved himself capable of restoring internal stability and order by the sword. He put an end to rivalry and feuding among the elite families, including the royal family, by centralizing effective power within his own family. Thus, it came about that with kings as mere figureheads, the hereditary Rana Maharaj-cum-Prime Ministers ruled Nepal by personal fiat for 104 years, from 1846 to 1950. The Ranas
were willing to cooperate with the British empire so long as they were given a free hand in managing their country's internal affairs. During the two world wars Nepal suffered a higher percentage of death and casualties in relation to total population than any other country directly involved in them.

Within less than four years of the British withdrawal from India, followed by the emergence of a nationalist government under the leadership of the Indian National Congress, the Rana family rule in Nepal ended. In fact, the failure of the Rana regime to adjust to the post-war changes in the regional and global environment resulted in the breakdown of internal order which the Rana family oligarchy had up to then maintained in Nepal.

The 'revolution' of 1950-51 brought to an end the rule of the hereditary Rana Prime Ministers, and under Indian advice, the British style parliamentary monarchy was then adopted as a model for Nepal. In keeping with Tribhuvan's historic proclamation of 18 February, 1951 to stand by the constitution prepared by the constituent assembly elected on the basis of direct universal adult suffrage, the declared and the almost universally accepted goal at the time was to establish a parliamentary democracy in Nepal. Notwithstanding the fact that the elections for the constituent assembly scheduled to be held by the end of 1952 did not take place, very few people, if any, then envisaged a future return to the King's absolute rule by peremptory and pre-emptory commands (hukumi shashan or raj).

As the years passed, there was a steady decline in the powers of the democratic institutions and offices established after February 1951, and a corresponding rise in the trend towards absolutism of the king resulted. In February 1959, King Mahendra made the political parties accept the terms of a constitution he himself proposed to grant, backing out of his father's commitment to hold elections for a constituent assembly. In February 1959 King Mahendra drew up a constitution himself which, while reserving extensive emergency and discretionary powers to the King, provided for a bicameral legislature and a cabinet entirely responsible to the lower house of the legislature directly elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage.

Following the first general elections held under the new constitution, the first ever elected government of Nepal assumed office on 9 May 1959 with B.P. Koirala, the leader of the Nepali Congress
Party, as Prime Minister. But the experiment in parliamentary democracy did not last long. The abrupt dismissal of a popularly elected government after only eighteen months, while its parliamentary majority remained intact, and the simultaneous dissolution of parliament, the first ever elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage, were radical departures from the avowed goals of what King Tribhuvan termed the 1951 'Revolution'. The armed raids and hostile expeditions organized by the Nepali Congress leaders from their base of exile in India for the restoration of democracy in Nepal failed to repeat their success of 1950-51 because of the change in external environment, and primarily because of the Sino-Indian armed conflict in 1962. The royal takeover paved the way for the gradual revival of traditional rule by peremptory and pre-emptory commands (*hukumi raj*) under the cloak of 'the party-less democratic Panchayat system'.

For the future the question is: while absolute monarchy may succeed temporarily in projecting its nationalist image, manoeuvring for small gains by exploiting rivalry between neighbouring powers and among internal political factions, will it prove strong enough and flexible enough to withstand the growing pressure of internal social forces as the pace of modernization increases?

King Mahendra, after his accession in 1955, sought to assert Nepal's freedom in matters of foreign policy and defence *vis-a-vis* India without trying to change the basic terms of agreement and understanding between the two countries. King Birendra's policy is directed towards securing a permanent guarantee of Nepal's peace, independence and non-alignment between India and China through a broad acceptance of his proposal for having Nepal recognized as a zone of peace.

Generally speaking, Nepal has from time to time tried to play off its southern and northern neighbours to avoid being absorbed by either country, but it has not always been possible for it to do so. Historical circumstances have forced Nepali statesmen at every critical turn to find solutions suited to the conditions of their times. When their solution has been adequate to the demands of the internal and external situation, the domestic political structure has not suffered any consequential changes, but when the response of the policy-makers has failed to meet the exigencies of the situation, the result has been a drastic change.

In the opinion of the present writer, the threat to Nepal's political
independence, stability and territorial integrity in future, if it matu-
ralizes at all, is likely to come not from direct military action by its
neighbours to the south and the north but from its own incapacity
to cope with internal social forces generated by the process of
modernization. Nepal’s capacity to meet this threat effectively will
depend on how successfully it can solve the problem of unemployed
youth and students in the long run. Experience in other developing
countries shows that these elements, as their numbers and the
acuteness of their dissatisfaction grow, become the leaders of revo-
lutionary and radical movements against the government in power,
whether it be indigenous or alien in character. If the mass base of
discontented urban workers and rural peasants should rise, such
protest movement can seriously undermine stability anywhere, and
external help and guidance to revolutionary movements may be
easily available under these circumstances.

B. Domestic Policy: New Directions in
Panchayat Politics

In Chapter 2 in the course of our discussion of the late King
Mahendra’s various evolutionary tactics involving the Panchayat
system, some passing references were made to the 1975 Amend-
ments to the Constitution of Nepal. If the recent trend of politics
in Nepal is to be properly understood, a more close and detailed
study of the amendments against the immediate background of
events is necessary. An analysis of the actual results of putting the
1975 Amendments into practice makes it possible to arrive at a
clear-cut definition of current Panchayat politics.

*Background to the 1975 Amendments to the Constitution of Nepal*

The events of the first four years of King Birendra’s rule provide
the immediate background to the 1975 Amendments to the Consti-
tution of Nepal. This period of King Birendra’s rule was characte-
rized by a perceptible rise in the incidence of acts of both govern-
mental and popular violence, accompanied by periodic waves of
unrest among students and peasants. Sporadic uprisings of the
peasants in the Tarai belt were forcibly suppressed on several occa-
sions. A number of Naxalite activists were, after being taken
prisoner, shot on the familiar pretext of trying to overpower the
armed guards and escape. Student strikes were frequent and the University and colleges remained closed for months every year. At times the police fired on student processions and demonstrations. On several occasions higher institutes of learning affiliated with the University were closed \textit{sine die}.

\textbf{Student and Peasant Unrest followed by Naxalite Activities}

The Haripur incident in August 1972 involved an armed assault, allegedly by armed Nepali Congress volunteers from Indian territory, on a police sub-station on the Nepali side of the border and resulted in the death of a Nepali armed constable. 1972 was marked by widespread unrest among students and peasants, culminating in several incidents of police firing. The year also witnessed the detention, under the Public Security Act, of four legislators, including a former Prime Minister, and the beating up of the incumbent Prime Minister by an irate legislator on the floor of the national legislature itself. Incidents of violence, arson, looting and murder were ascribed to Naxalites, and for five or six months there were sporadic outbreaks of antisocial activities in the south-eastern Tarai districts of Jhapa, Biratnagar, Janakpur and Bara. A mass arrest of 35 to 40 persons was made in the Jhapa district following the murder of a former member of Nepal's national legislature, Dharma Prasad Dhakal, and his son.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Violent Incidents in 1973}

On 4 March 1973, Ram Nath Dhakal, Narayan Shrestha, Krishna Prasad Kuinkhel, Netra Prasad Ghimire and Birendra Rajbamshi, arrested in connection with Dharma Prasad Dhakal's murder, were shot dead by the police. The allegation was made that they were trying to escape while being transferred from Jhapa to the jail in Ilam.\textsuperscript{35} Pamphlets vowing vengeance for the recent killing of five Naxalites in the Jhapa district were reported to have been circulated.\textsuperscript{36} According to the government-owned and published Nepali daily newspaper,

The police fired a total of 21 rounds. They had shot at the detainees below the knee, but the latter were actually hit above the thigh, the report added. It was also claimed that the detainees
tried to snatch away the weapons of the police. Local inquiries were said to have confirmed that the police had had no chance but to open fire. The other detainees were taken back to Jhapa.37

The first major incident in 1973 was the hijacking of a Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation plane on 10 June. Three young Nepali students forced the plane, en route to Kathmandu from Biratnagar, to land at a deserted airstrip at Forbesganj, a township in Indian territory. Rajendra Bista, Basanta Bhatrai and Narendra Dhungel were reported to have been belatedly arrested, as alleged hijackers, by the Indian authorities in the summer of 1976. Nothing has been heard since about the extradition proceedings. According to the official Nepali daily, ‘Rajendra Bista, alias Durga Subedi, was arrested in Varanasi, India, on 8 June, 1976. He was said to be one of the ringleaders of the gang which hijacked a Royal Nepal Airlines airplane and looted three million rupees belonging to Nepal’s State Bank.’38

Another noteworthy incident was the burning on 9 July, 1973, of Nepal’s Government Secretariat building called Simha Darbar (the Lion Palace). The investigation commission set up under the chairmanship of the Chief Justice of Nepal finally expressed its inability to account for the conflagration.39

On 18 October, 1973, Saroj Prasad Koirala, a former member of Parliament and prominent leader of the Nepali Congress, was shot in Indian territory—allegedly by someone in the pay of Nepali officials—with a revolver fitted with a silencer.40 The present author’s appeal to both the governments of India and Nepal to apprehend the criminals and bring them to book failed to produce any positive result.41

Grenade Explosions in 1974

1974 saw further incidents of violence, including grenade explosions in different parts of the country. On 16 March, 1974, there occurred a hand-grenade explosion at Biratnagar. It took place only a few yards away from where King Birendra himself was making his official visit of inspection to the local government offices. The explosion resulted in two deaths but the King was unharmed.42 On 5 May 1974, a hand-grenade was hurled at the official car carrying the then Transport and Public Works Minister, P.R.S. Suwal, on one of the busy streets in the heart of Kathmandu. The Minister
escaped unhurt but a few passers-by on the road were injured.43

Action against the Khampas44

A major incident involving the use of force by the government was the vigorous three month-long military operation by a brigade of the royal Nepal army against the so-called Khampa 'marauders' in their mountain hideouts. The ostensible purpose for this action, in the summer and autumn of 1974, was said to be the recovery of arms, weapons and ammunition which a section of the Khampas had persistently refused to surrender, even though asked to do so by the government of Nepal.

Reportedly, these armed Khampas were intended to function as underground guerrillas against the Chinese in Tibet. They were said to have been initially funded, supplied and trained by the United States in India, with assistance from the Taiwanese authorities and considerable help from the Dalai Lama and other influential members of his entourage in India. The Khampas, having entered Nepal from the south and north, presumably with the connivance of the governments of Nepal and India, had been roaming at large on the Nepal-Tibet border for slightly more than a decade. Over a period of time they had built permanent shelters from which to harass detachments of the Chinese army on the other side of the border, as and when opportunities presented themselves. Gradually, all the parties concerned became more or less reconciled to the presence of the Khampas on the Nepal-Tibet border, except for the fact that both the Nepali and the Chinese authorities would appear to have been overly concerned whenever a news item regarding the ambushing of the Chinese soldiers by the Khampa guerrillas hit the headlines in the world press.

Early in July 1974, the two English language periodicals in Nepal, presumably prompted by the palace, demanded strong action against the Khampas on the grounds that they were misusing Nepal's hospitality. They were a nuisance, it was claimed, to the Nepali people living in the remote northern border areas.45 On July 1974, Home Minister Hom Bahadur Shreshtha made a press statement on the Khampa problem, indicating that two rival groups of Khampas were being led by Hisi and Wangdi, and that the time limit set by the government for the Khampas to surrender all arms in their possession would expire on 26 July, 1974.46 The government had already moved two or three battalions of troops from
the brigade headquarters at Bhairawa in the central Tarai to the northern border area to impress the Khampas with a show of determination and force. Reportedly, Hisi was cooperating fully with the government whereas Wangdi, primarily because of his differences with Hisi, was reluctant to surrender all the arms in the possession of his group. On 22 July, 1974, the official Nepali daily newspaper contradicted the rumours of a Nepali colonel having been killed in an armed encounter with the Khampas. It further denied that the Indian and Chinese authorities were involved in the Khampa affair. On July 1974, a spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the Khampas were busy procuring arms clandestinely. However, this statement was subsequently modified and withdrawn. The time limit for the surrender of arms by the Khampas was extended till 31 July, 1974.

On 7 August, the Home Minister made the following statement in the national legislature: ‘Since 1 August, 1974, the police have been making a rigorous search for arms and other military supplies at the Khampa camps in the Mustang district. By 6 August, 1974, they had seized 91 rifles, 24 automatic weapons, 2 handguns, 5 pieces of cannon, 274 grenades, 215 shells, 31,134 rounds of ammunition and a wireless set.’

Even the Prime Minister appeared to be more than eager to receive his share of credit for resolving the problem of the Khampas when he stated: ‘Even an ordinary mistake regarding the security of the country can assume a critical form later. This is proved by the recent Khampa problem. We have been facing the adverse effect of a mistake committed by the administration 14 years ago.’ According to the Home Minister’s statement in the national legislature on 11 September, 1974, the total haul of arms and ammunition (both surrendered and forcibly acquired) consisted of 542 rifles, 75 bren guns, 135 sten guns, 16 pistols, 860mm mortars, 202 7.57mm recoilless gun shells, 340 bullets of different calibres, 981 hand-grenades and 5 wireless sets. The Home Minister further added that on 17 August, 1974, Gue Wangdi had offered to help the government recover arms from his men, but on 7 September, 1974, 150 Khampas, attempting to lay siege to the police station in Humla, had clashed with the government security forces. On September, 1974, the official Nepali daily reported that Gue Wangdi was killed at Lipu, Tinkar in Dharchula. According to knowledgeable sources, Wangdi, supposedly the young and dynamic...
leader of a section of the Khampas was ambushed and killed in a chance encounter with a small body of Nepali armed forces. Following reports that a party of the Khampas was on its way to the far north-western boundary of Nepal, with the intention of crossing into India, soldiers were flown in. Along with their leader, a few other Khampas were killed, but the main body crossed into India and were disarmed in accordance with international law and practice.

By the time King Birendra took determined action against the Khampas in Nepal they had already lost their potential for mischief in Tibet as well as the active support and patronage of foreign governments. However, it would be interesting to explore what made King Birendra take this step against the Khampas whose presence his father, the late King Mahendra, had tolerated for a decade. According to one opinion, the late King Mahendra had let the Khampas remain as the first line of defence on the northern frontier. King Birendra’s action against the Khampas may be viewed as a departure from Nepal’s traditional perception of defence. King Birendra’s persistent attempt to have Nepal recognized as a zone of peace seems to indicate that the King lacked the traditional preoccupation with the defence of Nepal’s northern frontier.

Despite the fact that the King’s action against the Khampas took place immediately after the arrival in Kathmandu of an official Chinese delegation, led by a Chinese vice-minister, there is no indication that the Chinese put pressure on the King to launch the military operation against the Khampas. At the time, the Chinese ambassador to Nepal personally told the author that his country having itself dealt with the Khampa miscreants effectively in the past—when those ‘unpatriotic traitorous elements’ were so much of a nuisance—China had no further reason to do anything about the Khampas. According to the ambassador, as far as China was concerned, Nepal’s action against the Khampas was entirely a matter of its domestic policy. Despite idle speculations and rumours about possible intervention by India and China, nothing of the kind happened.

Another possible explanation for King Birendra’s determined action against the Khampas was that he wanted to free himself from a potential menace to his personal power. He may have envisaged collusion between the armed Khampas in the north and the armed Nepali Congress ‘volunteers’ who were active from the
south, for the restoration of democracy in Nepal. The more likely explanation, however, is that the King wanted to prove to his political opponents that, in time of necessity, he was much more ready than his father to take decisive military action.

A Brutal Act of Vengeance

On the heels of the military-cum-police action against the Khampas occurred a brutal act of governmental violence, which did not reflect credit on those responsible. Four young Nepalis had been arrested on 14 May, 1974 on the charge of possessing hand-grenades and duly convicted. They were serving life-sentences for the offence in one of the Kathmandu prisons. On the night of 29 September, 1974 they were shot under highly suspicious circumstances. According to a news item, belatedly carried by the official Nepali daily:

Lila Nath Dahal, Khagendra Raj Dahal, Thagi Raj Dahal and Gokarna Bahadur Karki had been convicted by a special court of having procured No. 36 hand-grenades from leaders of the banned Nepali Congress in India and sentenced to life imprisonment. On 29 September, 1974, they were being transferred from the central jail in Kathmandu to the Nakkhu jail in a jeep. Near Jaulakhel they tried to overpower the security guards and escape. The security guards then opened fire, as a result of which all the four prisoners were killed. In the course of investigations in connection with the Jaisideval bomb explosion of 5 May, 1974, these persons had been arrested with grenades in their possession, as they were coming by bus from Janakpur on 14 May, 1974.54

It is difficult to imagine four handcuffed prisoners overpowering a party of armed guards with loaded guns, nor is it easy to understand why those prisoners had to be transferred at night from one prison to another.

Some of the political prisoners in the Nakkhu prison at the time told the author subsequently that they clearly heard the report of the rifles and revolvers fired by the guards. The political detainees were inclined to believe that this incident was engineered to strike terror in their hearts and to serve as a deterrent. A few Nepalis, including the present author, requested the government, through diplomatically worded statements in the press, to set up a commis-
sion to inquire into the circumstances under which the prisoners had been shot. The present writer went to the extent of publicly appealing to the King that His Majesty set up a royal commission, consisting of men enjoying public confidence, to remove the doubts aroused in the minds of the people by the official version of the event as reported in the government newspaper.

The Okhaldhunga Incident

Governmental and popular violence reached its peak about the middle of December 1974. As early as 10 December, 1974, the pro-Chinese Communist weekly in Nepali, Matribhumi, published the following report, apparently gathered from intelligence sources:

Large quantities of arms and ammunition, as well as of subversive materials, were reported to have been smuggled into the Tarai from across the southern border. This was proved by the discovery of bullets for pistols and rifles, bullets for sten guns, a wireless set and dry cells as well as a map of the area, a badge containing the effigy of B.P. Koirala, four flags of the banned Nepali Congress and some leaflets on a farm at the Lokod Village Panchayat. The farm is situated on the Siraha-Dhanukha border, located only 1½ miles from the nearby royal army barracks and three miles from Jayanagar, India. The Kamala River, flowing through the western part of the Siraha district, was being used as the main route for the arms traffic.

Even from this it is clear that the government of Nepal must have tailed the intruders prior to the publication of this news and kept their movements inside Nepal under constant watch. The official Nepali daily, Gorkhapatra, belatedly carried the following news item:

Sixteen anti-national elements were reported to have been killed in an encounter with Security forces at the Timure Bhot forest of the Okhaldhunga district on 16 December, 1974. According to a spokesman of the Home Ministry, Captain Yajna Bahadur Thapa, who was the ringleader of the gang of anti-national elements, had been captured by the police. He had been hiding after he sustained injuries in the encounter. Captain Yajna Bahadur Thapa had been implicated in the grenade explosion of the 16
March, 1974, at Biratnagar and a court case against him was pending.

The spokesman added,

The gang, which was armed, had managed to infiltrate into Okhaldhunga, travelling along the bank of the Kamala River, with the aim of attacking Panchayat members, government employees, policemen and others associated with Panchayats, blowing up government offices, bridges, etc., intimidating and robbing people. Our Security forces, who had been tracking their movement right from the border, directly pursued them. Finding that the atmosphere at Okhaldhunga was not favourable to them, the members of the gang advanced further toward Salleri and reached the forest of Timure Bhot, where they fired upon the Security forces as well as on the people who had gone to help them. Our Security forces returned the fire, as a result of which sixteen of the anti-national elements were killed. The Security forces have captured arms and ammunition in considerable quantities.58

According to independent and reliable sources, what actually happened was that a group of armed extremists, who had made their way to a remote hide-out in the eastern hill district of Okhaldhunga, were taken unawares by a detachment of the Royal Army. The troops were specially flown from Kathmandu to the spot after an informer had pinpointed the whereabouts of the group. After this sharp, swift military operation there were scarcely two or three survivors.

Among those killed on the spot were tested student and youth political activists such as the twin brothers Ram and Lakshman, Shyam Gurung, Mahesh Koirala, Padam Prakash Puri, Mahila Rai and others.59 According to the clandestinely printed, published and distributed Tarun bulletin in Nepali, six peasants, arrested in connection with the encounter, were shot to death on the pretext of being moved from the hills area to the Raj Biraj prison in the Tarai plains.60

Surprisingly, the group represented a fair cross-section of various castes and ethnic groups in Nepal and was led by Captain Y.B. Thapa, himself a retired officer of the Royal Army. Thapa, who was captured alive, was found to have worked in close collaboration with G.P. Koirala, former Prime Minister B.P. Koirala’s youngest brother, who was politically active for the restoration of democratic
freedom and rights in Nepal. Reportedly, some of the personnel of the local militia in Okhaldhunga and regular units of the Royal Army had come under the influence of Y.B. Thapa, but their cases were secretly handled. The government also maintained strict secrecy about the extent of the involvement of military personnel in the Thapa episode. Thapa himself was sentenced to death by a special tribunal, but his death sentence has not so far been carried out.

The initial reaction of the Nepali government to the Okhaldhunga incident was one of panic. About the middle of December 1974, Ram Raja Prasad Singh, imprisoned under the Security Act, was brought to court formally on the charge of murdering a fellow prisoner. The present author was also taken into police custody for interrogation with regard to the allegation that he had been instrumental in securing handgrenades to one of the three young men arrested weeks earlier. However, the official Nepali daily newspaper, Gorkhapatra, reported the present author's arrest with the rider that no reason was given by the police. Luckily for the author, he had a fool-proof alibi, because it could be easily proved that he was in New Delhi on the day on which, according to the police version, one of the young men accused was to have met him at his home in Kathmandu. Furthermore, Mathbar Singh Basnyat, a young writer and acquaintance of the author, who, again according to the police, had alleged that the author had been instrumental in getting him hand-grenades, refused, even under manifest pressure from the police, to endorse the statement attributed to him. The author was subsequently cleared of the charge. Mathbar Singh Basnyat, with his friend, Janaki, was however sentenced to life-imprisonment. A schoolboy who was involved was sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

Direct Demand for Political Reforms

The events, catalogued above, may have indirectly and negatively influenced the King to introduce constitutional reforms. There is no dearth of evidence of positive and constructive efforts to influence the King directly. Not only the government, but also the Panchayat political system itself received a good deal of criticism in the second convention of the Back to the Village National Campaign, held in Kathmandu in September 1974. The conference unanimously
endorsed the view that the Panchayat system, in its present form, had not been able to mobilize resources for development in the political and economic spheres. It was further accused of having failed to promote the institutional growth of national politics. The hope was expressed that the system would be changed to meet the aspirations and needs of the nation.6

In October 1974, Tanka Prasad Acharya, a former Prime Minister, in consultation and collaboration with the present author, convened a meeting in Kathmandu. Twenty-two Nepali citizens, with a background of experience in social and political organizations and activities took part. Among those present at the meeting were leaders of most of the banned democratic parties and of various factions of the banned Communist Party, together with a number of sitting members of various bodies at the different levels of the Panchayat political hierarchy. The meeting undertook to examine, in general terms, the record of achievements and failures of the Panchayat administration over a period of fourteen years in the political, economic and social spheres of national life. At the end of its deliberations, the meeting authorized Tanka Prasad Acharya to issue a press statement to the effect that the Panchayat system had failed to fulfill its promise in every sphere and needed to be changed forthwith in accordance with the wishes of the people. Further, the conference demanded the immediate restoration of fundamental rights and release of political prisoners with a view to creating an atmosphere of freedom to assess public opinion in general on the nature and shape of changes needed in the Constitution. It was also decided that another broad-based national conference would be convened within a period of three or four months to place before the King and the people concrete suggestions for future reforms.6

At this time, General Subarna Shamsher J. B. Rana, a former chairman of the Council of Ministers and a former Deputy Prime Minister in the Nepali Congress Cabinet headed by B. P. Koirala, was living in Nepal. He had been granted amnesty by the late King Mahendra after playing a leading role in organizing an armed revolution for the restoration of democracy in Nepal following the royal takeover on 15 December, 1960. On 13 October, 1974, General Subarna issued a press statement, reaffirming his full faith in the leadership of the King and reiterating his intention to cooperate in promoting 'constitutional development with a view to encouraging the growth of democracy.'6
Proclamation of Royal Intent to Introduce Political Reforms

This, then, was the situation when, on 16 December, 1974, about two months before his coronation, King Birendra declared his intention to set up a commission to suggest reforms in the Panchayat political system without changing its fundamental character or basic aspects. The King was presumably motivated by a desire to mollify popular feeling against the regime by raising the prospect of constitutional reforms. He had all the more reason to do so as his advisers had persuaded him that an extremist section of the banned Nepali Congress Party, under the leadership of B.P. Koirala, was resolutely set on creating serious disturbances at the time of the coronation, notwithstanding the ex-Prime Minister’s disclaimer of any such intention.

General Subarna, the leader of a large section of the banned Nepali Congress, in pursuance of his newly adopted style of politics by ‘press statements’, welcomed the royal proposal for a Constitutional Reforms Advisory Commission. B. P. Koirala, the former Nepali Congress Prime Minister, then in India, made no comment.66 The informal group of twenty-two continued its efforts to convene a general meeting on 14 January, 1975. The scheduled meeting was abandoned at the last minute because of pressure brought by the government on Tanka Prasad Acharya. Acharya issued a press statement admitting his inability to hold the meeting in the face of the government’s unfavourable attitude. Others associated with the convening of the meeting also felt that it would be inappropriate to do anything further so near the date set for the King’s coronation. They felt that more thorough preparations would be necessary if the conference hoped to challenge the government.67

The Formation of the Constitutional Reforms Advisory Commission (CRAC)

With the approach of King Birendra’s coronation, the Principal Secretariat of the Royal Palace announced, on 9 February, 1975, the appointment of a seven-man Constitutional Reform Advisory Commission (CRAC). The chairman was Anirudra Prasad Singh, a former civil servant during the Rana regime. During the late King Mahendra’s rule in the post-1954 period, Singh filled the posts of Royal Counsellor, Chief Justice, Cabinet Minister and Ambassador to Cairo, prior to his resignation from the last-named office. Dr Mohammed Moshin, a Palace-appointed civil servant, was named
secretary. The other members of the Commission:

Kirti Nidhi Bisht was for some time a Prime Minister in the post-1960 Panchayat era. He was at one time General Secretary of the Nepali National Congress (D. R. Regmi Group), which had failed to secure any representation whatsoever in the first-ever elected Parliament in 1959;

Ram Hari Sharma was a former chairman of the Rastriya Panchayat, Nepal’s national legislature. Sharma had been General Secretary of the Nepal Praja Parishad, Nepal’s oldest political party. However, the party was of minor importance and had won only one seat in the 1959 Parliament. Sharma, who had failed to get himself re-elected to the national legislature from the Peasants’ constituency, had taken part in the October meeting of the informal group of twenty-two, convened by his old political mentor, Tanka Prasad Acharya;

Shribhadra Sharma was an elected member of the 1959 Parliament and one-time General Secretary of the banned Nepali Congress. After his release from five years’ imprisonment he had gradually become an ardent supporter of the King-dominated Panchayat system;

D.P. Adhikari was at one time a member of the Politburo of the banned Communist Party of Nepal, which had won four seats in the 1959 Parliament. Adhikari was active as a member of the informal group of twenty-two until a month before he was nominated a member of the CRAC; and finally the rotating chairman of the then Central Committee of the Back to the Village National Campaign as an *ex-officio* member. The members of the Commission later took an oath of secrecy and loyalty to the crown.

Once the coronation was safely over, official enthusiasm for constitutional reforms understandably declined. The Commission took about ten months to complete its work and did not submit its recommendations to the King until 21 November, 1975. When the late King Mahendra had asked for a draft of the entire text of the 1962 Constitution of Nepal, the desired text was in his hands within three weeks.

*CRAC Members under Pressure*

Soon after the King’s coronation, members of the CRAC were actually sent from the capital to the different parts of the country.
It is difficult to state categorically whether the move to dispatch commissioners to the outlying regions was intended as a dilatory tactic or whether it was inspired by a sincere desire to entertain the people’s suggestions for political reforms. Reportedly, the Commissioners’ zeal for recording popular pleas for reforms began to wane to a marked degree after it became increasingly clear to them that an overwhelmingly large body of opinion, expressed at public meetings organized under the auspices of the CRAC, favoured reforms which, in the judgment of the powers-that-be, would adversely affect the fundamental character of the Panchayat system. Although the Commissioners were clearly asked by the King to suggest constitutional reforms which would not be at variance with the fundamental aspects of the Panchayat system, their mandate did not define these ‘fundamental aspects’. The so-called fundamental characteristics or basic aspects of the Panchayat system are not precisely defined in any royal proclamation or enumerated in any other official or legal document.

No Consensus on Fundamental Aspects of the Panchayat System

Prior to the enactment of the 1975 Constitutional Amendments, no consensus was ever reached on the interpretation of the Articles of the 1962 Constitution relating to the fundamental rights of freedom, the *habeas corpus*, and the legal procedure for their enforcement. Even as early as 1964, an extra-constitutional top-level Council of National Guidance, with the late King Mahendra as its chairman, failed to reach a consensus on the interpretation of the articles of the 1962 Constitution relating to the fundamental rights of freedom. Included in the Council were the old political leaders, such as Tanka Prasad Acharya and the late General Mrigendra Shamsher J. B. Rana, together with Tulsi Giri, the then chairman of the Council of Ministers. Other leading Ministers and members of the national legislature and chair-persons of class organizations, including the present author, who was Chairman of Raj-Sabha (the King’s Council or Council of State), were included in the Council of National Guidance. The ministers of the day and other members of the council could not agree on how much political freedom and initiative the Constitution permitted in practice. Those opposed to the ministerial group favoured a liberal interpretation of the fundamental rights clauses, whereas the Ministers of the government desired a stricter construction of those clauses.
The late King Mahendra sought to resolve the issue by referring it to a small, six-member *ad hoc* committee, with one of the then assistant ministers as its secretary. This committee was also completely deadlocked on the issue. In July, 1964 the present author was dismissed from the chairmanship of the Standing Committee of the King's Council with due appreciation of his honest services in the past and Tanka Prasad Acharya resigned his membership of the Council of National Guidance at about the same time. The Council of National Guidance itself existed in limbo until it was finally abolished in April 1967.

In the autumn of 1967, King Mahendra, on the eve of his second visit to the United States, persuaded the national legislature to unanimously endorse his own suggestion that since the Panchayat system had become an integral part of the life of the people of Nepal, it admitted of no alternative. The interpretation of the Constitution, so far as it related to the question of political freedom and future reforms, was left open. This resulted in a sharper definition of the so-called liberal and conservative trends of opinion, within the national legislature.

Eleven members of the national legislature chose this occasion to demand constitutional provisions in future for its open sessions, for its election by direct universal adult suffrage under effective guarantees of an adequate respect for individual freedom and the rule of law, and also for the appointment of the Prime Minister in consultation with its wishes after elections are held in the manner indicated. However, a formal motion recommending the adoption of these reforms was disallowed by the Chairman of the national legislature; with reference to the King’s suggestion for the general endorsement of the Panchayat system, some members replied from the floor of the national legislature. They felt it would be better to organize a popular referendum on the question than to consult with the legislature.

In 1968, the present author, while a member of Nepal’s national legislature, put together a compilation, drawn from the pronouncements of the late King Mahendra, the text of the 1962 Constitution and other legal documents and opinions of jurists to show how, in theory at least, Nepal’s ‘partyless democratic Panchayat system’ tended to approximate to the accepted standard of freedom of the individual and human rights in other democratic countries of the world. The authorities in Kathmandu procrastinated and showed
considerable reluctance to clear this pamphlet, in Nepali, for publication.\textsuperscript{68}

Reportedly, the subject of the actual degree of civil and political freedom allowable under the Panchayat system was once again taken up by a small extra-Constitutional body of royal advisers appointed by the late King Mahendra, comprising three ex-ministers, Surya Bahadur Thapa, Tulsi Giri and Viswa Bandhu Thapa. Again, no agreement was reached on the question by this small, select body.

Even after the accession of King Birendra to the throne, the issue of political initiative and freedom in the Panchayat system remained unresolved, at least until the enactment of the 1975 Constitutional amendments. This is apparent from the rejoinders to the author’s article, ‘Where are we going from here?’, which appeared in the Nepali weekly, \textit{Rastra Pukar}. Officially inspired articles, including one in the weekly, \textit{Matribhumi}, from Tulsi Giri, who was then the royal political adviser, proliferated in the Kathmandu papers.\textsuperscript{70} In that article the present author had pleaded with the King that he should not directly involve himself in the day-to-day administration of speech, assembly and political association. Under the proposed conditions, His Majesty would let the popularly elected ministers bear the responsibility of running the administration and take the consequences of its failure. The King would retain, in a fair measure, his overall restraining power as the crowned head of state. Tulsi Giri felt that the suggestions the present author had advanced were basically the same as those of B. P. Koirala, the former elected Prime Minister in 1959-60. It was claimed that these proposals struck at the very foundation of the Panchayat system, which requires the King to play an active and all-powerful role.

Irrespective of what Tulsi Giri had to say, demands for reforms along the lines suggested by the present author continued to be voiced by a section of the national legislature itself and by leaders of the government-organized class organizations. A free exercise of fundamental rights, as laid down in the 1962 Constitution, was suggested. Proposals were made for a government appointed and led by a person selected by and responsible to a national legislature elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. Time alone will show whether the 1975 amendments to the Constitution will, as claimed by Tulsi Giri, permanently set at rest the controversy over the question of political freedom and initiative in the Panchayat system.
This controversy apart, the vital question remains whether the acts of the government will not be construed as those of the King and whether the King can be entirely above criticism when it is he who, in theory and practice, appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister and Ministers at his pleasure while, at the same time, taking an active part in running the day-to-day administration of the country. The 1962 Constitution, theoretically at least, allows criticism of the government and ministers, though not of the King and the royal family.

The CRAC’s Findings

Whatever the report submitted by the Commission to the King may have contained, the Commissioner’s findings in various areas were published in the Kathmandu press itself. Even from the reports of their findings published in such a wide spectrum of the Kathmandu press as represented by the government-owned and financed Nepali daily newspaper, Gorkhapatra, and other pro-government papers, on the one hand, and by the banned Nepali weeklies, such as Rastra Pukar, Samiksha, Matribhumi (widely regarded as the organs of the banned Nepali Congress, the pro-Soviet Communist Party and the pro-Chinese Communist Party of Nepal), on the other, there seemed to be a general consensus. This supported the holding of direct elections to the national legislature from the districts on the basis of universal adult suffrage. The need for a wider measure of personal freedom and fundamental rights, and initiative for political action was also widely felt. According to newspaper reports, demands were also voiced by the people for the removal of restrictions on debate in the national legislature, and for the opening of its regular sessions to the press and public.71

The zonal and district officers had forewarned the Commissioners against the possible emergence of a situation in which the very basis of unlimited monarchy might be challenged at public meetings sponsored by the CRAC. They now began to assert themselves over the latter to a greater and greater degree, with the covert backing of the Palace and the government in Kathmandu. Further, pressure was slowly but steadily brought on the individual Commissioners, reportedly through Dr Mohammed Moshin, Member-cum-Secretary of the CRAC, who appears a confidant of the Court, according to reliable sources, even before the Commissioners had started sounding out the people for suggestion of reforms, a Palace
clique was busy working on drafts of the alternative texts of Constitutional amendments. Dr Mohammed Moshin, then Executive Secretary of the Commission on Higher Education, who afterwards became Secretary-cum-member of the most powerful body in the amended Constitution, that is, the Central Committee of the Back to the Village National Commission, was the leader. Another important member of this clique was Krishna Prasad Pant, formerly an advocate of the Supreme Court of Nepal, but subsequently nominated by the King as a member of the Judicial Committee. Nagendra Prasad, an under-secretary in the Royal Palace Service, then in charge of legal and judicial matters in the Palace Secretariat, was also influential. Other functionaries of the State, such as Dr Harka Gurung, vice-chairman of the National Planning Commission and now Minister of State in charge of Education, Commerce and Industries, also attended public sessions held by the CRAC for entertaining suggestions for political reforms. On all reliable evidence, King Birendra himself was fully briefed, not only on all aspects of the suggested amendments but also on other larger and broader issues of constitutional and political reforms.

Declaration of the Emergency in India

The declaration of Emergency in India on 26 June, 1975, seems to have had its impact on the trend of constitutional reforms in Nepal. Although there is no direct correlation between the two, the declaration of Emergency did bring about a change in the thrust and direction of constitutional amendments in Nepal. Palace circles in Kathmandu expressed marked satisfaction at the similarity between Mrs Indira Gandhi’s statements supporting her resort to emergency powers and the late King Mahendra’s arguments justifying his abolition of the parliamentary system in Nepal. Again, it was just after the declaration of Emergency in India that Nepal decided to introduce its press legislation, for prevention of publication of objectionable matter, on more or less the same lines as its Indian counterpart. Notwithstanding the fact that Nepal had introduced its own Panchayat system of polity in 1960, and although there had been different political systems in the two countries, the democratic example in India had deterred the rulers of Nepal from imposing stricter limitations on individual freedom and freedom of expression in Nepal. With the weakening of the democratic example set by India, the Nepali government seemed to feel itself free to
follow its authoritarian and anti-liberal predilections.

Despite the mutual recognition of the need for a redefinition of Nepal-India relations on more relevant terms even prior to the Emergency in India, there has so far been no settlement on any of the outstanding political and economic issues between Nepal and India except on India’s terms. The restrained glee with which Palace circles welcomed the Emergency in India is fast giving way to a growing concern that, in the absence of democratic restraints, Mrs Gandhi may prove more intractable than before. The Nepali democratic opposition was shocked by the declaration of Emergency in India. At the time this retrograde step seemed to weaken their hopes of restoring democracy in Nepal.

The Liberal Trend of Reforms Checkmated

By July 1975, it was apparent that neither the government in Kathmandu nor the Commission itself was interested in heeding popular suggestions regarding constitutional reforms recorded at the meetings organized by the CRAC in different districts. The King's exhortation to the Chairmen of District Panchayats in different parts of the country to submit their recommendations in writing to the CRAC was contained in his address to the National Development Council on 2 July, 1975. Lok Raj Baral is right in pointing out, in a different context, that 'In view of the pervasive ideological influence of non-Panchayat elements on the panchas in general, it is reasonable to assume that King Birendra was determined to provide more direct leadership to the partyless system himself.'

The elements in the Panchayat most closely allied to the King, who were lying low in face of the rising tide of public opinion favouring liberal political reforms, seemed to take their cue from the Royal address. They now concentrated their efforts on getting the District Panchayat chairmen to change their earlier stand and to voice their opposition to liberal reforms. In a statement published in the *Gorkhapatra* of 21 July, 1975, twenty-nine members of Nepal's national legislature strongly advocated indirect elections and the appointment of the Prime Minister by the King as basic features of the Panchayat Constitution, which could not be altered. This was their belated reply to the earlier demand by eighteen of their colleagues on 4 May, 1975, for a constitutional provision for a government formed by the Prime Minister selected by a legislature directly
elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. Chairman and members of District Panchayats were invited to Kathmandu at about the same time and, according to published reports in the Kathmandu newspapers, they were entertained lavishly, then coaxed and cajoled, and were eventually made to back down on the reforms they themselves had suggested at the district level meetings in the presence of their colleagues and workers. By August 1975, a large number of student and youth leaders, including Mahendra Narayan Nidhi, former Deputy Speaker of the dissolved Parliament, were clapped into prison, and soon after that more than six leading newspapers, including all the four weeklies mentioned above, were banned. The 1975 students' strike was suspected by the government to have the support of some faculty members and about a score of them were arbitrarily dismissed.

Circumstances Immediately Preceding the Proclamation of Constitutional Amendments

It is apparent that the CRAC itself had a minimal role in actually processing and formulating amendments which appeared to have been suggested by them. According to one reliable source, the two more liberally oriented members of the Commission—Anirudra Prasad Singh and Bhadra Sharma—were, at the last minute, deserted by D.P. Adhikari. Adhikari, hoping for appointments for himself and his supporters in the all-powerful central committee of the Back to the Village National Campaign, withdrew his support of the move to include, in the final report, provisions for broad-based elections and the expansion of political freedom and rights. The oath of secrecy administered to the CRAC office-holders had already prevented access of the general public to information about the proceedings of the CRAC and the real nature of its recommendations.

King Birendra, prior to the proclamation of constitutional amendments, made the formal gesture of meeting prominent politicians, such as General Subarna Shamsher J. B. Rana of the banned Nepali Congress, Manmohan Adhikari, of the banned pro-Chinese Communist Party, and Keshar Jang Rayamajhi, of the banned pro-Soviet Communist Party, and a number of other political figures during November and December 1975. The King's gesture was intended to create an impression inside and outside the country that all sections of opinion were consulted on the question of politi-
cal reforms. Although the suggested amendments were never made public, it was rumoured in Palace circles and by other interested parties that they had met the approval of different leaders and all sections of public opinion.

The appointment of Dr Tulsi Giri as Prime Minister, on December, 1975, with that of Khadga Bahadur Singh as the number-two man in the Cabinet, was an ominous prelude to the promulgation of constitutional amendments on 12 December, 1975. Neither politician belonged to the national legislature at the time. Both of them were known to be hard-liners opposed to any kind of 'fundamental' change or reform in a 'partyless Panchayat system'. The amendments were, in compliance with constitutional procedure, routed through the special committee consisting of members of the Steering Committee of the national legislature and the Standing Committee of the Raj Sabha (The King's Council or Council of State). By the time they were finally adopted and submitted by the Special Committee for royal approval, it had become clear to everyone that the reforms would not amount to much in terms of liberalizing the system.

Immediate Reaction to Constitutional Amendments

Although it was widely rumoured through diverse political elements in the pay of Palace circles that even the leaders of various factions of the banned Communist Party had approved the 1975 constitutional amendments and were going to welcome them publicly, none of the leaders of these factions came forward to do so. Even the Palace-oriented politicians, such as Tanka Prasad Acharya and others, expressed no approval of the constitutional amendments in public. However, two of the former leaders of the Nepali Congress, General Subarna Shamsher J.B. Rana and Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, apparently welcomed the amendments as manifestations of the will of the Crown which had always enjoyed their faith and obedience. General Subarna, who had himself led an armed struggle against the royal regime in 1961-62, was the first to state his reaction: 'We Nepalis have paid unflinching faith to the Crown. We have always been paying sincere obeisance to the Constitution given by the sovereign from time to time, and to the amendments made therein.' Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, who was Home Minister in the B.P. Koirala Cabinet in 1959-60, and was living in Nepal after six-months' imprisonment following the
royal take-over in December 1960, also reacted along the same lines: ‘Whatever proclamations and declarations His Majesty graciously makes in exercise of his sovereign authority are meant in the interest of the welfare of Nepal and the Nepali people. His Majesty knows best the objective conditions prevailing in the country today.’

However, Krishna Prasad Upadhyaya, one of the top leaders of the Nepali Congress and former speaker of the dissolved Parliament who had been in prison for more than ten years, continued his critical stance on the Panchayat set-up after he was released in mid-December, 1975 in Kathmandu. B.P. Koirala, former Prime Minister, and Ganesh Man Singh, another leader of the Nepali Congress, both of whom were in India at the time, strongly criticized the constitutional amendments. B.P. Koirala declared:

The King himself has admitted that national existence is in jeopardy. The King hopes that the Second Amendment to the Constitution may save the country from that danger. In this context, the main question is—What was it that caused the nation’s existence to fall into danger? Is not the King responsible for landing the country in this crisis by setting up a tyrannical system in the name of Panchayat and by destroying the political rights of the people completely? It is our considered opinion that rule by peremptory and pre-emptory commands (hukumi raj) is leading the country to the abyss of degradation and destruction.

If the King had wanted to amend this Constitution with the development of the country in heart, the reforms would have been democratic. The King has put his interests above those of this country in promulgating these constitutional amendments. These amendments have seriously undermined the interests of the nation. The King’s step has been an anti-national step.

Ganesh Man Singh has condemned the Constitutional amendments in the most scathing terms.

**Patrimonial System alias ‘Indigenous Democracy’**

The 1975 Amendments to the Constitution, promulgated by King Birendra, have brought about a major change in the spirit, form and direction of the Panchayat system by making it conform more literally and strictly to the traditional pattern of the patrimonial
state or the earlier rule of the Shah Kings and the semi-hereditary Rana Maharaj-cum-Prime Ministers by peremptory and pre-emptory commands (*hukumi raj*).

The text of Article 20(2) of the 1962 Constitution, gifted by the late King Mahendra to his subjects, clearly states that the sovereignty of Nepal is inherent or vests itself in the King and all or the whole of executive, legislative, and judicial authority emanates from him. It further adds that the King shall use all this authority or these powers through the institutions or bodies established in accordance with this Constitution and the existing laws and, while doing so, will also, in keeping with the highest tradition of the Shah dynasty, take into account the interests and wishes of the King’s subjects. King Birendra, however, seems to have gone much farther than his father in asserting his royal authority by improvising a novel definition of constitutional monarchy which, in a way, approximates the traditional theory of the divine right of kings.

**King Birendra’s View of Constitutional Monarchy**

The spirit in which King Birendra has introduced the 1975 constitutional amendments can be best understood and analysed in the light of his own novel concept of constitutional monarchy said to have been derived from a certain aspect of Hindu *dharma* or religious polity.

King Birendra’s view of constitutional monarchy is not the usually accepted one in which both the king and his people derive their rights and responsibilities from the constitution, which can be changed at any time by the required majority of the votes of the people, or of their representatives, in popularly elected national legislatures. His theory of constitutional monarchy seems to be largely influenced by his concept of a king as God among the people. King Birendra’s published statements suggest that he places himself above the government and the constitution because both of them are his creations. He is evasive on the question of whether the constitution defines the relations between the king and the people, thereby putting limitations on the royal powers. In considering the return to *hukumi raj* two questions must be examined: whether the king should be viewed as part of the government, when he can appoint and dismiss that government without reference to popular sanction of any kind, and whether he can escape criticism for the failure of the policies of such governments.
King Birendra has said, ‘my government and people are governed under a constitution’. Concerning himself and his relationship to the people, he has stated, ‘the monarch and his subjects have been governed by dharma, a system drawn from the Hindu religion... The king cannot change this value system. Therefore, he too is governed by the ethical code.’ And what does this ethical code imply? In the King’s own words, ‘according to this code, the King lives and has his being only to protect the people, to dispense justice to them and punish the wrong-doers’. To emphasize his point, His Majesty has amplified his statement, ‘indeed, the king embodies the collective identity of the people and, as desired by his people, it is he who grants and amends the Constitution.’ The obvious implication is that the interests of the king and the people are one and indivisible. Independently of the king, the people, as individuals or as a body, cannot have any wishes or interests of their own. Both the king and his subjects are bound by the very same ethical code, which compels the latter to merge their individual selves into the king, and the king himself is powerless to change this value system. When pointedly questioned by a newspaper correspondent about how he felt at being looked upon as God, His Majesty replied that his people accept him as a god, and that his feelings did not enter into the matter.

Kingship in Vedic and Sanskrit Literature

Since King Birendra has referred to dharma, a system drawn from the Hindu religion’, it will not be out of place to look briefly into the nature of the Hindu religion and the connotation of the word ‘dharma’ in its context. Hinduism is not a religion in the accepted sense of the word because it has neither an established church nor a corpus of codified doctrines and practices. What passes for the Hindu religion in popular parlance is, in short, the body of thoughts and speculations, rituals and practices comprising different periods of the cultural development of a people from the early Vedic age to the present time.

In the Vedic period kingship was not hereditary and the magician-kings of the time were elected on the basis of their skill in performing magical feats, such as causing rain and stopping it by the incantation of mantras or words of Revelation. Even later, at the time of Buddha, monarchy was not hereditary and kings were elected for fixed periods. The Buddha’s father, himself, was one such elected
There seems to have been a strong republican tradition in the southern part of today's Nepal and the adjoining Indian plains, as indicated by the republics of the Sakyas and the Licchavis. The republican trend in the Hindu tradition was, in due course of time, submerged under the imperial tide characterized by the rise of the powerful kingdom of Magadha and of the later empires of the Kushanas, the Nandas, the Mauryas and the Guptas.

The literal and derivative meaning of the word 'dharma' is 'that which sustains', and implies nothing more than a collective sense or mutuality of rights and duties which sustains a society. The rights and duties of the monarch and his subjects are defined in the ritualistic, metaphysical and speculative literature of the earliest times such as the Vedas, the Brahmans and the Upanisads; in the popular scriptures such as the epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata and the eighteen Puranas, and also in the latter-day Dharma-sutras and Dharma-sastras, which served as legal and social codes. The concept of the rights and duties of the king and his subjects seems to vary with the time in which a particular kind of literature appears. Nowhere in the Hindu tradition do we come across anything that approximates the model of a modern constitutional monarch who does not enjoy any effective powers and who, therefore, is absolved from all blame. In the Hindu tradition the king enjoyed powers but the people could always hold him to account for errors of omission and commission. Even regicide is recommended in extreme cases, and the killing of King Behn, notorious for his oppressive measures, is celebrated as an event in Hindu religious literature.

Countries have different ways of authenticating or legitimizing the authority of rulers. Such authentication involves religious beliefs, sacerdotal functionaries, and the power relations between the ruling house and sacred institutions. Religion in Nepal has always been used as a hand-maid of politics. Even the apparently powerful institution of the royal preceptor, equipped with the arbitrary power of dispensation and excommunication, was always used in Nepal to legitimize the acts of the powers-that-be. The late King Mahendra did away with heredity as the basis for the appointment or selection of royal preceptors by promulgating a royal ordinance which made the office open to competition among all qualified persons of the Brahmin caste who fulfilled certain qualifications or conditions.

Despite the epithets referring to the Nepali king in the official
panegyrics as ‘lord of the mountains’ (Giriraja), ‘crest-jewel of the wheel’ (Chakrachudamani), God among men (Nara-Narayana), historically, the kings of Nepal, in the past, never considered themselves to be gods. They did not claim descent from gods as some other rulers, such as the emperors of China and Japan did. The kings of Nepal merely regarded themselves as the seekers of the blessings of God or the recipients or beneficiaries of God’s favours. It was only after effective ruling power in Nepal had passed into the hands of the Three Times Shri Rana Maharaj-cum-Prime Ministers that the title of Five Times Shri Maharajdhiraj was applied to the kings. The bearer of the title began to be referred to ironically as an incarnation of Narayana who, like the image of this god at Budanila-Kantha in Kathmandu, did not act on his own or speak to the common people but was, all the same, worthy of veneration by them. The Ranas so contrived to exalt the majesty of the king that he became immobilized, or at least unable to act independently.

The attempt to exploit the ruler’s ties with the Hindu religion for blatant political purposes is as recent as the post-1960 period of the late King Mahendra’s rule. Before that Nepal, in pursuit of the declared goals of the 1951 revolution, such as representative democracy and secularism, always emphasized officially the lack of religious discrimination in its tradition. The 1962 Constitution of Nepal characterized Nepal as a Hindu state for the first time, even at the risk of incurring the displeasure of non-Hindu minorities. The late King Mahendra was motivated by a political desire to exploit the Hindu sentiment in India to combat the pressure Jawaharlal Nehru’s government was putting on him to adhere to the democratic tradition ushered in by the 1951 revolution in Nepal. Again, the practice of issuing royal messages of goodwill, not only to Nepali Hindus but also to all Hindus in the world, initiated by the late King Mahendra and followed by his son and successor, King Birendra, is another example of a conscious intent to use religion for a political purpose. The Shah kings had never, in the past, professed to be religious leaders and had been content with their role as the protectors of religion in keeping with the old Kshatriya tradition. The concept of traditional legitimacy in Nepal was primarily based on the arbitrary claim, backed up by the capacity of a ruler to use physical force to compel obedience. This concept of kingship was reinforced by the Hindu view of the nobility of birth,
resulting from meritorious action in a previous life and sanctified by custom.

Rule by pre-emptory commands takes many forms—the Japanese emperor, supported by astrologer-historians and the Frankish or Norman kings supported by priestly advisers, come to mind, but as Bendix points out; 'All forms of personal rule are distinguished among themselves by the mix between sanctified custom and sanctified arbitrariness, and by the personnel which upholds that mix through interpretation.'

The expressed opinion of King Birendra, concerning the rights and duties of the king and his subjects and the permanence of the relations between them (which is said to be derived from the ethical code of dharma), imparts a new dimension to the 1975 amendments to the Constitution of Nepal. In the changed context King Birendra has not only raised the status and authority of the Back to the Village National Campaign machinery but has also sought to redesign it as his personal instrument for organizing and guiding Nepali politics.

The Apparatus for the Back to the Village National Campaign

To this end, the 1975 constitutional amendments have incorporated the apparatus for the Back to the Village National Campaign (BVNC) in the main body of the Constitution of Nepal. The BVNC, however, had already been in existence for eight years before this. However the BVNC, as presently constituted, differs from its predecessor, not only in its form and purpose, but also in its operational procedure.

Even prior to the enactment of the 1975 constitutional amendments, the reorganization and revitalization of the BVNC machinery under King Birendra projected its popular image or stereotype as the King’s party except in name. This impression became so widespread that the central committee of the BVNC felt constrained to issue on 13 September, 1974, a pamphlet entitled The BVNC Central Committee Clarifies Some Doubts About the Reorganized BVNC. This publication conceded that the BVNC as reorganized on new lines bore some resemblance to a party organization and performed similar functions, furnishing (1) the correct interpretation of the Panchayat ideology, (2) the training and indoctrination of cadres, (3) the education of voters along right lines, (4) the evaluation of political workers, and (5) the enforcement of political discipline.
However, the pamphlet sought to differentiate the BVNC from the political party organization by professing that unlike the party, the BVNC apparatus was not power-oriented and did not aim at gaining control of the government.

It was further stated in the pamphlet that: ‘The BVNC has not and will not put up candidates of its own in the election at any level, nor has it taken or will take part in election campaigns for or against a particular pancha.’

But this statement was subsequently repudiated by the process of implementation of the 1975 constitutional amendments which involved the BVNC actively in the actual selection of candidates for various bodies in the Panchayat hierarchy. The contradictions, already present in the BVNC as reorganized in 1973 have been highlighted by the BVNC in its latest form as a constitutional organ. How is it possible for a body such as the BVNC, subject to innumerable political pulls and pressures both from within and without, to actually remain effectively aloof from power motivations of its own, and how can it possibly dissociate politics from its vital elements of competition and struggle for power merely by professing development in a pious manner?

The BVNC as the Backbone of the Partyless Panchayat System under King Birendra

As we have seen above, the BVNC, in the new Panchayat set-up, as amended in 1975, has been deliberately redesigned as the direct instrument of the King’s will and power. It conducts organized politics under the ‘active leadership’ or the ‘direct guidance’ of the King. The central committee of the BVNC consists of nine members, including the chairman and the member-cum-secretary, all of whom are directly nominated by the King. It is the most powerful body in the new set-up, and is entrusted with the responsibility of mobilizing people politically in the King’s name to ensure collective action and efforts for economic development at all levels. One of the official publications of His Majesty’s government describes the BVNC as the ‘backbone of the partyless Panchayat system’.

The eventual composition of the higher-level bodies in the Panchayat hierarchy, such as the district Panchayat and the national legislature, Rastriya Panchayat, entirely depends on who is permitted to run for elections at the village level. The Local Panchayat (Election Procedure, First Amendment) ordinance provides that
no one can contest these elections unless his candidacy has been approved beforehand by the BVNC at the proper level. In addition, the BVNC has the authority to fill positions in the Panchayat bodies that may fall vacant due to death or to other reasons. The King, if he so desires, may consult the BVNC Central Committee about the appointment of the Prime Minister, the chairman of the national assembly (Rastriya Panchayat) and other ministers.

The role and functions of the BVNC, whose machinery and operational procedures resemble those of a political party, are incorporated in the main body of the Constitution as amended in 1975. Even the Constitutions of one-party communist states do not contain anything about their political party and its working. The BVNC does not fit naturally into the political structure of the Panchayat as it can neither be said to serve as a link between the executive and the legislative branches of the government nor can it be said to represent the popular wing of the government and legislature. As Lok Raj Baral has pointed out, 'Since all the members of the BVNC committees from the apex to the bottom are nominees, they do not have an organic relationship with the panchas at large.'

The relations between the so-called popularly elected members of various bodies in the Panchayat hierarchy and their mentors and overseers at the different levels of the BVNC, all of whom are nominated, are apt to be uneasy in the best of circumstances and may not prove conducive in the long run to the institutional growth of the Panchayats as effective units of local and national government. The essential dichotomy between these elected and nominated officials in the present modified version of the Panchayat system may further reduce its cohesiveness.

The BVNC seems to partially follow the Leninist blueprint of party organization, which came to be euphemistically termed 'democratic centralism'. According to Lenin, in One Step Forward, Two Steps Back (1914), 'it is the organizational principle of the revolutionary Social-Democrats' who 'strive to proceed from the top downward, and advocate an extension of the rights and plenary powers of the centre in respect to the parts', as different from the opportunist Social-Democrats 'who strive to proceed from the bottom upward, and therefore, wherever possible and as far as possible, advocate autonomism and a 'democracy' which is carried (by the over-zealous) to the point of anarchism.' The role of the BVNC machinery is, in a way, similar to that of the
Communist party in one-party Communist states, with the difference that the Politburo or the Executive Committee of such parties draws its personnel and cadres from below, i.e. from its ordinary members on the basis of their popularity, experience and past service to the party, whereas the BVNC has, as its driving force and most powerful body, the Central Committee, appointed by the King for political considerations of a personal nature. Furthermore, the BVNC has no modern social ideology or message of progress to offer to the people. It can merely emphasize the usefulness of absolute monarchy by upholding, through interpretation, 'the mix between sanctified custom and sanctified arbitrariness', which is the basis of all kinds of personal rules reinforced by the strength derived from the army.

Even the right to recall elected members of different bodies at various levels of the Panchayat hierarchy cannot be exercised by the electorate without the prior approval of the BVNC committee of the appropriate level. This is the procedure for recall laid down in the ordinance promulgated by King Birendra on 12 December, 1975.

Members of Panchayat at any level, other than ministers, ministers of state, assistant ministers of His majesty's government, and nominated members of the Rastriya Panchayat, may be recalled through a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of the electorate. Such resolutions shall be presented with the approval of the BVNC of the appropriate level on the charge that the member whose recall is demanded has not discharged his duties and responsibilities, or has displayed contempt for monarchy or spread confusion about the panchayat system, or indulged in factionalism and created a rift among panchayat workers, or worked with evil or malafide motives. However, such member shall not be deprived of an opportunity to explain his conduct. He shall be deemed to have been recalled if the resolution is passed.88

In the Constitution of Nepal, as amended in 1975, the BVNC enjoys a highly favoured and sheltered existence. The privileges of its office-bearers and members are surpassed only by the King and the royal family. Even the rules framed by the central committee of the BVNC for the conduct of its business are placed above the law
and Constitution of the land. Section (7) of Article 67B of the amended Constitution of Nepal clearly lays down that the rules to be framed under this Article, which deals with the BVNC, shall prevail even if they are found to be inconsistent with the existing laws or any other Article in the Constitution itself.\textsuperscript{89} The salaries of the members of the Central Committee of the BVNC shall be directly charged on the consolidated funds of the state and are, therefore, not subject to annual appropriation by the national legislature.\textsuperscript{90}

\textit{The Panchayat Structure}

There has been slight confusion because of a misleading use of the term ‘Panchayat’ in relation to both the Panchayats (executive committees) at local levels on the one hand and the Rastriya Panchayat (national assembly or legislature) on the other. The national assembly, which is also called Panchayat, is not like smaller executive committees, called Panchayats, at the village or the district level but resembles the larger village, district or zonal assemblies (Sabhas). The four-tier Panchayat framework originally consisted of the Gaun Panchayat (village executive committee), the Zilla Panchayat (the district executive committee), the Anchal Panchayat (the zonal executive committee) together with their respective Sabhas (assemblies) and the Rastriya Panchayat (national legislature or assembly) at the highest level. Previously, the entire adult population of a village or a group of villages (altogether about 5,000 electors) was regarded as the village assembly which elected an 11-person Gaon Panchayat (village executive committees). One person from each village was sent to the Zilla Sabha (district assembly) which in turn elected an 11-member Zilla Panchayat (district executive committee).\textsuperscript{91}

\textit{Gaun and Nagar Panchayats (Village and Town Executive Committees)}

Under the Constitution, as amended by King Birendra in 1975, a new provision has been made for the setting up of the Gaun and Nagar Sabhas (village and town assemblies). The 45-member village assemblies are composed of five representatives elected from each of the nine wards into which the village is divided for purposes of election to the village assembly. The village assembly has to elect members of the village executive committee (Gaun Panchayat)
from among the five members of the ward committee, one from each of the nine wards. The person elected to the village Panchayat from the ward shall also be the chairman of that village ward committee. The nine members elected by the village assembly, in the manner described above, together with two members nominated by the district committee of the BVNC, will compose the 11-member village executive committee. The town assembly, like the village assembly, will be composed of five members elected from every ward in the town and every ward will have a committee with its representative in the Nagar Panchayat (town or municipal executive committee). The town or municipal committee will consist of a sum total of the ward representatives, elected by the town-assembly from among the five members of each of the ward committees in the town, along with two to six members nominated by the district committee of the BVNC. In case no woman has been elected member of the village and the municipal committee, one of the two members to be nominated by the district committee of the BVNC shall be a woman. The pradhan and upapradhan pancha (the chairman and vice-chairman) of the Gaun Panchayat (village executive committee) shall be elected from among themselves by the eleven members of the village committee and not by the adult population of the village, as was done previously. The town or municipal committee can also elect its chairman and vice-chairman from among its members, by a two-thirds majority. In the event of the failure of any candidates for the offices of the chairman and vice-chairman of the village and town committees to be elected by a clear two-thirds vote, the district-level committee of the BVNC shall acquire the right to nominate the above office-bearers from among the members of the village and town committees.

*The Zilla Sabha and Zilla Panchayat (District Assembly and District Executive Committees)*

The district assembly shall consist of the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the village and town executive committees in the district, along with those elected by the municipal committees whose number will be equal to one-third of the total number of wards in a town. The district assembly thus formed shall elect nine members, one from each of the nine electoral areas into which the district will be divided for purposes of election to the district executive committee (Zilla Panchayat). These nine members, together
with four others—to be nominated by the zonal committee of the BVNC—shall make up the thirteen-member district executive committee (Zilla Panchayat) in the new Panchayat set-up in Nepal.  

The thirteen-member district executive committee shall elect the chairman and vice-chairman from among its members by a clear two-third majority. In case the candidate fails to obtain a two-thirds majority, the zonal committee of the BVNC shall again nominate the above-mentioned office-bearers from among the members of the district executive committee.

Rastriya Panchayat (National Assembly or Legislature)

The Rastriya Panchayat (national assembly or legislature) resembles more closely a legislative assembly in functions and character than the Panchayats (executive committee) at the lower level, which are essentially executive committees. According to the latest constitutional amendments, members of the district assembly shall have the right to propose, second and vote for candidates for membership of the Rastriya Panchayat from among the thirteen members of the district executive committee. However, all district executive committee members in a particular zone shall also vote for candidates from the particular district for membership of the national assembly or legislature. In short, under the amended Panchayat set-up, the members of a particular district assembly, along with those of the district executive committees in the zone to which the district belongs, shall elect members from the district for a term of four years only, instead of six years, as was the case earlier, from the Panchayat constituencies. Previously, the members of the district assembly did not form a part of the electoral college for electing the national assembly members, which merely consisted of all the district executive committees in a particular zone. Now the national assembly shall consist of 135 members, including 23 royal nominees, whereas in the past it was composed of 125 members including 16 royal nominees.

Earlier, fifteen members of the national assembly were also elected from constituencies other than the Panchayat. Fifteen members were elected by officially recognized and controlled organizations, four each by the Peasants’ Organization and the Youth Organization, three by the Women’s Organization and two each by the Exservicemen’s Organization and the Labour or Workers’ Organization. The remaining four members of the 109 elected members came
from the Graduates’ Constituency. All registered graduates in the
country elected directly from among themselves four members to the
national assembly on the basis of preferential proportionate repre-
sentation, and every college graduate could freely contest the election
from this nationwide constituency. But the 1975 constitutional
amendments have abolished the Graduates’ Constituency along with
the constituencies reserved for the so-called class and professional
organizations, probably to avoid even the minimal conflict the class
organizations had tended to generate within the components of the
Panchayat system by giving rise to competition for status and power,
albeit on a very minor scale.

The votaries of the Panchayat system have always sought to coun-
ter even the spirit of healthy rivalry which is the very essence of
politics. The spirit of competition, motivated by desire for status
and power, can never be completely suppressed among political
participants. All that can be done in the way of mitigating conflict
is to seek and gain a consensus on the rules of the game and to
see to it that they are respected by all parties and enforced in practice.
It is the lack of national consensus on this vital matter that has
proved an obstacle to the institutionalization of the recent Panchayat
political procedures and practices in Nepal. This is, in fact, at the
root of the abolition of the constituencies for class organizations.
The first four years of King Birendra’s rule saw the appointment
of three Prime Ministers, the last of whom had to be brought in
from outside the Rastriya Panchayat.

In the past, regular sessions of the national legislature (Rastriya
Panchayat) were always held in camera. Article 42, Section 6, of the
Constitution of Nepal, as amended in 1975, provides that the sessions
of the national legislature will normally be open to the press and
public, except under special circumstances. But this provision does
not seem to amount to much in view of the fact that the prospect
for full and free debate, on the floor of the national assembly, has
been further restricted in the latest version of the Constitution by
the incorporation of Article 45, Section 2, which forbids even refer-
ences critical of the principles of ‘the partyless democratic Panchayat
system’.

Professional and Class Organizations under the
new Constitutional set-up

Another novel feature of the Constitution, as amended in Decem-
ber 1975, is the manner in which it seeks to dovetail class organizations into the Panchayat hierarchy by having the district and zonal committees of the BVNC nominate the office-bearers of the class organizations, at the village and district levels respectively, from among the members of these organizations elected to the Panchayat bodies. Of course, under the new constitutional set-up, no-one who has not been a member of one or the other of these class organizations for the required number of years can offer himself as a candidate for election to the Panchayats. But the five class organizations, the Labour Organization and the Ex-servicemen’s Organization—and also the newly introduced Adults’ Organization—are intended to perform the input function of the Panchayat political system and also to act as the feedback mechanism serving as a corrective to public measures and policies. These class organizations which, on their own admission, had in the past been ineffective in both the roles intended for them, have now been rendered all the more ineffective. As they are presently constituted, they cannot possibly function as countervailing influences which have, all along, been lacking in Nepal’s Panchayat political system. The so-called class organizations, with their national executive and central committees abolished under the newly amended constitution, can only function up to the district level. Their office-bearers will be denied any initiative or any independent existence, inasmuch as they are to be nominated by the appropriate committee of the BVNC from among the members of the village executive committee and the district executive committee in the Panchayat hierarchy. The so-called class and professional organizations have thus been deprived of even the possibility of having a grass-roots organization at the level of the masses. In the past, aware of the possibility of their members securing representation in the national legislature, these organizations became quite active on the eve of elections. Now they do not even have that incentive any longer as the constituencies of the class organizations have been abolished by the 1975 amendments to the Constitution.

Commission for Prevention of the Misuse of Power (CPMP)

The newly created Commission for the Prevention of the Misuse of Power (CPMP) which resembles, in form, the constitution of the ombudsman in some democratic states, does not in practice resemble the latter in its role and methods. The Comission has the
authority to encroach directly on the authority and jurisdiction of elected assemblies and courts in much the same way as the Enquiry and Investigation Centre did during the first four years of King Birendra’s rule, as an affiliate of the Palace Secretariat. The CPMP is expected to serve, in essence, as the King’s watch-dog committee to see whether the people in various elective and appointive positions are acting in a manner prejudicial to the accepted practice and tradition of the monarch’s absolute power to rule by peremptory and pre-emptory commands.

The Amended Constitution at Work

Before we examine the actual implementation of the 1975 constitutional amendments, it would be worthwhile to inquire briefly into the personal and political standing and qualifications of the members and office-bearers of the central committee of the BVNC. This select body of persons, by virtue of the power and responsibility vested in them directly by the King, are wholly responsible for the conduct and guidance of Nepal’s ‘partyless democratic Panchayat system’ in conformity with His Majesty’s command and wishes.

On 2 January, 1976, King Birendra dissolved the existing Central Committee of the BVNC, which had been set up by him on 26 August, 1973, and nominated a new Central Committee of nine men including its chairman and secretary. The new Food and Land Reforms Minister, Khadga Bahadur Singh, has been appointed as Chairman, and Dr Mohammad Moshin, as member-secretary. The other members are: Home Minister Bhoj Raj Ghimire, Dil Bahadur Shreshtha, Narsingh Bhakta Tulachand, Kamal Raj Regmi, Satrughan Prasad Singh, Krishna Prasad Pant and Yajna Prasad Acharya.

In view of the key position this committee has in the amended Constitution, the background and personality of its office-bearers and members deserve some notice as their personal value-system, philosophical preferences and political beliefs are apt to influence their decisions and actions as members of this powerful body. The professional and the political careers of some of them have already been referred to. Chairman Khadga Bahadur Singh, who has had no formal schooling of any kind, was at one time a member of the Nepali National Congress (D.R. Regmi Group), which he left afterwards to join Dr K.I. Singh’s United Democratic Party. He came into prominence after the late King Mahendra appointed him Minister during the post-1960 Panchayat era, and he was
Home Minister until 1971 when he failed to contest the election to the national legislature against Dr K.I. Singh from the district of Doti, because he could not find a proposer and a seconder. Even after he ceased to be a member of the Panchayat legislature, Khadga Bahadur continued to enjoy royal favour and was appointed executive chairman of the Tikapur Development Committee (reportedly with a Minister’s salary), until King Birendra nominated him a member of the national legislature and appointed him minister in December 1975. Secretary-cum-member Dr Mohammad Moshin, who belongs to the minority Muslim community and has earned a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Bombay, initially served on the committee set up by the late King Mahendra to draw up the philosophy of the Panchayat system after it had been established. When this committee was dissolved, the late King directly appointed him, over the head of the Public Service Commission, a joint secretary on probation in the Panchayat ministry. Later on, he was nominated member-secretary of the Commission set up by the late King, under the personal supervision of King Birendra (then Crown Prince), to draw up a comprehensive plan for a new system of education. Dr Moshin received due recognition for his contribution to the newly introduced system of education when he was awarded Rs 10,000 in cash and was appointed executive secretary of the permanent National Policy Planning Commission for High Education, which was to be headed by no less a person than the Minister of Education. His close association with King Birendra, then Crown Prince, in drawing up a plan for the new system of education, seems to have stood him in good stead and has, so far, enabled him to exercise a fair measure of the real decision and policy-making power without being directly and personally responsible for the consequences of this.

Among the members of this committee: Bhoj Raj Ghimire, who lost the election to Parliament in 1959 on the Nepali Congress ticket, but has all along been a member of the Panchayat national legislature and has also held ministerial position on occasions, was Home Minister in 1976. Dil Bahadur Shrestha, another favourite hatchet man of the late King Mahendra has, like Khadga Bahadur Singh, no formal education of any sort, but came into some prominence in 1959 when the late King nominated him a member of Parliament after he was defeated in the 1959 General Elections by B.P. Koirala, the first ever elected Prime Minister of Nepal. In the
post-1960 era Shrestha served as District Officer and Zonal Commissioner, and rapidly rose to the position of Home Minister without ever contesting Panchayat elections as he was twice nominated a member of the national legislature by the late King. During the first four years that King Birendra was on the throne, Dil Bahadur Shrestha was kept in a state of political hibernation (with his less political and less ambitious elder brother, Hom Bahadur Shreshta, as Home Minister) until the former was appointed member of the powerful Central Committee of the BVNC. Narsingh Bhakta Tulachand, also a favourite of the late King, has been a nominated member of the national legislature and belongs to the minority Thakali community. Kamal Raj Regmi is the only member of the committee with some experience in pre-1960 national politics. He was at one time a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Nepal and was one of the four members elected to the 1959 Parliament on the Communist Party ticket. He was also an elected member of the Panchayat National Assembly but failed in his re-election attempt after he was made Vice-Chairman and member of the Central Committee of the BVNC. Satrughan Prasad Singh is a rich landlord, who belongs to the Yadav (Gwala or Cowherd) community of the eastern Tarai. His local and social welfare activities were patronized by the late King. Krishna Prasad Pant, a Supreme Court advocate who was nominated by King Birendra as a member of the Judicial Committee after he had lost badly in the last election to the national legislature from the Graduates’ Constituency, is a rich hill Brahmin landlord with lands in the western Tarai. Yajna Prasad Acharya, a one-time Communist fellow traveller who became head of the government-controlled Youth Organization after he had lost his election to the national legislature from the Graduates’ Constituency, is another Brahmin landlord from Dharan in the eastern Tarai.

On the basis of a quick, general scrutiny of their backgrounds, the members of this most powerful body under the amended Constitution can be divided into two broad categories. There are those who have been rejected by the people in elections, and there are others who have not even bothered to contest elections. But the question that is vital for the future of Nepal is whether such people will be able to staff and man the party-like apparatus created by the King for the purpose of political recruitment and mobilization on a nationwide scale.
A striking feature of the amended Constitution is the abolition of the Graduates' Constituency for election to the national legislature and also that of representation for the so-called class organizations in the national legislature on an elective basis with a view to countering even the minimal growth of the spirit of open competitive politics in the Panchayat system. However, there seems to have been a compelling reason for the abolition of the Graduates' Constituency. The results of successive elections to the national legislature from this Constituency in the past must have convinced advisers of the court that educated people could no longer be trusted as free agents to carry out their political obligations in the Panchayat system. It is this realization, more than anything else, that led to the abolition of the Graduates' Constituency in the amended Constitution. As the Palace wanted a few educated people in the national legislature for ornamental purposes, it was decided to bring them in by nomination and co-option from among teachers in the university or educational service. Although it had been necessary for persons in the university or educational service to resign before they could independently contest Panchayat elections previously, it has now been made possible for university teachers to be nominated to the national legislature without losing their lien on educational service. The logic of this may be that educated people under some kind of governmental bondage can be more reliable in playing their assigned roles. Where then lies the justification for debarring those holding offices of profit from running for elections?

The recent constitutional amendments have the effect of an even greater centralization of power in the hands of the King, and show a definite preference for nomination, indirect elections and consensus as compared to popular choice, direct elections and simple majority decisions at every level in the Panchayat set-up. Elections to different levels of Panchayat bodies were held in the districts of the Sagarmatha, Lumbini and Seti zones in the spring and summer of 1976. Almost all of the candidates approved by the BVNC were returned unopposed. The government newspaper itself states:

In the majority of cases, candidates have been returned unopposed. Panchayat workers who had joined the Panchayat system at the time of its very inception and made notable contributions to it, as well as political workers who had joined the system after realizing that it was achieving success, have been elected unoppos-
ed as members of district and village assemblies or as chairmen and vice-chairmen of village Panchayats.

The nature and trend of elections show not only a lack of popular interest in elections but also a determined effort, on the part of the BVNC, to make sure that candidates of its choosing are returned unopposed. The high-ranking officials of the BVNC who have themselves never faced the test of competitive politics at the popular level have naturally begun to make much of uncontested elections. Khadga Bahadur Singh, Minister of Food, Agriculture, Irrigation and Land Reform, and Chairman of the Central Committee of the BVNC, commended 'the manner in which Panchayat workers were securing, without opposition, the election of persons who were more qualified than they'. He hoped that a similar tendency would be witnessed in elections to be held in the future.98 Addressing a conference of Panchayat workers of the Rapti zone at Dang on 28 May, 1976, Singh made it clear that ‘in accordance with the spirit of the Second Amendment to the Constitution, the performance of Panchayat workers will be evaluated on the basis of the contribution they can make in holding elections through a consensus’; that is to say, he is himself in favour of uncontested elections as a means of returning the best qualified candidates. Dr Mohammed Moshin, Member-cum-Secretary of the Central Committee of the BVNC, stressed that ‘unopposed elections would put an end to mutual hostility and recrimination among candidates, and thereby foster the spirit of Panchayat politics’.99

Not all elections in 1976 for membership in the National Panchayat were organized in accordance with the procedure laid down in the second amendment of the Constitution. Seventeen vacancies in the national legislature were filled in accordance with the old method in use prior to the enactment of the second amendment. However, it was announced beforehand that the terms of the members thus returned would expire in the month of January 1977, 1978 and 1979, depending on when elections were held in those districts. Sixteen seats were filled without any contest.100 Elections to the national legislature from one of the districts, Bardiya, was postponed ‘for certain reasons’. According to another report, circulated by the official news agency, the decision was dictated by the possibility of disturbance as there were two candidates in the field.101 The Central Committee of the BVNC set up a two-member
sub-committee to investigate the allegation that some of the Panchayat workers in the Bheri zone had violated the code of conduct in the course of elections.\textsuperscript{102} Shanti Shamsher Rana, the member returned unopposed to the national legislature from the district of Banke, in the Bheri zone, resigned with the objective of 'maintaining political discipline and a pure atmosphere, and promoting the spirit of the second amendment to the Constitution.\textsuperscript{103} The official account of how elections were organized makes their real nature and spirit perfectly clear, and leaves no doubt as to the role of the BVNC in influencing them.

The Election Campaign, in what proved once again to be no more than an empty formality in the end, announced on 2 June, 1976 that, in accordance with the procedure laid down by the second amendment to the Constitution, elections for 26 seats in the national legislature would be held on 10 June, 1976.\textsuperscript{104} Nepal's official news agency, \textit{Rastriya Sambad Samiti} (RSS), reported on 5 June, 1976 that twenty candidates had been returned unopposed to the national legislature—two from each of the districts of Palpa, Kapilavastu Nawal Parasi, Gulmi, Siraha, Saptari and Khotang, and one from each of the districts of Argha Khanchi, Kailali, Bajhang, Bajura, Okhaldhunga and Solukhumba.\textsuperscript{105} Further, the Election Commission announced on 8 June, 1976 that six other candidates were also returned unopposed to the national legislature—two from each of the districts of Achham and Rupandehi, and one from each of the districts of Udayapur and Doti.\textsuperscript{106} Thus, candidates for all the 26 seats in the national legislature from seventeen districts were elected unopposed.

The elections organized in accordance with the letter and spirit of the second amendment proved to be so meaningless in practice that even the pro-Panchayat establishment Nepali daily, \textit{Naya Samaj}, felt compelled to state in its columns that the practice of unopposed elections might completely undermine the faith of the people in elections as such and complained in a guarded manner:

\begin{quote}
It is even possible that favour and influence, rather than merit, will play an important part in Panchayat elections in the future... Rastriya Panchayat members will lose the moral right to regard themselves as real representatives of the people. The people, on their part, may lose their respect for Rastriya Panchayat members. We have no objection to the BVNC selecting the candidates.
\end{quote}
It is, in fact, the duty of the BVNC to do so. But the people's interest in elections would not dwindle if several candidates were selected from each constituency, and competition thus encouraged among them. We are not opposed to unopposed elections. But we cannot welcome the tradition of having unopposed elections everywhere.\(^{107}\)

However, the official mouthpiece of the government, *Gorkhapatra*, said in an editorial:

The basic objective of the Panchayat system is to channelize the energies of the nation toward reconstruction. This objective can be attained only through unity among Panchayat workers. Unopposed elections will not only ensure unity among Panchayat workers, but also make it unnecessary for candidates to incur needless expenses during elections.\(^{108}\)

In keeping with the tone of the remarks in *Gorkhapatra*, a large section of the controlled press of Nepal lost no opportunity in congratulating the BVNC on its success the new tradition of election by consensus.\(^{109}\)

*Janmabhumi*, a Nepali weekly, has succinctly reported on the role of the BVNC in the 1976 mid-term elections to the national legislature:

Except in the Bardiya district, mid-term elections to the Rastriya Panchayat were held in sixteen districts without any contest. All the candidates that were elected unopposed had been endorsed by the BVNC Central Committee. In the Banke and Jajarkot districts of the Bheri zone, however, the decisions of the Central Committee of the BVNC were flouted, and candidates not endorsed by it were returned unopposed. In the Bardiya district, the election was postponed because a candidate other than the one endorsed by the Central Committee of the BVNC also sought to contest the election.\(^{110}\)

The 1976 Panchayat elections make it all too obvious that the BVNC is going to play a paramount role in Nepal's Panchayat politics under King Birendra.

**Conclusion**

Under the post-1960 political system, in which power has been
centralized in the monarchy, there are three distinct organizational levels to be considered.

1. The Palace Secretariat plans a dominant policy and decision-making role. As all channels of communication to the King are routed through the Palace Secretariat, it is in a position to act as a filter for the flow of information to the King from various official and unofficial sources. The function of the Palace Secretariat, in this respect, not only approximates the aggregational role of political parties in modern societies, but also acts like a legislative organ when it sometimes exercises not only supervisory or investigatory powers on an *ad hoc* basis but also policy planning functions through its affiliate, known as the *Janch Bujh Kendra* (Centre for Enquiry and Investigation). Although the direct role of the Palace Secretariat in policy implementation appears to be minimal, its wide-ranging supervisory and investigatory powers enable it to influence, in some measure, even the actual process of policy implementation.

2. The Central Secretariat, whose role in the final stages of policy making appears to be nominal, is, however, directly responsible for implementation of the Government’s programme. The Central Secretariat acts as a consultant and a supplier of data to the Palace Secretariat on the basis of which the latter formulates briefs for public policy measures. But the Palace Secretariat is free to obtain data and advice from anywhere and is also seeking to develop its own agency for collecting data.

3. The Panchayat hierarchy, comprising indirectly elected bodies at the district, zone and national levels, seems to have been given—at least in name and theory—a large measure of responsibility for public affairs and policies without, however, being given control of resources. In the ‘partyless democratic Panchayat system’, the Panchayats themselves have been, for all practical purposes, rendered ineffective and anomalous in the actual process of decision and policy making at various levels.

Even the unamended 1962 Constitution, for all its shortcomings, granted a measure of fundamental rights and freedoms to the people and provided for the external or formal safeguards of democracy, albeit in a limited form. Noteworthy are its provisions for an independent judiciary, independent audits and accounts, and a Public Service Commission for the impartial recruitment of civil servants on the basis of merit and for their promotion on the basis
of efficiency. The Constitution also granted constitutional remedies, such as *Habeas Corpus*, *Quo Warranto*, *Certiorari* and *Mandamus*, to ensure effective protection by the courts of the rights of individuals against the state or the government. The 1967 amendment to the Constitution had also introduced an independent Election Commission to guarantee free, fair and impartial elections. Further, the stress laid on decentralization of power and respect for public opinion in the Constitution did not appear to block the way for the development of democratic trends in future. However, the trend towards rule by peremptory and pre-emptory commands (*hukumi shasan*), the pre-eminent position of the Palace Secretariat, the transformation of the National Army (*Rastriya Sena*) into the Royal Army (*Shahi Sena*), the revival, in a subtle form, of some of the traditional institutions of the Shah and Rana despotism of the past, such as the *pajani, daudaha*, and the *salam* or *darshan-bhet*, and the setting up of special tribunals, reminiscent of the Star Chamber and Courts of Commission in Tudor Britain, pointed to ominous autocratic and authoritarian trends and tendencies.

As a result of the 1975 constitutional amendments, the BVNC has emerged as the most powerful and sheltered body in the Constitution and will no doubt enable a small clique or coterie of individuals, including a few technocratic policy-oriented intellectuals, to exercise a measure of political power in the name of the King without facing competition at the popular level and even without running the risk of being held directly responsible for the consequences of political failures. Highly placed officials in charge of responsible offices can cover themselves by placing that political decision at the highest level has always been the King's. However, the direct involvement of the King in active politics will ultimately reduce his position to that of several other contestants or competitors in the political arena. The consequences of possible failure may be all the graver for the institution of monarchy.

Generally speaking, the 1975 amendments betray a marked lack of trust in popular initiative, elections, freedom and majority decision. All of the candidates selected by the BVNC were returned to various elective bodies in the Panchayat hierarchy in the elections held in the spring and summer of 1976, after the promulgation of the 1975 amendments to the Constitution. The evidence is conclusive that what took place was nothing less than a mockery of democratic elections. If elections are not to be used as a means of
encouraging healthy competition for public office, on the basis of popular confidence there seems to be hardly any justification for holding them. In its misplaced zeal to promote the notion of 'partylessness' and to have the King as the one and only national political leader, the amended version of the Constitution tends to neglect, far more than the 1962 version, Nepal's prime need to evolve a viable, unified system of national politics suited to the changed needs and circumstances of the present, and capable of development in future. Since the results of successive elections from the Graduates' Constituency proved that the Panchayat system was out of step with the aspirations of the educated elite and intelligentsia, the 1975 Amendment abolished the Graduates' Constituency. Thus the most numerous and the most politically conscious section of the electorate in the Panchayat system without whose guidance and cooperation the country cannot be modernized, was deprived of its chance to contribute to political deliberations. In today's context what is important, from the viewpoint of national integration or nation-building, is evolving a national consensus and a national political culture capable of mobilizing the nation as a whole. This needed development can be achieved, in the long run, either by evolving, on a nationwide scale, self-disciplining and self-sustaining popular organizations based on individual initiative and freedom or by developing a party capable of implementing and enforcing its revolutionary ideology and programme through totalitarian methods of mass mobilization and surveillance, with the help of conscious, disciplined cadres tested over a period of time in the vicissitudes of political life and struggle.

It is difficult to see how the apparatus of the BVNC, as reorganized and restructured, is going to strengthen the institution of monarchy or promote its long range interests. It is equally doubtful whether the BVNC can ever turn itself into a party-like political organization capable of effectively performing the task of 'bureaucratic mobilization'. This has been accomplished by the communist party in several countries by enthusing or activating the people as participant subjects in the implementation of various democratic programme drawn up by the party elites. But the communist parties in some cases had to go through their baptism of fire before they could have their ideology and programme accepted. Unfortunately for those in Nepal who are apparently planning a strategy for 'bureaucratic mobilization' of this kind, there seems to exist neither the kind of ideology and programme needed for the purpose nor
the kind of leadership and cadres required to implement any determined course of political action. The BVNC, consisting of 'All the King's Men', will be suspect from the beginning even if they do nothing of the kind that 'All the President's Men' were found guilty of in the course of the unfolding of the Watergate scandal in the American context.

The salient features of the present day politics of Nepal may be summarized as follows:

1. The Panchayat political structure has, for the present, a king who is an absolute monarch, and a partyless Panchayat democracy consisting of a four-tier Panchayat framework founded upon a narrow electoral base.

2. The King is far too powerful and is not responsible to the people, directly or indirectly, in any effective way. The real problem of partyless Panchayat democracy is, therefore, one of reconciling the absolute power of a ruling king with the popular pressure for sharing power, which will steadily grow with the process of modernization.

3. The Panchayat system lacks breadth of participation and representation.

4. The Panchayats at various levels have nominal and largely symbolic or 'dignified' powers, and functions limited in depth and range.

5. The Palace Secretariat's dominant policy and decision-making role, which is not defined anywhere in the law or the Constitution of Nepal, has led to the kind of situation characterized by Edmund Burke as 'double government', with the Palace Secretariat dominating the official Central Government's Secretariat. The establishment, consisting of the traditional vested-interest groups drawn from the religious, the military and the landowning elites, exerts its pressure and influence on the government through the palace and the Central Government's Secretariat, and also through the political and administrative structures at various levels.

6. The BVNC has been deliberately redesigned as an instrument of conducting organized politics under the 'active leadership' or the 'direct guidance' of the King. The BVNC (Back to the Village National Campaign) apparatus, consisting wholly of royal nominees and appointees of its own higher level body in the hierarchy, has emerged as the most powerful agency in the new constitutional set-up. It enjoys even arbitrary powers of selecting and controlling members of various elective bodies in the hierarchy of the Panchayat and class
organizations. It is charged with the responsibility for drawing up concrete programmes of political action and has also been assigned the task of interpreting and disseminating Panchayat political ideology. The professed goal of its action and policy is popular mobilization for development but it is difficult to see how a body composed of salaried officials, with no experience of working among the people, will be able to mobilize them while following the deliberate tactic of restricting their participation in the Panchayat and class-organizations. While acting as a filter for the flow of information to the King and also as an agency for recruiting prospective political lieutenants and cadres for him, the Central Committee of the BVNC will find itself, in the future, competing with the Palace Secretariat-cum-Centre for Enquiry and Investigation in an area which has long been the preserve and exclusive jurisdiction of the latter.

The very process of the creation and operation of the BVNC has adversely affected the King’s position as a symbol of unity and impartiality. It has involved the King in the political process as an active contestant. Two other possible consequences of the evolution of the BVNC give cause for concern. Firstly, if the BVNC continues to seek to differentiate between ‘loyal’ and ‘disloyal’ subjects, it runs the risk of dividing the nation, and as the King’s creation, it will involve the King in that act of division should it come to pass. Secondly, the attempts to remove the officials of the BVNC from the normal give and take of competitive political life in Nepal in the past and in the recent Panchayat decade has made clear again and again, and what the King’s advisors have failed to take into account, is that if political competition is not openly permitted, the contestants will turn to other, more questionable methods and practices for gaining political ends. Political organizations of any kind cannot be insulated from the conflicting pulls and pressures from both within and without. It is impossible for active participants to avoid being motivated by the spirit of competition for status and power. The BVNC is ill-equipped to manage the conflict aspect of politics.

(7) The newly created Commission for Prevention of the Misuse of Power (CPMP), which seems to resemble in form the institution of the ombudsman in some democratic states, does not resemble the latter in its role and practice, as the Commission has the capacity to encroach directly on the authority and jurisdiction of elected
assemblies and law courts as well. Essentially, the CPMP, as well as, the BVNC, can be expected, like the Centre for Enquiry and Investigation in the recent past, to scrutinize the actions of elective and appointive functionaries to see whether the people in various elective and appointive positions are acting in a manner prejudicial to the monarch’s absolute power. Like the BVNC, the CPMP will also tend to function as an additional wing of the Palace Secretariat Centre for Enquiry and Investigation.

(8) The five class organization, viz. the Peasants’ Organization, the Youth Organization, the Women’s Organization, the Labour or the Workers’ Organization and the Ex-Servicemen’s Organization, were intended to perform the input functions of the Panchayat political system and also to act as the feedback mechanism serving as a corrective to public measures and policies. These class organizations have been ineffective in both of the roles intended for them and have, therefore, failed to realize their potential of becoming countervailing influences. The class organizations, including the newly introduced Adults’ Organization, have been rendered even more ineffective by the abolition of their national set-ups. In addition, they have been forced to surrender to the BVNC even their right and privilege of selecting their own office-bearers at the village levels.

(9) The class organizations have failed to provide for effective popular participation in political decision and policy making. Nor have they been able to employ the method of bureaucratic mobilization, as practiced in the communist political system, in order to enthuse or activate the people even as ‘participant-subjects’ in the implementation of various development programmes drawn up by the elites.

(10) The ‘partyless democratic Panchayat system’ has not been able to close the gap between the polity and society because the system of communication between the decision-makers and the names of the people is extremely ineffective. There is a complete absence of political parties, with their network of communication reaching down to the people in the villages, the mass media is very limited and literacy low.

(11) Because of the absence of an adequate communication network, the masses of the people at the village level are not aware of even the rudimentary features of either the constitutional, legal framework or the goals and the working of partyless Panchayat
democracy.\textsuperscript{112} As the village leaders are mostly drawn from the traditional power and caste structure they generally transmit the traditional value system to the people and thereby obstruct the process of modernization to an even greater degree. The governmental machinery is inadequate for the wide-scale transmission of the message of modernization which requires inspiring attitudinal changes.

(12) In partyless Panchayat democracy, there seems to be a clear dichotomy between the Palace and Central Government Secretariats which allocate resources—namely finance and personnel—and the Panchayat political structure at various levels which, according to the law and the Constitution, is theoretically made to bear the responsibility for Nepal’s development. If this state of affairs is to be remedied, what is needed is decentralization of the real power of allocating resources to various levels of the political structure.

(13) Despite the official claim that the Panchayat political system has been accepted by the nation as a whole, the successive elections from the four-member nationwide Graduates’ Constituency have clearly shown that the Panchayat system is out of step with the large segments of political public. A national political culture, which is essential to national integration, can be evolved only by educating those involved in the political and economic processes of nation-building to understand new attitudes, new ideas and new forms of social organization. Viewed from this standpoint, a party or non-party system in Nepal appears to be only an instrumental aspect of the vital process of the creation of a national unified political culture or consensus.

(14) The decision and policy-making process is utterly confused. The result of this confusion is that no control or supervision is possible except, perhaps, by the Palace through which all lines of communication in the Panchayat political system are made to pass.

(15) The system is not well structured and the functional roles remain undifferentiated. If we are to add the local Panchayats, there is a minimum of five sets of officials, the other four being drawn from the regular civil service, the Royal Palace Service and the Public Corporation Service and the BVNC at various levels. These officials operate through different channels of command and exercise overlapping functions in each case.

To conclude, it may appear for a while that the government of Nepal has got away without making concessions to the people as
the 1975 Amendments to the Constitution have actually restricted freedom and political participation even more than before. The amendments have not gone even half the way towards accommodating the wishes and demands of politically conscious groups in the country and have, if anything, disoriented even the professed democratic principle and purpose of the Panchayat system. However, the best is yet to be seen and it is too early to say whether the Constitution of Nepal, as amended in 1975, will be able to contain for long the social forces pressing for a change in the political structure.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


Despite these citations it has been discovered that King Birendra's statement at the Non-aligned Summit in Algiers in 1973, as recorded officially, does not contain any reference to the zone of peace proposal as such. The Nepali delegation must have had second thoughts on bringing up this matter and dropped it at the last moment. The official Nepali newspapers, supplied with the text of the speech in advance, might have had no time to incorporate the last minute deletion. But again, the pointed reference to the same proposal in the article, referred to above, in the official newspaper after a lapse of ten days, inclines one to think that the authorities at some point of time deliberately intended to retain, at least for domestic consumption, the reference to the zone of peace proposal.


5. Ibid.


7. Ibid.


9. Talukdar Maniruzzaman, 'Bangladesh in 1975: The Fall of the Mujib Regime', *Asian Survey*, vol. XVI, no. 2, February 1976, pp. 119-129. The coup was engineered by three dismissed officers of the army in collaboration with 20 to 30 majors and captains of two battalions and supported by about 1,400 soldiers. On 25 January, 1975, the Constitution of Bangladesh had been amended on the initiative of Sheikh Mujib, despite popular opposition, to provide for a presidential form of government under one 'National Party' to be led by himself. The amendment had also provided for a five-year tenure of presidential office for himself. Sheikh Mujib had apparently failed to take adequate precautions against a possible army coup, and this failure proved to be very costly for him and also for the future of Indo-Bangladesh relations.
10. On that day Major-General Ziaur Rahman was reinstalled as chief of staff of the Bangladesh army with the support of the rank and file, after his removal by Brigadier Musharraf during the counter-coup.


15. Following a hurriedly held referendum, Sikkim was incorporated into India on 26 April, 1975, as the 22nd state of the union after formal ratification of the Indian Constitution Amendment Bill. This bill provided for one representative of Sikkim in each of the houses of Parliament.


22. Ibid., 3 June, 1976.

23. Ibid.


32. Aksai Chin, which means desert of white stones, is an uninhabited, barren and desolate plateau lying between the towering ranges of the Karakoram and the Kun Lun mountains. However, a seldom-used ancient trade route linking Sinkiang with Tibet passed through this plateau. After the Chinese had made this road motorable in the late 1950s, the Aksai Chin region became a bone of contention between India and China. This and other border disputes led to the war between them in 1962.

33. Naxalbari, West Bengal in India, only a few miles from the Nepali border in the far-eastern Tarai, gave its name to a group, inspired by radical communist propaganda for political violence, who for some time took the law into their own hands. Convinced of the evils resulting from the dominance of small local landlords and the stranglehold of the money-lenders in the villages, they murdered their chosen targets, refusing to be bought off.


38. Ibid., 21 June, 1976.
44. Members of the Tibetan tribe in Kham (eastern Tibet), which traditionally provided bodyguards to the Dalai Lama, the former god-king of Tibet.
47. Ibid., 26 July, 1974.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., 8 August, 1974.
51. Ibid., 13 August, 1974.
52. Ibid., 12 September, 1974.
53. Ibid., 16 September, 1974.
54. Ibid., 1 October 1974.
55. *Navin Khabar*, 4 October, 1974.
60. Ibid. (Printed by Tarun Dal at Tarun Press in Kathmandu).
76. The new Cabinet formed on 1 December, 1975 with Tulsi Giri as Prime Minister has now lifted the ban on the pro-Chinese weekly, Matribhumi and the pro-American weekly, Naya Sandesh.

77. On 31 August, 1975 17 college lecturers and professors including Professor Basu Dev Malla of the Department of Political Science, Tribhuvan University and other college teachers such as Nutan Thapalia, Durga Pokharel, Sahana Shrestha, Krishna Prasad Bhandari, Pitambar Dahal and Arjun Narsingh were summarily dismissed and three other senior college teachers in government service—Dr Samba Dev Pandey, Ram Raj Panta and Bhawani Prasad Mishra—were forced to retire prematurely. Action was taken against them in the wake of a violent clash between the two rival wings of social democratic and communist students at the central campus of the Tribhuvan University. Reportedly, the clash was wilfully and deliberately engineered by certain interested parties. However, it apparently resulted from differences on the question of negotiating and settling terms with the University authorities after the students’ strike had dragged on for quite a long time.

79. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. Art. 3 (1), The Constitution of Nepal, 1962 (incorporating both the first and second amendments), (Kathmandu: Ministry of Law and Justice), (V.S. Magh 2032 v January, 1976), p. 3.
83. ‘Kingship and Aristocracy as a Type of Traditional Rule’, in Reinhardt Bendix, ‘King and People—Power and the Mandate to Rule’ (Unpublished).
92. Op cit., (81), Article 30 and 31, p. 22 and Village Panchayat (Sixth Amendment) Ordinance and Town Panchayat (Fifth Amendment Ordinance), Nepal Gazette, 25; Additional no. 42, 12 December, 1975.
98. Ibid., 26 May, 1976.
100. Ibid., 1 June, 1976; *The Rising Nepal*, 4 June, 1976.
103. Ibid., 6 June, 1976.
104. Ibid., 2 June, 1976.
105. Ibid., 6 June, 1976.
106. Ibid., 8 June, 1976.
111. *Vide* Figure 1 at the end of chap. 2.
112. *Vide* Table 1 at the end of chap. 2.
APPENDIX 1

Social Mobilization

Social mobilization consists of using manpower fully and educating people involved to understand new mental attitudes, new ideas and new forms of social organization. At the present time it is not possible to state definitively the way in which social mobilization occurs. The various processes of social mobilization remain a challenge to social science. But even if the various processes, which are distinct from one another, are detected and analysed individually, each process may be found to comprise a number of sub-processes such as the mode of capital formation, the spread of literacy and education, the growth of collective bodies, corporations, institutions, parties, and the like. For an analysis of the development of the mobilization process, see Karl W. Deutsch and William J. Foltz (eds.), Nationbuilding (New York, Atherton Press, 1966). In ‘Social Mobilization and Political Development’ [Harry Eckstein and David E. Aper (eds.)] Comparative Politics (New York: The Free Press, 1967, p. 583), Karl W. Deutsch mentions seven constituent processes of social mobilization:

1. The exposure to aspects of modern life through demonstrations of machinery, buildings, installations, consumer goods and so on, as well as through mass media of communication. 2. Exposure to the mass media alone. 3. Change of residence. 4. Urbanization. 5. Change from agricultural occupation. 6. Literacy. 7. Growth of per capita income.
The Modernizing Role of Traditional Monarchies

In his inquiry into the modernizing role of traditional monarchies, Samuel P. Huntington visualizes four possibilities for the modernizing traditional monarchs.

1. **Invest the political system with just enough power to make it bearable to the monarch.** It may be recalled here that Prince Norodom Sihanouk went to the extent of abdicating as King of Cambodia, then ran successfully for Prime Ministership in a parliamentary election. He changed the constitution to provide for an elected head of state and then got himself elected to that office. Thus Sihanouk had gone full circle and back to autocratic rule with the trappings of modern popular legitimacy before he was deposed.

2. **Draw on both traditional and popular sources of authority.** What is being attempted in Morocco, Afghanistan, Iran and Nepal are cases in point. King Moulay Hassan of Morocco dissolved his parliament in 1965 and decided to rule himself. After several unsuccessful attempts on his life, King Moulay Hassan is now, on all reliable evidence, contemplating a return to party politics and government. The 40 year old regime of King Zahir Shah in Afghanistan was overthrown by a military *coup d’état* in July 1973. King Zahir Shah was experimenting with all kinds of reforms and with a sort of democratic constitution since 1965, which did not permit political parties or groupings outside the legislature. However, the King was said to be seriously thinking of permitting even political parties at the time when he was overthrown. Despite the fact that both the King and Crown Prince were out of the country at the time of the *Coup d’état* the takeover by the new leader was not altogether smooth and bloodless.

The leader of the *coup* was no less a person than the King’s brother-in-law, General Mohammed Daud Khan, a retired Lieutenant-General of the Army who had previously been Prime Minister for ten years from 1953 to 1963. General Daud Khan at once proclaimed Afghanistan a republic, and blamed the old regime for corruption and for leading the country to bankruptcy. He denounced the new constitution given by the King as pseudo-democratic and promised genuine democracy to the people. It is too early to say what Daud
Khan as the head of the new Republic of Afghanistan will accomplish. But recent events in Afghanistan show how difficult it is for a monarch in modern times to sustain his power merely by seeking to relate his traditional position to popular sources of authority in a superficial manner without aiming eventually at the real transfer of power to the people. The Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, after suppressing political parties, rules with a parliament consisting only of his supporters, the Majlis. The one advantage the Shahanshah has over other traditional monarchs is that he is in a position to use his ample oil revenues and resources to bribe and suppress the opposition forces represented by the conscious and educated sections of his subjects. At the same time, however, he can keep the vast majority of the rural population satisfied, at least for the time being, by creating an impression of tangible progress. The late King Mahendra of Nepal also sought to mix traditional and popular sources of authority both in theory and in practice when he began ruling Nepal on his own under the garb of the Panchayat constitution of 1962 after dissolving the elected parliament, banning political parties and taking over the government on 15 December, 1960.

3. Centralize power and concurrently try to modernize the society. A great concentration of power in the hands of the ruler has, at certain times and in certain countries, helped the pace of modernization. Peter the Great and Catherine the Great of Russia, Frederick the Great of Prussia and Henry VII of England may be cited as examples. But the ultimate result of such a circumstance in all probability will be the forcible overthrow of monarchy, 'as the very concentration of power which creates the capacity for reform also created the vulnerability to revolution.' In Nepal, King Mahendra sought to control the pace of modernization with a view to putting off the risk of revolution as long as possible. That also accounts in part for the spectacular lack of development in Nepal.

4. Stop or retard the process of modernizing. This sounds fatuous in view of the fact that most of the traditional monarchs in the world are forced by circumstances to claim a modernizing role for themselves. But a reversion to traditionalism is not inconceivable and cannot be ruled out altogether. Such a traditionalism in the guise of modernization will manifest itself in slow-moving but continual development in the country, but aimed at a partially or superficially and not truly modern system. The monarch thus expects to force the
pace and direction of change in the different sections of the country’s society in such a way as to make them the least disequilibrating for his regime. This was what King Mahendra tried to do under his ‘active or direct’ leadership in the name of the ‘non-party democratic panchayat system’. But modernization is not a process which can be turned on or off as a ruler desires. It has its own dynamism, and once commenced, it cannot easily be switched off. It would necessitate a retreat to isolation from the main trends of ideas and progress in the world. Under the circumstances, the educated elite and others already exposed to wider horizons will feel themselves cut off from the mainstream of modern life and thought, and will, as a result, not only tend to become a centre of dissatisfaction and protest but will also in due course serve at the base for an internal rising or revolt. For example, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia at one time sought to slow the pace of progress by cutting down the number of students sent abroad for studies and by placing restrictions on freedom of student organizations. The result was an appreciable growth of internal strife and disorder.

Samuel P. Huntington in ‘The Political Modernization of Traditional Monarchies’ presents two typologies illustrating the differences between modern and traditional (modernizing) monarchies. These may be useful for reference and are therefore reproduced below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Typologies of Contemporary Monarchies</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Principal function of monarch</td>
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<td>Principal source of legitimacy</td>
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<td>Principal efficient authorities</td>
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<td>Scope of political participation</td>
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</table>
### Table 2. Political Systems and Power Configurations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of Power</th>
<th>Amount of Power</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concentrated</td>
<td>Bureaucratic Empire,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Absolute Monarchy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dispersed</td>
<td>Feudalism, 'Pyramidal</td>
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<td>Structures'</td>
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APPENDIX 3

Roll of Succession to the office of Prime Minister

Jang Bahadur sought to secure a permanent built-in position for the Rana family within the political structure of Nepal through the introduction of a novel system of the roll of succession with royal sanction. It was an attempt to establish an accepted procedure to regulate succession to the office of Prime Minister. Jang Bahadur drew up a roll of succession on which all the male descendants of the Rana family, consisting of seven brothers including himself, were enrolled on the basis of seniority of age. It was laid down that the eldest agnate of the family would succeed to the Prime Ministership upon the incumbent’s death. Other members of the family would hold the key civil and military posts upon attaining majority, not only on the basis of age but also on the basis of generational relationship which, in practice, allowed a younger uncle to take precedence over an older nephew in respect of succession to the office of Prime Minister. All those placed on the roll would hold military titles with the rank of a Lieutenant-Colonel to begin with. This elaborate arrangement was probably made to ensure that every aspirant to the office of Prime Minister acquired the necessary experience for the high office by holding various ranks in the hierarchy during the earlier stage of his career. The Prime Minister, however, could make changes in the roll of succession for disciplinary and other reasons. Non-members of the Rana family could not aspire to any rank higher than that of a commanding colonel in the army and that of a Bada Kazi in the civil service.

When he temporarily and nominally resigned from office on 6 August, 1856, Jang Bahadur not only received the title of Maharaja from the King and the sovereignty of two districts of Kaski and Lamjung, but also acquired powers over the King himself through an edict bearing the King’s red seal. The document stated:

‘I am pleased with you for the following reasons:

1. You secured to me the throne of Nepal by killing those persons who were aiding the efforts of the Junior Queen of Rajendra Bikram Shah [who had earlier given her sovereign powers] to put her own son on the throne, and deprive me of my rights;
2. You promoted friendship with the Queen of England by paying a visit to that country;

3. You won the war with Tibet, and made it pay an annual tribute to Nepal in cash;

4. You treated with respect and kindness my father, ex-King Rajendra Bikram Shah, in the face of his conspiracies against your life;

5. You did not inflict the death sentence on my younger brother, Upendra Bikram Shah, who had conspired against you. Instead, you were lenient to him and interned him only for five years with due regard for his status;

6. During you Prime Ministership, you have satisfied the nobility, the soldiery and the peasantry of Nepal, rendered them justice, and promoted peace and prosperity;

7. You have increased the military force of Nepal, observed economy, and added to the state exchequer.

After receiving such loyal service from you, I had sworn to abdicate the throne if you should resign the vizirship. But when you came to relinquish your charge as vizir, I had forgotten my promise. I could not consult the queen and other umraos, and since you had requested the Prime Ministership for your brother, I granted it. If I were to keep you out of service [lit. empty] and continue to sit on the throne, I would be guilty of perjury. The subjects would begin to say that I have not duly recognized the services of such a loyal vizir. So, for this reason, I give you the title of Sri Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung. As the Maharaja of these lands, you should restrain me at any time, with the assistance of the umraos, the people, and the army if I try to injure the friendship with the Queen-Empress of England and the Emperor of China. If, in your attempts to do so, I apply force, then my umraos and army should support you. Whenever Prime Minister Bam Bahadur commits any mistakes in his responsibility of conducting the civil and military affairs of the state, pajani and friendly relations with the Emperor of China and England, you should advise him. If he persists and refuses to accept your advice, then my mir-umrao and the army will carry out any orders given by you. Keep your kingdom happy. In matters of justice we have given you the authority to inflict capital punishment. Live happily with your title of Sri Maharaja of your kingdom. If any subjects of my country try to plot against your kingdom and your life, we have authorized you to kill such persons if necessary.
These rights will be inheritable by your children. Along with your brothers, according to the roll of succession we have established for the office of Mukhtiyar, your son, Jagat Jang Bahadur Kanwar Rana, will be the Mukhtiyar after the completion of the roll with Dhir Shamsher Jang Kanwar Ranajee.' (Abstract translation of the Lal-Mohar granted by King Surendra Bikram Shah of Nepal to Jang Bahadur conferring on him the sovereignty of Kaski and Lamjung and the title of Maharaja, dated 1913 v.s., Sravan Sudi 6, corresponding to 6 August, 1856).

The Lal Panja (Royal Decree) of 1856 thus wrested power from the helpless reigning monarch, King Surendra, and led to institutionalization of the position of the Rana family within the political structure. This innovation distinguished the character of the Rana regime from that of earlier family regimes, which otherwise had much in common with it. The document of 1856 provided the legal basis for the Rana regime, which lasted for more than a century. It bestowed in perpetuity on Jang Bahadur and his successors absolute authority in civil and military administration, justice and foreign relations, including the right to supersede the King if this was found necessary in the national interest. The royal family was thus deprived of all its sovereign powers and was confined within the limits of the palace grounds. In exchange for this, the Shah Kings were addressed as Maharajadhiraja (King of Kings), which sounded somewhat ironic but was a more exalted title.

From the viewpoint of political development, the creation of the office of Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung was of special significance, since the 1856 document vested absolute authority in this office. It is extremely doubtful whether the roll of succession as contained in the document applied to the office of Maharaja. The document is so phrased as to make one believe that Jang Bahadur was interested in establishing primogeniture as the basis of succession to the office of the Maharaja. Such an arrangement would have enabled his eldest son Jagat Jang to inherit the title of Maharaja with full powers and would have deprived the Prime Minister’s office of supreme powers. But after Jang Bahadur died, his brothers compelled the King to appoint the eldest surviving brother Ranoddip Singh, as both Prime Minister and Maharaja of Kaski and Lamjung. Thus, a precedent was created and maintained throughout the Rana period.

Subsequent division of the Rana family on caste and sub-branch
lines seriously affected the working of the succession system in practice. In 1856 only the so-called pure members of the family, i.e. the sons of a Rana by a wife of equal caste status, were included on the roll of succession. Jang Bahadur himself violated the rule during his own lifetime, and his example was followed by his successors, Maharaja Bir Shamsher and Maharaja Bhim Shamsher. Maharaja Chandra Shamsher sought to divide the Rana family into ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ classes without, however, tampering with the roll of succession established by Bir Shamsher. But Juddha Shamsher decided to change the roll in accordance with the caste principles propounded by Chandra Shamsher and destroyed the solidarity of the Rana family, with the consequence that a number of wealthy and powerful ‘C’ class Ranas joined hands with other discontented elements in bringing about the overthrow of Rana family rule.
A Historical Perspective on the Accord between Nepal and India (Mutual Security and Defence)

Letters couched in identical language were exchanged at the time the Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed between Nepal and India in July 1950. The full text of the letter was published for the first time in S.D. Muni’s book, Foreign Policy of Nepal (Delhi: National Publishing House, 1973).

Letter Exchanged with the Treaty

KATHMANDU
Dated 31 July, 1950

EXCELLENCY,

In the course of our discussion of the Treaties of Peace and Friendship and of Trade and Commerce which have been happily concluded between the Government of India and the Government of Nepal, we agreed that certain matters of detail be regulated by an exchange of letters. In pursuance of this understanding, it is hereby agreed between the two governments:

(1) Neither government shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor. To deal with any such threat, the two governments shall consult with each other and devise effective counter-measures.

(2) Any arms, ammunition or warlike material and equipment necessary for the security of Nepal that the Government of Nepal may import through the territory of India shall be so imported with the assistance and agreement of the Government of India. The Government of India will take steps for the smooth and expeditious transport of such arms and ammunition through India.

(3) In regard to Article 6 of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship which provides for national treatment, the Government of India recognizes that it may be necessary for some time to come to afford the Nepalese nationals in Nepal protection from unrestricted competition. The nature and extent to this protection will be deter-
mined as and when required by mutual agreement between the two
governments.

(4) If the Government of Nepal should decide to seek foreign
assistance in regard to the development of the natural resources of,
or of any industrial project in Nepal, the Government of Nepal
shall give first preference to the government or the nationals of
India, as the case may be, provided that the terms offered by the
Government of India or Indian nationals, as the case may be, are
not less favourable to Nepal than the terms offered by any other
foreign government or by other foreign nationals.

Nothing in the foregoing provision shall apply to assistance that
the Government of Nepal may seek from the United Nations Orga-
nization or any of its specialized agencies.

(5) Both governments agree not to employ any foreigners whose
activity may be prejudicial to the security of the other. Either
government may make representations to the other in this behalf,
as and when occasion requires.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consi-
deration.

(Sd.) MOHUN SHAMSHER JANG BAHADUR RANA
Maharaja, Prime Minister and
Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Nepal

The above letter furnishes the basis of subsequent and present
arrangements for mutual security between Nepal and India and,
more specifically, for the importation of arms by Nepal through
India. A close scrutiny of the contents of the letter will reveal that
most of the items mentioned therein, with modifications, are borrow-
ed from the 1815 Peace Treaty of Sugauli between the Raja of
Nepal and the East India Company, and the 1923 Treaty between
Nepal and Great Britain.

These two treaties regulated relations between Nepal and British
India for a period of 134 years from 1816 to 1950. They still deserve
notice because the vital points in the still extant 1950 Treaty of
Peace and Friendship between Nepal and India, and especially in
the letters accompanying it, date back to them.

The 1815 Treaty of Sugauli

The Treaty of Sugauli deprived Nepal of one-third of its territory,
mainly on the west and the south. The treaty provided, among
other things, that accredited ministers of each signatory should reside at the court of the other. A British envoy with a small escort of Indian sepoys thereafter lived at Nepal’s capital. The representation clause makes the East India Company’s treaty with Nepal resemble more the treaties with the frontier states of Afghanistan (1879) and Iran (1841) than those with Hyderabad (1798) and Mysore (1799) which belonged to the Company’s system of protectorates and subsidiary alliances, and for whom the Company had assumed responsibility for internal peace and stability. The treaty of Sugauli, like the British treaties with Iran and Afghanistan, contained provisions for the presence of the British representative but did not in any way make him responsible for internal administration in Nepal. However, by the treaty of Sugauli, Nepal relinquished its right—generally enjoyed by independent states—to choose its officials and advisers from any country it liked. Nepal was not to employ any European or American or even any British subjects without the consent of the Company’s government. The Company also acquired the right to mediate in any dispute that might arise between Nepal and Sikkim. However, Nepal’s status was kept distinct from that of the Indian states. Both Dhir Shamsher and Chandra Shamsher who had represented the Nepali King at the Imperial Darbar of 1877 and the great Delhi Darbar in 1903 respectively did not sit with other Indian princes but in the enclosure reserved for representatives of foreign states.

Britain’s reward to Nepal in 1919 for its assistance in World War I was an annual payment of one million rupees in perpetuity, the responsibility for which was assumed by the Republic of India when independence was achieved in 1947. A few months later in 1920, the designation of the British representative in Nepal was changed from ‘Resident’ to ‘British Envoy at the Court of Nepal’ as a sop to Nepal’s sense of pride in being distinguished from the Indian princely states, where the final source of authority was always the British Resident. As a further psychological concession to the Nepali government in September 1921 the British Government of India, officially recognized the practice of the Government of Nepal in employing British subjects without previous reference; in June 1923, that part of the engagement of 1839 by which Nepal undertook to have no dealings with the dependent allies of the East India Company beyond the Ganges was cancelled. The Rana government was very concerned with the maintenance of Nepal’s formal independence.
The 1923 Treaty between Nepal and Great Britain

A fresh treaty was concluded between Nepal and Great Britain on 21 December, 1923, to emphasize in principle at least that the relationship between them was one between two independent countries. The ostensible purpose of the treaty was to strengthen the friendship which had existed since 1816. The most important provision of this treaty was a confirmation of all treaties subsequent to and including the Treaty of Sugauli except in so far as they might have been altered by the new treaty. Article 3 of the 1923 Treaty also provided for close consultation and cooperation between Nepal and Great Britain through the exchange of information should any serious friction or misunderstanding arise between the signatory states and their neighbours. However, despite the fact that the first article of the treaty provided that the two governments agreed to acknowledge and respect each other’s independence, both external and internal, Nepal’s foreign relations in fact continued to be conducted through New Delhi, and the nature of the relationship between Nepal and Great Britain did not show any change. However, to facilitate relations between Nepal and Great Britain, and probably to prepare for the day when India would achieve independence, a Nepali legation was set up in London in 1934.

Article 2 and Article 5 of the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Nepal and India, along with para 2 of the accompanying letter, seem to resemble Articles 3 and 5 of the 1923 Treaty between Nepal and Great Britain. Para 5 of the letter accompanying the treaty of 1950 regarding the acceptance of restrictions by both countries in the matter of employing ‘foreigners whose activity may be prejudicial to the security of the other’, is a reminder of the provision contained in Article 7 of the Sugauli Treaty restricting the employment of British subjects or subjects of other European and American States without the consent of the British government. Para 1 of the letter accompanying the 1950 Treaty between Nepal and India goes further than anything contained in the earlier treaties between Nepal and British India with regard to a firm assurance about mutual security. It provides that the two governments will not merely consult with each other but will also ‘devise effective counter-measures’ to deal with any threat to their security by a foreign aggressor.

Although the Indian personnel at checkposts that control access through the key passes from Nepal to the Tibetan region of China
were withdrawn in 1970, there still exist quite a few concrete forms of cooperation, both formal and informal, between Nepal and India. Some exist as a result of joint arrangements for security and defence, mutually agreed upon since 1950. Examples are as follows:

1. Procedure for consultation and information on security matters as envisaged by the 1950 Treaty and the exchange of the letter accompanying it.

2. The Tripartite Agreement under which Nepalis are recruited in large numbers into the Indian Army and particularly into mountain warfare units. Under a tripartite agreement between Nepal, India and Great Britain in July 1947, India retained 12 battalions of Gorkha soldiers while eight battalions were transferred to Britain on the condition that Britain would in the future recruit Gorkha soldiers only after India's requirements had been satisfied. India, however, retained an option to raise the number of Gorkha battalions to 20 during an emergency. The Tripartite Agreement is still in force despite the pressure applied to Nepal by China and Pakistan in 1962 and 1965 to terminate or modify it and also despite the protest by the late President Sukarno of Indonesia against the use of Gorkha troops by Britain in Malaysia and Borneo in 1964. The only restriction this agreement places on the use of Gorkha soldiers by the government recruiting them is that the Gorkhas must not be used against Hindus or against unarmed people in times of civil commotion and unrest.

3. The arrangement under which Nepali army officers are sent to officer training institutes in India and under which a number of Indian officers serve as 'advisers' to the Royal Nepal Army.

4. India's special role as a supplier of military arms and equipment to Nepal.
Exchange of Views between the Prime Ministers of Nepal and India following the Kor La Pass (Mustang) Incident

When Nehru offered help at the time of the Kor La Pass incident, B.P. Koirala, the Prime Minister of Nepal, made a statement which deserves to be quoted in full:

‘Nepal is a fully sovereign independent nation. It decides its external and home policy according to its own judgement and its own liking without ever referring to any outside authorities. Our Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India affirms this. I take Mr Nehru’s statement as an expression of friendship that in case of aggression against Nepal, India would send help if such help was ever sought. It would never be taken as suggesting that India could take unilateral action. Is there any apprehension of danger from any quarter? The answer is definitely no. We are at peace with everybody and we do not apprehend any danger from any quarter.’

Nehru’s reaction to B.P. Koirala’s statement also needs to be reproduced in full:

‘I think what the Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr B.P. Koirala, has said is completely correct. The statement I made stuck many people as perhaps a novel statement but it was merely stating what the position has been for the last ten years. That is, I say ten years, you may say even more than ten. But I am saying ten years because there was a treaty ten or nine years ago with Nepal.

That treaty is the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the Government of India, and the Government of Nepal, 31 July, 1950. Article I of the Treaty stated that “the two governments agree to acknowledge mutually and respect the complete sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of each other.” Article II: “The two governments hereby undertake to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighbouring state, likely to cause any breach in the friendly relations existing between the two governments.”

1A.S. Bhasin, Documents on Nepal’s Relations with India and China, 1949-66, p. 27.
There is much else in the Treaty, but attached to the Treaty were letters that were exchanged on that very day, as is often done. In these letters, apart from other matters, there is a paragraph: “Neither government shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor. To deal with any such threat, the two governments shall consult with each other and devise effective countermeasures.” [This occurs in both the letters (the letter from Nepal to India and India to Nepal).]

‘It is not a military alliance by any means but a mutual assurance between friendly countries. I had that in mind. I was not aware, even, that I was making some novel statement and Mr B.P. Koirala has correctly interpreted it. There is no question of India or any country taking unilateral action. That is absurd. It is a question of functioning as friendly countries and being helpful to each other in case of danger.’

*Ibid., p. 28.*
Documents

1. *English translation of the author’s article in Nepali entitled ‘Hami Kata!’ (‘Where are we going’) published in Rastra Pukar, 27 April, 1972*

‘Development does not mean mere economic development. Rather, it is a human problem. It is human beings who mobilize natural resources, manpower and capital. Ideas, social perceptions and values provide the motivation for human action. Hence development cannot be attained to the desired extent as long as social values and attitudes do not change.’

The quotation is from King Birendra’s reply to a joint address of felicitation presented to him by a large number of social and professional organizations on 13 April, 1972. In the present political context, the views expressed by our beloved, youthful King Birendra are of considerable significance. In fact, the entire responsibility for taking decisions on the vital question of shaping the future of the country now rests with him. It is therefore natural that everybody should have affection, sympathy and goodwill for him.

The level of development of any society is correlated to the political institutions existing in that society. During the Rana regime there existed no political parties, no parliament and no public organizations. All these appeared on the Nepali scene in the wake of the 1951 democratic revolution brought about through the joint efforts of the King and his subjects. It was certainly difficult to lay the foundation of a democratic political system in Nepal. In a society which believed for centuries in the adage that none can defy royal commands and the will or providence, it was not an easy task to establish in practical terms the supremacy of the popular will and rule of law within a period of eighteen months or even ten years. In a country where parents warned their children not to talk politics and told them that their tongues might be pulled out if they did so, it was certainly going to take a long time to inculcate in every person an interest in political matters. In an atmosphere in which every order given by the father or any other senior member of the family was habitually carried out blindly, it would have
taken some time to assert individual freedom and common sense. In a society ridden with fatalism as well as social and religious taboos, it was certainly difficult to convince the people that a man can build his destiny and that of society through his own efforts. Despite all these odds, thanks to the 1951 revolution, we finally succeeded in introducing a democratic regime based on popular consent. Efforts were made to form a government responsible to a legislature elected through adult franchise, freedom of opposition was granted, a Public Service Commission was set up and an independent judiciary was established. The way was opened to enable a commoner to become Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief, or Chief Justice. Thousands of boys and girls got an opportunity to acquire education abroad.

Various parties had been trying to bring about a psychological change in society by acquainting the people with the meaning of democratic values and institutions. Nowhere has it been possible to bring about a psychological change among the people through efforts at the governmental level alone. As such, it was essential that political parties in Nepal should make concerted efforts to penetrate the minds of the people. In a society known for its tradition of discipline sustained by blind loyalty and obedience to persons occupying positions of authority, it was not surprising that such efforts should appear to some people to be a sign of indiscipline and chaos. In the initial phase, the existence of scores of parties that had come into being through the political immaturity of some people had no doubt created the impression of a disintegration of public life. However, following the success of the Nepali Congress, which had a democratic socialist outlook, in securing an overwhelming majority in the 1959 general elections, a basis was laid for political stability. However, on 15 December, 1960, the late King Mahendra terminated the experiment with parliamentary democracy. This was followed by the institution of an administrative system which was based on centralization of political authority and which was run for eleven years under his direct leadership. The late King Mahendra felt that political parties constituted a hindrance to national unity. Accordingly, in 1967, he effected an amendment to prefix 'partyless' to the Panchayat system. Before that amendment, there was no constitutional ban on political parties and their formation was prohibited simply through an act. The author of this article had had to languish in
jail merely because of his efforts from 1967 to 1970 to bring about reforms in the Constitution through peaceful and constitutional means in accordance with the aspirations of the people. Ramraja Prasad Singh was also jailed in 1970 in connection with similar efforts made by him both inside as well as outside the National Panchayat. He has been expelled from the National Panchayat and is still in jail. All the candidates elected from the Graduates' Constituency had demanded that direct elections should be held on the basis of adult franchise, that the government should be responsible to a legislature so elected, that the sessions of the National Panchayat should be open to the public and that all restrictions on fundamental rights should be removed. On the other hand, four candidates supported by Prime Minister Kirtinidhi Bista, who opposed all those demands, were defeated. Even then, the Bista government continues to function normally. This has led at least the overwhelming majority of the 10,000 graduates to feel that the Bista government is not people-oriented.

The 'partyless Panchayat democratic system' had been introduced on the plea that national interests had been superseded by party interests. But the partyless Panchayat system only fostered the growth of factions based on petty individual interests, which are even more reprehensible than party interests. Since unity on the basis of ideology or programme is not encouraged, and since meetings of the legislature are secret, it does not appear likely that political parties will emerge inside the legislature as has been the case in other countries. The economic and social development that has been achieved during the past decade in the absence of the freedom of political expression and organization is clear to all. I do not intend to elaborate on this point, as I have done so already both inside and outside the National Panchayat during the regime of His late Majesty King Mahendra.

Political changes occurred in 1951 more through international development than through the efforts of the Nepali people themselves. Moreover, the educational and social infrastructure for a democratic political set-up was non-existent. These were the reasons why the royal step of 15 December, 1960 was possible. 'In 1951, the King and the people together initiated a political revolution. But the change of 1960 proved that unless there is a real intellectual awakening among the masses, the impact of extraneous developments alone cannot insure the durability of a political system.'
These words of His Majesty King Birendra are very true and nobody can disagree with him that development cannot be achieved to the desired extent unless the attitudes of the people change. Everybody must admit that it is not easy to bring about such a change in attitudes. The question therefore is how such changes can be brought about.

Only political parties or organizations can acquaint the masses with the problem of national reconstruction and take the nation ahead towards development through social mobilization on the basis of organized public opinion. It is only with the participation of political parties or organizations which have entered into the life of the masses that such changes can be brought about, not through official notifications, publicity and broadcasts alone. Autocratic or authoritarian regimes of the traditional type are not possible in the highly complex society of today. Political parties are an extension of politics in the modern form, particularly of social mobilization and the political participation of the masses. The partyless system is a traditional system which cannot serve the needs of modern development. This is the reason why even authoritarian regimes have adopted the one-party system in modern times. Nowhere in the world did political parties in the form we know them exist prior to the political revolution of the latter part of the eighteenth century. They do not exist even now in many places where the processes of political modernization have not yet been initiated.

In a political vacuum, or in a situation where an appropriate political structure does not exist, the people cannot take an active part in the process of development. If we try to achieve development only through imported capital, skill and technology without undertaking measures to associate the people in the process of development, an explosive situation may emerge as has occurred in certain other developing nations.

American experts and professors who were well known in the field of development economics along with the AID officials used to refer to the 7.5 to 9 per cent annual growth rate which Pakistan had achieved during the early 1960s to cite Pakistan as a model of planned economic development. But the process of development started in other developing nations as in Pakistan on the basis of capital, technicians and trained administrators collapsed in the wake of political upheavals. Attention is now being paid
not solely to the training of administrators but to the evolution of a suitable or viable political structure as a whole from the viewpoint of development. If undue importance is attached to the training of administrative officials in developing nations, they will monopolize power. Since the tenure of bureaucratic officials is long and secure, the non-bureaucratic organs of the political system are comparatively less effective. This disrupts the balance of power between the administrative and political organs. As Lucien Pye, a well-known American political scientist, says: 'The western nations have contributed to the strengthening of the authoritarian organs of the government through historical colonialism and the US aid program.' This is the reason why military cliques have been able to grab power in many developing nations.

It may be worthwhile to quote here the wise words of Lord Hailsham at the Commonwealth Law Conference held in New Delhi in January 1971: 'Constitutional liberties, freedom of the person, of association, equality before the law, liberty of expression, precede and are the conditions of economic advance and social security, and cannot be obtained without them. This is why those who throw away constitutional safeguards—elected governments, freedom to oppose, independent courts—in the name of economic advance are ultimately betraying the common man, and depriving him of the chance of social progress.'

His Majesty King Birendra has declared that 'we need a psychological change which may enable us to utilize the gains of political revolution for an agricultural and industrial revolution'. I feel that the achievements of our political revolution of 1951 are mainly two: (1) The assurances given by the royal proclamation of 18 February, 1951 that a system of government based on a constitution framed by representatives directly elected by the people through adult franchise, and (2) the freedom of political expression and organization which were obtained thereafter. It is on the basis of these two conditions that true feelings of constructive and dynamic nationalism can be mobilized in Nepal. In the modern sense, nationalism means a feeling of unity among the people based on their freely expressed opinions and wishes. These days, nationalism and democracy have become synonymous terms. Let us hope that we, the subjects of Nepal, will obtain from His Majesty the gains of the political revolution of 1951 that will enlist the active cooperation of the people in the task of national development. If this is done,
we would be able to transform the gains of political revolution into achievements in the agricultural and industrial fields, and make progress on the basis of constructive and dynamic nationalism.

2. Authorized statement issued by Tanka Prasad Acharyya, a former Prime Minister, on behalf of twenty-two social and political workers in accordance with their express desire, as recorded at a meeting held on 4 October, 1974 and reproduced in Samaj, 6 and 13 October, 1944.

I had convened a meeting of political and social workers and members of the intelligentsia to take stock of the situation in the country. After I had put my own view before them, everyone present at the meeting gave his opinion on the subject under discussion. I am issuing the following statement which, in my opinion, represents the consensus of the meeting:

'The Panchayat system has been in existence for thirteen or fourteen years. The time has come to evaluate the system in the light of the experience obtained from its working so far. Let us turn our attention to economic development. According to statistics provided by the World Bank, Nepal's annual economic growth rate has been 0.5 per cent whereas its population has grown at the rate of 1.5 per cent per annum. It is clear that during the last decade, population growth has far outstripped economic growth. Even according to the progress report of the Fourth Plan, recently published by the Planning Commission, the GNP has increased by 4 per cent whereas population has grown by 6.2 per cent during the 1970-73 period. Even in those three years, income alone cannot be taken as a sole index to development. In order to establish a society free from exploitation, equal attention must be paid to the fulfilment of the minimum economic needs of the population as a whole. From this point of view, distribution in terms of social justice is as important as the growth of production.

The narrowly based developmental process in which only a few have a stake and the use of technology suited to its purpose have led to the growing concentration of national income in the hands of a small number of people and the vast majority have remained as poor as ever. The benefits resulting from both private and public sector enterprises have remained beyond the pale of the common people. According to a survey only recently published by the Centre for Economic Development and Administration, even after the implementation of four successive economic development plans,
72 per cent of the hill population and 56 per cent of the Tarai population live below the poverty line and have an income of less than 500 rupees per annum. Only a very small group of people who have enjoyed a highly favoured position in the prevailing social power-structure has enjoyed an overwhelmingly large share of the fruits of development. In the words of a member of Nepal’s Planning Commission.

In the Nepali context, subsistence level small peasants and tenant farmers who have little or nothing left to sell from their share of what is produced, agricultural wage labourers with no land or tenancy rights of their own, piece-wage earners looking for work in urban areas, the educated lower middle class with no means of livelihood or employment, those groups who have lost their traditional occupation as a result of the blind, reckless and unconscionable modernization that has occurred in the country and the society, are among the great majority of the people who have not been able to enjoy the fruits of development or take part in it. These are the people who have not benefited at all from development.

To turn to the social and political conditions, there is little or no evidence of social mobility among the weaker and vulnerable sections of society. If the polity is not geared to the needs of economy, and a relevant culture is not meanwhile evolved to reinforce the prevailing social structure, that polity itself will not last long. It has been necessary to work out an overall national development programme, explain it to the people, make them understand it and secure, through free elections, representation in the legislature and government of those who are committed to implementing the programme. But instead, all and sundry without commitment to any programme are being elected to the Panchayat bodies with the result that the Panchayat polity has failed to develop a larger national outlook. It is not at all a healthy sign that partisan politics of the lowest kind have been rampant in the system which has been introduced on the plea that national interests had earlier been eclipsed by the narrow selfish interests of political parties. It would have been fit and proper to develop collective organization and leadership at the national level on the basis of a national programme of action for the realization of political, economic and social goals under the constitutional leadership of His Majesty the King. But unfortunately
for us, through small cliques of vested interests, drawing sustenance mainly from a sectarian communal feeling, ethnicity and regionalism are thriving. In absence of an overall national programme and also because of the lack of atmosphere, the efforts and the popular machinery to carry it direct to the people, it has not been possible to accelerate the pace of nation-building. The want of enthusiasm among the students and youth for nation-building is mainly responsible for this state of affairs. In our opinion, the main cause of all this is the absence of organized popular force. Institution-building is the primary need of the hour for nation-building.

'It is clear from this that the government's political and economic measures adopted since 15 December, 1960 have failed to solve the basic problems of the nation from the viewpoint of the common people. We have failed to meet successfully any of those grave internal and external challenges confronting the nation in the political and economic spheres. Consequently, an atmosphere of fear, suspicion and uncertainty prevails in the country. In this hour of trial it is the duty of every Nepali to ponder deeply and decide on the right course of action.

'Over the past thirteen or fourteen years we have failed to evolve even an adequate popular machinery outside the government to mobilize the people on a national and democratic basis. Therefore, besides drawing the attention of all Nepalis to the existing state of affairs in the country, it was unanimously resolved that we should endeavour to find a solution to this national crisis through contact with the people on the widest possible scale and through collective efforts on a national and democratic basis, and place the solution, thus arrived at, before the King and the country as a whole.

The following persons were present at the meeting: Tanka Prasad Acharya, a former Prime Minister; Rishikesh Shaha, a former Minister for Finance and Foreign Affairs, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Council of State and Ambassador to the U.N. and to the U.S.; Manmohan Adhikari, a former General Secretary of the now banned Communist Party of Nepal; Ram Hari Sharma, a former General Secretary of the now banned Nepal Praja Parishad and President of the Rastriya Panchayat; Chuda Prasad Sharma, a former Foreign Minister; Ranga Nath Sharma, a former Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Council of State; Prem Bahadur Kansakar, a former General Secretary of the People's Democratic Party, one of the oldest leaders of the movement for
democracy in Nepal and also a prominent leader of the Newari literary and cultural movement; Sambhu Ram, a former member of Nepali Parliament and member of the Politburo of the now banned Communist Party of Nepal; Bhuban Lal Pradhan, a former Minister and leader of the now banned Red (Lal) Communist Party; Tilak Raj Shahi, a seasoned and veteran political fighter and a well-known figure in the now banned Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal and also a former member of Rastriya Panchayat; D.P. Adhikari, a former member of the Politburo of the now banned Communist Party of Nepal; Hikmat Singh, a former member of the Politburo of the now banned Communist Party of Nepal; Narendra Man Joshi, a former member of the working committee of the Nepal Praja Parishad; Birendra Keshari Upadhyaya, a former Chief Engineer of Roads and member of the Rastriya Panchayat from the Graduates’ Constituency and an Amnesty International activist; Prakash Chandra Lohani, a former member of Rastriya Panchayat from the Graduates’ Constituency and a prominent Nepali economist; Sagar Shamsher J.B. Rana, an Oxford graduate in Law and Jurisprudence, and a prominent Nepali businessman and industrialist; S.L. Sharma, a prominent labour leader from the Eastern Tarai; Manik Lal Shrestha, a prominent figure in Nepali Associations of culture and friendship with communist countries and a communist publicist; Upendra Jha, a former Chairman of the Janakpur Municipality in the Tarai; Pushkar Nath Thakur, a prominent social worker in the Tarai; Lila and Shyam Gautam, both of whom are social workers.
APPENDIX 7

Economic Fact Sheet

A compilation of economic data on Nepal with a view to providing an overall view of Nepal’s economy to the general readers and enabling them to form an idea of the size, structure, and other aspects of this economy.

Table 1

*Population Characteristics of Nepal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (thousands)</td>
<td>9,413</td>
<td>11,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density per square kilometer</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per cent in urban areas*</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per cent employed in agriculture</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>94.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average rate of population increase</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Defined as settlements of 10,000 or more inhabitants.

**Source:** Central Bureau of Statistics.

Table 2

*Economically Active Population in Various Sectors: 1950-71*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>4,199 (100.0)</td>
<td>3,920 (93.30)</td>
<td>89 (2.12)</td>
<td>190 (4.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>4,385 (100.0)</td>
<td>4,140 (94.43)</td>
<td>90 (2.05)</td>
<td>155 (3.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>4,852 (100.0)</td>
<td>4,579 (94.37)</td>
<td>106 (2.19)</td>
<td>167 (3.44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3

*Economically Active and Not Economically Active Population*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total Economically Active</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
<th>Total Economically Not Active</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-54</td>
<td>82,35,079</td>
<td>41,53,455</td>
<td>50.43</td>
<td>40,81,624</td>
<td>49.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>94,12,996</td>
<td>43,06,839</td>
<td>45.75</td>
<td>51,06,157</td>
<td>54.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,15,55,983</td>
<td>48,52,524</td>
<td>42.08</td>
<td>67,03,459</td>
<td>57.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4

**Population Change by Regions: 1961-1971**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>% Increase During 1761-71</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Region</td>
<td>2,273,496</td>
<td>24.15</td>
<td>2,797,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hills and Mountains</td>
<td>1,317,750</td>
<td>13.99</td>
<td>1,409,942</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tarai</td>
<td>955,746</td>
<td>10.15</td>
<td>1,387,558</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Region</td>
<td>3,072,596</td>
<td>32.64</td>
<td>3,865,753</td>
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<td>Hills and Mountains</td>
<td>1,747,178</td>
<td>18.56</td>
<td>2,005,517</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tarai</td>
<td>1,325,418</td>
<td>14.08</td>
<td>1,770,236</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Region</td>
<td>1,998,663</td>
<td>21.23</td>
<td>2,465,540</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hills and Mountains</td>
<td>1,580,482</td>
<td>16.79</td>
<td>1,870,430</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tarai</td>
<td>418,181</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>595,110</td>
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<td>Far Western Region</td>
<td>2,068,241</td>
<td>21.97</td>
<td>2,427,190</td>
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<td>Hills and Mountains</td>
<td>1,698,083</td>
<td>18.03</td>
<td>1,834,128</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tarai</td>
<td>370,158</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>593,062</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>9,412,996</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>11,555,983</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hills and Mountains</td>
<td>6,343,493</td>
<td>67.39</td>
<td>7,210,017</td>
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<td>Tarai</td>
<td>3,069,503</td>
<td>32.61</td>
<td>4,345,966</td>
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**Source:** Central Bureau of Statistics HMG of Nepal 1971 Census.

### Table 5

**Patterns of Interregional Migration: 1971**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Mountains</th>
<th>Hills</th>
<th>Kathmandu Valley</th>
<th>Tarai</th>
<th>Total (Out migration)</th>
<th>Net Migration</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mountains</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>11,905</td>
<td>3,762</td>
<td>33,990</td>
<td>49,657</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hills</td>
<td>8,401</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>19,513</td>
<td>352,837</td>
<td>380,751</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu Valley</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>21,390</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>23,237</td>
<td>45,484</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarai</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>6,534</td>
<td>3,165</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>10,139</td>
<td>+399,925</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total (in-migration)** 9,698 39,829 26,440 410,064 486,031 0

**Source:** Central Bureau of Statistics HMG of Nepal 1971 Census.
### Table 6(a)

**Basic Data for Nepal**

- **Area:** 54,717 Square Miles
- **Population:**
  - 1961: 9.4 Million
  - 1971: Approx. 11.5 Million
  - 1974: 12.3 Million

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Receipts</th>
<th>Expenditures, including Development Purposes</th>
<th>Budget Surplus/Deficit</th>
<th>Financed by Foreign Assistance</th>
<th>Government Development Expenditure</th>
<th>Money Supply at End of Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mn. Rs:</td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>Actual</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966/67</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967/68</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968/69</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969/70</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970/71</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>565</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971/72</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972/73</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973/74</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975/76</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>793</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Official Foreign Exchange Rate: Rs. 10.10 per US $ from December 1967 and Rs. 12.45 per US $ from October 1975
### Table 6(b)

**Payment Position with Countries other than India** *(in million rupees)*

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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receipts</td>
<td>122.2</td>
<td>210.4</td>
<td>262.6</td>
<td>280.7</td>
<td>255.4</td>
<td>302.9</td>
<td>399.5</td>
<td>464.3</td>
<td>459.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visible Exports</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>136.7</td>
<td>108.8</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>151.6</td>
<td>130.3</td>
<td>119.5</td>
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<td>Invisibles</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>100.4</td>
<td>105.4</td>
<td>130.5</td>
<td>153.7</td>
<td>236.2</td>
<td>299.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>94.2</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>40.6</td>
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<td>Expenditures</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>113.3</td>
<td>116.6</td>
<td>189.0</td>
<td>171.3</td>
<td>253.9</td>
<td>299.1</td>
<td>295.9</td>
<td>798.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visible Imports</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>134.8</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>113.4</td>
<td>197.5</td>
<td>177.3</td>
<td>463.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invisibles</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>120.1</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>255.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>146.0</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>84.1</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>100.4</td>
<td>168.4</td>
<td>-399.7</td>
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</table>

**Gold and Foreign Exchange Reserve** *(in million Rs)*

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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Reserve</td>
<td>367.5</td>
<td>408.6</td>
<td>637.6</td>
<td>885.6</td>
<td>996.7</td>
<td>1097.2</td>
<td>1226.3</td>
<td>1430.7</td>
<td>1554.4</td>
<td>1391.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF Position and SDR’s</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>58.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Convertible Currency</td>
<td>234.0</td>
<td>297.0</td>
<td>409.2</td>
<td>563.5</td>
<td>644.4</td>
<td>759.1</td>
<td>894.0</td>
<td>1132.8</td>
<td>1277.6</td>
<td>1025.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian Currency and Others</td>
<td>101.7</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>148.6</td>
<td>190.1</td>
<td>265.5</td>
<td>262.8</td>
<td>240.0</td>
<td>204.6</td>
<td>183.5</td>
<td>272.8</td>
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</table>

### Table 6(c)

**Nepal’s Geographic Trade Concentration**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exports to India (in thousand Rs)</th>
<th>(as a percentage of total exports)</th>
<th>Imports from India (in thousand Rs)</th>
<th>(as a percentage of total imports)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>269,737</td>
<td>99.73</td>
<td>397,982</td>
<td>94.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
<td>265,221</td>
<td>99.50</td>
<td>444,414</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>287,653</td>
<td>99.43</td>
<td>604,025</td>
<td>99.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>291,171</td>
<td>97.87</td>
<td>604,557</td>
<td>98.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>440,562</td>
<td>98.78</td>
<td>818,867</td>
<td>98.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>375,106</td>
<td>98.77</td>
<td>781,989</td>
<td>97.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>426,321</td>
<td>98.62</td>
<td>481,268</td>
<td>96.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967-68</td>
<td>392,980</td>
<td>99.33</td>
<td>477,776</td>
<td>92.33</td>
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<td>1968-69</td>
<td>572,159</td>
<td>99.61</td>
<td>747,882</td>
<td>93.24</td>
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<td>1969-70</td>
<td>489,247</td>
<td>99.16</td>
<td>854,671</td>
<td>91.62</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Motorable Roads</td>
<td>(mi)</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>1,398</td>
<td>2,318</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,408</td>
<td>4,181</td>
<td>Completed Highways: Kathmandu-Raxaul; Kathmandu-Kodari; Kathmandu-Trishuli; Pathlaiya-Janakpur (part of Mahendra Highway); Sunauli-Pokhara; under construction: Simra-Jhapal; Narayanghat-Butwal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ropeways</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dhagadi-Dadeldhura: Kathmandu-Hetauda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Railways</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Janakpur, Bhairahawa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Paved Airports</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Janakpur, Bhairahawa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Post Offices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>439</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>664</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Telephone Exchanges (Towns)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kathmandu, Patan, Biratnagar, Birganj, Hetauda.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8

**Outlay and Expenditure on Development: 1956-75**

<table>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan outlay</td>
<td>% of outlay</td>
<td>Expenditure</td>
<td>% of Expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Agriculture, Irrigation and Forestry (including drinking water)</td>
<td>103.5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Transport and Communications</td>
<td>111.5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>94.9</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Industry &amp; Power</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Social Services (including sports)</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Miscellaneous</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>330.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>214.5</td>
<td>100</td>
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*Fourth Plan 1971-75.*
### Table 9

**Breakdown of Development Expenditure of the Fiscal Years 1967-68 to 1976-77**  
(In million rupees)

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<tr>
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<th></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>General Administration</strong></td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Administration and Planning</strong></td>
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<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Services</strong></td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>122.1</td>
<td>146.9</td>
<td>226.5</td>
<td>315.1</td>
<td>477.6</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>25.8</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>137.9</td>
<td>198.7</td>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td>21.8</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>126.3</td>
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<td>Drinking Water</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<td>3.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
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<td>9.9</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>72.6</td>
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<td>Panchayat</td>
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<td>16.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Social Services</td>
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<td>3.9</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>21.0</td>
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<td><strong>Economic Services</strong></td>
<td>215.7</td>
<td>250.9</td>
<td>375.6</td>
<td>399.2</td>
<td>460.9</td>
<td>475.9</td>
<td>585.3</td>
<td>718.4</td>
<td>897.4</td>
<td>1256.2</td>
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<td>22.7</td>
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<td>35.3</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>189.1</td>
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Table 10

*Annual Revenue and Expenditure 1967-68 to 1976-77 (in thousand rupees)*
Table 11  
Annual Crop Yield  
(In 1000 metric tonnes)  

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<td>814</td>
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### Table 12

**Productivity of Principal Crops**  
1973/74—1975/76

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### Table 13

**Industrial Production**

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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather Articles</td>
<td>Sq. ft.</td>
<td>159,265</td>
<td>193,484</td>
<td>211,601</td>
<td>200,608</td>
<td>197,051</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Tools</td>
<td>kg</td>
<td>142,707</td>
<td>65,104</td>
<td>114,322</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>381,400</td>
<td>300,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>kg</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>20,480</td>
<td>24,399</td>
<td>35,510</td>
<td>53,904</td>
<td>46,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stainless Steel Utensils</td>
<td>kg</td>
<td>933,450</td>
<td>356,516</td>
<td>132,511</td>
<td>245,000</td>
<td>209,000</td>
<td>156,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawboard</td>
<td>kg</td>
<td>357,724</td>
<td>104,125</td>
<td>775,342</td>
<td>704,672</td>
<td>936,887</td>
<td>1022,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricks and Tiles**</td>
<td>One Thousand</td>
<td>23,536</td>
<td>24,902</td>
<td>27,880</td>
<td>25,529</td>
<td>23,102</td>
<td>25,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer</td>
<td>Hecto-liter</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>137,368</td>
<td>402,645</td>
<td>541,643</td>
<td>687,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manure</td>
<td>Metric tonne</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Production only of Distilleries  
**Production only of Bricks and Tile Factory
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