

NEPAL :

An Assertive Monarchy

Editor

S D MUNI



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Preface

King Mahendra made the single largest and most important contribution in building contemporary Nepal into an aspirant modern society pulsating with life and vigour. The era inaugurated by him in the Nepalese politics infact did not come to end even after his death in January 1972. The system, the ethos and the styles of governance initiated and nursed by him seem to have struck firm roots in Nepal. In their main thrust, they continue to remain valid as ever and, therefore, the Late King Mahendra is as relevant to Nepal today as he was during his life-time. His successor, King Birendra is carrying on the traditions laid down by his illustrious father. An intensive analysis of King Mahendra's Nepal was, therefore, called for. Such an analysis could naturally be undertaken coolly and dispassionately only after his death. Hence this Volume.

To offer this Volume as a tribute both to the late King Mahendra and India-Nepal friendship, it was decided to make it a joint venture of the Indian and Nepali scholars. The response to this idea from the contributors was encouraging as is evident from the the Volume itself. The only exception to this joint venture theme is the contribution from Prof Leo Rose of California University (Berkeley). This was deliberate because Prof Rose has written and done so much to put Nepal on the international academic map, that a Volume like this could not have been complete without his association.

The Volume has been divided into two parts, each dealing with domestic politics and foreign policy. In each section, the contributions dealing with general and broader aspects are followed by in-depth case studies. We have been able to cover only the major dimensions of Nepal's domestic politics and foreign policy owing to the limitations of space and resources.

The idea to bring about this Volume was first conceived and given shape at the South Asia Studies Centre, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur. At that stage, it received great encourage-

ment and support from Prof SP Varma and Prof Iqbal Narain. Considerable moral and intellectual stimulation to the venture was also provided by Dr Ramakant, Mr Virendra Narain, Mr PC Mathur, Dr RS Chauhan and Mr MV Lakhi, all of South Asia Studies Centre. The Editor is deeply thankful to all of them. Prof Varma and Prof Iqbal Narain went a step further and even promised to get the Volume published by the Rajasthan University. This, however, did not materialise owing to the administrative and other difficulties in the Department of Political Science and the University Press of Jaipur. The Volume underwent another revision about six months back when a couple of new contributions were also added.

This Volume is a concrete evidence of prompt response and sincere cooperation from all the contributors for which the Editor is extremely thankful. The friendly persuasion and affectionate encouragement from Prof CP Bhambhari and Prof Mohd. Ayoob of Jawaharlal Nehru University; Prof Aloo J Dastur of Bombay University and Mr NN Jha of Ministry of External Affairs facilitated to a great extent the finalisation of the Volume. My friend Zafar Iqbal (IAS), formerly of the Department of English, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur helped me in editing and Mr R Ganapathy very efficiently prepared the typed script of the Volume. This Volume owes a lot to all of them. And finally my wife Anuradha and little daughter Mona deserve mention for they ignored several lapses on my part regarding obligations *vis-a-vis* themselves during the completion of the Volume.

S D MUNI

Political Change : A Framework of Analysis

S D MUNI

Significant political, economic, social and cultural changes have taken place in the new nations of Asia and Africa recently. In the study of these changes and their consequences, “tradition” and “modernity” have come to be regarded as the basic concepts by a large number of social scientists. We are primarily concerned with a study of political change here. The commonly shared assumption in this context is that during the process of change, the traditional societies of the new nations move towards the goal of modernisation.

There are two schools of thought regarding the relationship between tradition and modernity. The first school believes that tradition and modernity are mutually incompatible ; that one is the total negation of, and a break from, the other and that the contradictions between them are mutually antagonistic. This school is represented by scholars like Pye, Verba, Almond and their associates. According to them, the pattern of modernisation in the traditional societies result, on the one hand, from the contradictions *within* tradition and modernity respectively ; and on the other, from the contradictions *between* them.¹

Another school believes that there are powerful trends in tradition and modernity that enable them to co-exist. That the two continuously interact with each other and, in the process, display strong tendencies towards mutual adjustment and accommodation. The “transition” of society from traditional to modern is a considerably long process, during which modernity gets traditionalised and the traditions acquire modern contour and contents.²

The reality, however, appears to lie somewhere between the two above stated positions regarding the relationship between tradition and modernity. Both tradition and modernity seem to

possess the tendencies of mutual compatibility as well as conflict. It is perhaps not possible to identify these tendencies since they are not consistent and the nature and extent of their manifestations are empirically found to be dependent upon other variables like the nature of historical, social, political and economic forces operating within and around a given society undergoing the process of change.

When mutually compatible and accommodative tendencies of tradition and modernity are dominant, the change would be a smooth and gradual process. But if the antagonistic tendencies are prominent, the process of change is bound to witness violent conflicts in the social set-up. Such conflict may divert the process of change from its hitherto followed path and thereafter, move the change towards an altogether new direction. The *conflict*, therefore, will remain a part of the continuum ; the process of change. However, the occurrence of conflict as a part of the continuum is not acceptable to most scholars except those who are committed to the Marxist-Leninist framework of social enquiry, since the structural-functional approach has a heavy, in-built bias in favour of the avoidance of conflict in the social set-up.

Thus the change in a traditional society is a *dialectical* process. It is not necessarily linear in direction and its path may be zig-zag. Here cognizance should be taken of the fact that tradition and modernity are time and culture bound concepts and they have still enough scope for being defined comprehensively.³ We can hardly identify a society which is wholly and purely either traditional or modern. The dialectics in the process of change takes place between what may be termed as the *mixes* of tradition and modernity, containing the varying proportions of each. One *mix* gives rise to another which further gives rise to yet another *mix*, and so on.

We propose to discuss various aspects of the process of *political* change in Nepal, since the fall of the Rana oligarchy in 1950-51. Traditional forces in Nepalese politics have been symbolised by the King and the Ranas, notwithstanding the fact that both played a modernising role on occasions in the past. The sources of authority and legitimacy of Monarchy have been and shall remain primarily ascriptive. The forces of modernity, on the other hand, were symbolised by the political parties and their

demands for democratic, particularly, parliamentary institutions and extensive popular participation in political decision making.

Fall of the Rana Regime

The fall of the Rana oligarchy in 1950-51 was a landmark in Nepal's political history. It restructured political forces of the kingdom, initiated the recent process of political change and therefore, deserves to be taken as a starting point in our present discussion.

The Rana regime fell under the combined thrust of : (i) "the internal contradictions of tradition" and (ii) "the contradictions between tradition and modernity". The internal contradictions of the regime were symbolised in the equation between the King and the Rana Prime Minister existing since the emergence of Jung Bahadur Rana as the all powerful Prime Minister following the famous Palace (*Kot*) Massacre in 1846. Structurally, the King was the wielder of power and authority. The Rana Prime Minister was subordinate to him. It was the King who through a Royal Decree (*Sanad*) in 1856 delegated the wide and extensive powers to the Rana Prime Minister and legitimised the Rana family rule. Even during the hey days of the Rana regime, no decision or "order" of any consequence was valid and legitimate unless it bore *Lal Mohar*—the Royal Seal.

Functionally, however, the *Sanad* of 1856 had reduced the King to the status of a political non-entity. Subsequently, the Prime Minister and the Rana family became the real rulers of Nepal and the King was their virtual captive. The Royal Seal (*Lal Mohar*) remained under the physical possession of the Prime Minister who used it, at his discretion. The King was kept in complete darkness about the affairs of the state, and his functional ineffectiveness was successfully perpetuated by the Rana Prime Minister who kept a firm grip over the army and the administrative machinery. The King's finances were also regulated by the Prime Minister so completely that the King had no independent source of money.

Therefore, the contradictions between the King and the Rana Prime Minister were inherent in the dichotomy of their respective structural positions and functional roles. Besides this, there were divisions within the Rana family itself. The

rolls of succession as prepared and amended and the methods of appointment to higher positions evolved from time to time, resulted in a number of disgruntled Ranas. Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere (1901-28) even divided the Rana family into 'A', 'B' and 'C' classes on the basis of caste of the mother from which a Rana-child was born, since almost every Rana had a number of wives belonging to high as well as low castes. The sons born of high caste *Kshatriya* wife/wives were put into 'A' category for which the Prime Ministership and other high positions were reserved. This introduction of class-caste consciousness into the Rana family alienated most 'C' class Ranas from the system, many of whom later (in 1950-51) actively participated in its overthrow.

The contradictions between the King and the Rana Prime Minister, and within the Rana family that gradually became sharper with the numerical extension of the family, were internal to their system of family oligarchy. Externally, the Rana regime was hostile to and incompatible with the modern concepts of power, authority and legitimacy which in a nutshell, required the broadening of the regime's base by making it people-oriented.

Initially, protests against the Ranas were made in the form of condemnation of the regime's atrocities. During 1935-40 a small organization named *Praja Parishad* worked clandestinely to subvert the Rana regime but it was successfully suppressed. Later on, further demands to broaden the regime were raised and fought for, by the political parties, which were organised in 1946 and afterwards in India since no political activity was allowed by the Ranas within Nepal.⁴ The most important of these parties, the Nepali Congress, launched a "struggle for democracy" against the Rana regime which took a violent form in 1950, resulting eventually in the fall of the regime.

The most interesting aspect of the contradictions related to the Rana system was this that some traditional (the King and the 'C' class Ranas) and the modern forces, the Nepali Congress and other political parties, had an understanding and alliance between themselves against the existing system which itself symbolised traditional forces. The King was believed to have been sympathetic to the activities of *Praja Parishad* during 1935-40.⁵ His sympathies and support to the activities of the

Nepali Congress between 1948 and 1950 was a matter of common knowledge in Kathmandu.⁶ The beginning of the armed struggle of the Nepali Congress against the Rana regime on 11 November 1950, the day King Tribhuvan landed in New Delhi after his dramatic escape to the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu on 6 November was also not just incidental.

The alliance of the 'C' class Ranas with the forces of modernity was much more open and active. Two prominent members of this class, Subarna Shumshere and Mahavir Shumshere, along with others, organised a political party of their own, named *Prajatantrik Congress*, at Calcutta in August 1948, to bring "an end to the autocratic regime of the Ranas". Later this party merged with the Nepali Congress. Subarna Shumshere, not only lent financial support to its activities but actively participated as a top ranking leader in the anti-Rana struggle launched by the Nepali Congress. He was also instrumental in bringing about a closer understanding between the King and the Nepali Congress, before and during the anti-Rana struggle.

To a considerable extent, the British imperial authority in India was instrumental in perpetuating the Rana system in Nepal. It was largely owing to the British that the 'internal' and 'external' contradictions of the Rana system did not acquire meaningful and effective proportions. Therefore, the British withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent in 1947 constituted a big setback to the Rana system. More so because the successor Nationalist government of India was not inclined to support the Rana system in its existing form. But for the inspiration and support from the Indian leaders and the definite hopes (in late 1946) that the British would withdraw, the Nepalis could not have organised political parties in Indian territory (Calcutta and Banaras). The Government of India was openly involved in King Tribhuvan's escape to the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu and flight to New Delhi in November 1950. It also exercised a quiet but powerful diplomatic pressure on the Ranas and brought them to terms with the King and the political parties. India has since then been an important 'external' factor in the political change in Nepal, the details of which are not proposed to be discussed here.⁷

The King, the political parties and the disgruntled 'C' class Ranas had gradually emerged as an "anti-thesis" to the Rana

regime. This “anti-thesis” was a *mix* of the forces of tradition and modernity. The interaction between the Rana-regime and its “anti-thesis” had been clearly going on in one form or the other since 1935. However, it was the inflexibility of the Rana system towards mutual accommodation and adjustment with the “anti-thesis” which ultimately precipitated the violent conflict ; the popularly known anti-Rana revolution of 1950-51. There were occasions and opportunities which, if properly harnessed, could have considerably weakened the prospects of conflict or at least delayed its occurrence. The Rana Prime Minister, Padma Shumshere, had, as a matter of fact, tried to do that. In May 1947, he proposed political reforms with the aim of widening the base of the regime and also conducted elections for the Kathmandu municipality. If these reforms had been implemented successfully and sincerely, there is every reason to believe that the conflict of 1950-51 could have been averted. But Padma Shumshere’s approach did not find favour with his brothers and other “co-rulers”. He was removed from the office in January 1948 and his successor, Mohan Shumshere opted for confrontation and made the violent conflict inevitable.

Elimination of the Ranas from the Power-Structure

The “anti-Rana revolution” came to an end in February 1951 as a result of an understanding amongst the King, the Rana rulers and the Nepali Congress leaders, evolved through the efforts and influence of the Government of India which came to be known as the “Delhi Settlement”. The “synthesis” inherent in the “Delhi Settlement” was also a *mix* of the forces of tradition and modernity. Its constituents were the King, the Ranas and the political party leaders (the modern elites) ; and all of them had committed themselves to the ideals of modernisation, i.e. to the development of a people-oriented polity in the kingdom. Needless to say their respective commitments to this ideal varied in seriousness and sincerity.

The King became the most important political force among all the three constituents. The hitherto existing contradictions between the Monarch and the Prime Minister were resolved in favour of the Monarch. However, the contradictions between the Ranas and the modern elites were left to be resolved

gradually, through mutual interaction, accommodation and adjustment. The "anti-Rana revolution", therefore, proved to be a "partial revolution", as some scholars have rightly described it.

The arrangements stipulated under the "Delhi Settlement" were given a formal, institutional shape with the enactment of the *Interim Government of Nepal Act, 2007* on 30 March 1951. All the executive, legislative and judicial powers were vested in the King and his supremacy over the Prime Minister was clearly laid down in this Act which came to be commonly known as the Interim Constitution. The Council of Ministers was made collectively responsible to the King. This principle of collective responsibility was provided for, to ensure, the Ranas and the modern elites to interact in the desired manner. It was not realised in this context that the actual conflict which took place between the Ranas and the modern elites before and during the "revolution" had badly damaged their tendencies to mutually co-exist and instead, sharpened their mutual antagonistic contradictions. The attempt to make the two interact and adjust with each other, therefore, soon proved to be futile. In a way, the enactment of the Interim Constitution was necessary since in absence of a new definition of their roles and functions, the Ranas appeared to have erroneously assumed that they could exercise their authority as before the "revolution", except, of course, in relation to the King.

A struggle between the Ranas and the modern elites for a higher position in the new power-structure followed the "Delhi Settlement". Whereas the Ranas tried to maintain their position, the modern elites seemed determined to replace them. This struggle gave rise to mild violence when the Gorkha Dal, a militant group organised by the Ranas, made an attempt on 12 April 1951, to assault Nepali Congress leader and Home Minister, BP Koirala. The modern elites could count on the King's support in their struggle against the Ranas, for he was their ally in the "revolution". Knowing this, the Ranas sought the mediation of the Government of India which was a party to the "Delhi Settlement". In May 1951, both the Rana and the Nepali Congress leaders went to New Delhi where they were again advised to hang on together in the hope that the desired interaction between them will result from their mere physical co-existence. How naive this hope was became evident when

a crisis in the Rana-Nepali Congress relations within the Council of Ministers re-appeared in November 1951. B P Koirala and his colleagues resigned from the coalition government, forcing the Prime Minister, Mohan Shumshere, to resign. The King announced the formation of a new government on 16 November 1951, in which there was no remnant, at least formal, of the Rana system.

The Ranas after being finally eliminated from the "post-revolution" power-structure of the kingdom, re-grouped themselves along the lines of the modern elites, in order to influence the emerging power equations. The structure and sources of recruitment of the Gorkha Dal were widened and made flexible to convert it into a political party. The formation of the party—the Gorkha Parishad, was announced in early 1952. It gradually became influential in the areas under feudal dominance. The Gorkha Parishad's initial objectives were to discredit the modern elites by adopting their own strategy and thus acquire a share in wielding power as alternate agents of modernisation. However, the political environment that prevailed in the kingdom in the "post-revolution" period in turn influenced the organisation, objectives and strategies of the party. As a result, many of its initial formulations underwent drastic revisions. By 1959, when the first general election took place in Nepal, the Gorkha Parishad could be viewed as an evidence of the modernisation of a traditional group in the Nepalese context.

Interaction between the King and the Political Parties

The elimination of the Ranas from the kingdom's power structure facilitated and brought into sharp focus the interaction between Monarchy and the modern elites. This interaction gave rise to a pattern of politics which remained basically consistent until the promulgation of a new Constitution and holding of the first general elections in 1959.

The pattern of Nepalese politics between the years 1952 and 1959 was comprised of the two major streams of development. The first was consolidation of the Monarchy's supreme position in the power structure. This was done through various means. The Interim Constitution was amended and additional

legislative provisions were enacted to remove whatever obstacles had arisen, or were feared, might arise in future. in the exercise of the King's supreme authority in all executive, legislative and judicial spheres. All the senior administrative appointments during this period were made by the King who placed his close confidants in strategic positions within the system. As a result, the Palace Secretariat became the nerve centre of the kingdom's administrative network at the cost of the Prime Minister's Secretariat at *Singh Durbar*. The armed and police forces were modernised and their service conditions were improved. Finally, through the employment of subtle techniques, the pro-Monarchial ethos were extensively propogated in the kingdom.

This process of consolidation of the Monarch's powers was not confined to the orthodox infra-structure of power. It also included an additional and modern dimension, that of popular support. There were instances of direct contact between King Tribhuvan and the people but the calculated and systematic mobilisation of popular support for Monarchy was pursued by his son, King Mahendra, since 1955 when he succeeded to the throne. During the years 1956 and 1957, King Mahendra visited most parts of the kingdom. While addressing well-attended public meetings during his tours, the King tried to project his image as a leader who was deeply committed to the ideals of democracy and a welfare state and was far from being a feudal and autocratic lord. He attended to the peoples' grievances and in some cases, dispensed on-the-spot justice. Through these tours, the King also tried to undermine, albeit indirectly, the role of political parties as agents of modernisation and change. The King's tours also helped, though to a limited extent, in the spread of political consciousness among the Nepalese, most of whom had remained by and large unaffected by the "anti-Rana revolution" and subsequent developments. The Monarchy, therefore, was not only modernising its support base, but also playing the role of an agent of modernisation and change in a small way.

While the consolidation of the Monarchy's power has been duly emphasized by a large number of scholars, sufficient attention has not been paid to the second major stream of developments in the Nepalese politice during 1952-58. This stream was

the strengthening and extension of the modern political forces—the parties, the elites, the ideals and the styles. In view of the Nepalese situation during the early 1950s, the political parties and elites may be divided into two categories : the peripheral and the hardcore. The peripheral modern elite and the political parties led by them were busy largely in the “maximisation of power” by seeking and securing the King’s favour which was readily forthcoming to perpetuate divisions within the forces of modernisation. Their commitments to modernisation ideals were only vocal and their concern for “the people” was nominal. In contrast, the hardcore modern elites and their parties sought share in power through popular support. Therefore, they had high stakes in the establishment of representative democratic institutions. Accordingly, they successfully endeavoured to mobilise mass support, gain organisational strength and achieve ideological clarity. On the basis of these characteristics, the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party and even the Gorkha Parishad may be placed in the hardcore category ; the rest of the parties and elites belonged to the peripheral category.

The most important gain in favour of the hardcore elite was consolidation of modernisation ideals as the dominant theme in the kingdom’s political culture. It came to be accepted as such by all the political actors ; the King, the peripheral elite and the hardcore elite, though in the first two cases, this acceptance was either reluctant or tactical. The rise in demands for certain basic fundamental rights ; rule of law, freedom of expression and association, establishment of democratic institutions, welfare activities, land reforms and general economic well-being were quite distinct, pronounced and substantial. Though a concrete and precise definition of the ideals of political modernisation and the corresponding goals remained vague, the debate in the country centred around them.

The simultaneous strengthening of the King and the forces of modernity was antithetical. Nevertheless, it was an integral part of the interaction leading to mutual adjustment and accommodation which was evident in all the significant changes that were taking place during this period with respect to the executive, the legislature and the model of political system. For instance, the executive functions of the state were discharged by the King with the help of a Council of Ministers, headed by a Prime

Minister, who almost necessarily belonged to a political party, though he and his party were often of a "peripheral" type. In a Council of Ministers constituted on 15 May 1958, the representatives of two of the hardcore political parties, the Nepali Congress and the Gorkha Parishad, were also included along with the "peripheral" elite. All these Councils of Ministers invariably included "independents" who were the King's nominees.¹⁰ The King, on occasions during August 1952 to June 1953, April 1955 to January 1956 and November 1957 to May 1958, which in all came to about 2 years and 6 weeks, ruled directly. On these occasions the King's direct rule was strongly resented by the modern elite and in response, the King had to terminate his direct rule each time in favour of a Council of Ministers constituted from the modern elite.

The nature of political system to be adopted was a major issue in the kingdom's "post-revolution" politics. During the preparations for the "revolution", the modern elite wanted Nepal to become a *Democratic Republic*. Some of the modern elite particularly BP Koirala and Ganeshman Singh of the Nepali Congress, had reportedly whispered in favour of a Republic even soon after the "revolution", in spite of the alliance forged with the King during the revolution. There was, however, a general consensus among the modern elites on a Constitutional Monarchy similar to the British model. The modern elite wanted the Constitution for such a political system to be drafted by a sovereign Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise. Pending arrangements for the elections, it was agreed to have an Advisory Assembly as a substitute for a representative legislature. The provisions for the Advisory Assembly were laid down in the Interim Constitution. Under these provisions, the Advisory Assembly was to be constituted by the representatives of the political parties and the nomination of the King. The mutual compromise between the King and the modern elite was thus clearly underlined, notwithstanding the occasional protests by some hardcore elite and parties against the manner in which the King had constituted the Assembly. There were three such Advisory Assemblies; each constituted in 1952, 1955 and 1958. In substance, the Advisory Assembly experiment reflected a greater amount of compromise on the part of modern elite, though in 1958, a semblance of elections

took place in order to constitute the Advisory Assembly.

Between 1956 and 1958, the political debate in the kingdom concentrated on whether to hold a general election for the Constituent Assembly or the Parliament. In the latter case, the Constitution was to be granted by the King. The issue at stake was the location of sovereignty. The modern elite (particularly, the hardcore) wanted a Constituent Assembly since their contention was that the sovereignty rested with the people. The King and some of the peripheral elite, on the other hand, held that sovereignty rested with the Crown which, none-the-less, was to be expressed through democratic institutions. Accordingly, it was argued that the King should *grant* the constitution providing for the democratic governance—through parliamentary government—of the kingdom. A compromise was clearly implied in the King's formula. After a number of postponements of the election dates, the hardcore modern elite ultimately accepted this compromise.

The compromise between the King and the hardcore modern elite was enshrined in *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal*. It was granted by the King to the people and it aimed at "the establishment of an efficient *monarchical form of government responsive to the wishes of the people*. Whereas functionally, this Constitution could encourage the growth of parliamentary institutions and processes, potentially, it was heavily weighed in favour of Monarchy. In a way, the Constitution of 1959 represented a synthesis of the anti-thetical and simultaneous growth of the King and the modern elites. The Constitution was put into operation and the elections for parliament were held in the kingdom in February 1959.

Clash between the King and the Hardcore Elites

The first General Elections of the Kingdom almost completely wiped out the peripheral elite and parties. The hardcore modern elite emerged as the strongest political force. The Nepali Congress secured 74 seats out of the total of 109, in the lower house of the Parliament. After some hesitation, King Mahendra invited, in May 1959, the Nepali Congress leader B P Koirala to form the government.

Following the formation of the Nepali Congress government,

the King assumed the role of a nominal head. He maintained communication-links with the people and the traditional segments of society but did not interfere in the day-to-day affairs and political decisions of the kingdom. This was perhaps a forced status since there were no institutional devices in the existing constitutional framework, through which he could decisively influence the policies and programmes of the Nepali Congress ministry. The King could check the representative government only by dismissing it and this he did on 15 December 1960. His action involved extensive demonstration and even actual use of force.

The factors that impelled the King to take the drastic step of December 1960, when he suspended the Constitution granted by himself and dissolved the representative government of the Nepali Congress, have been analysed with considerable vigour. The land reforms—Birta abolition and revision in tenancy laws—enacted by the Nepali Congress government disturbed the position of the landed aristocracy, which was also dominant in the kingdom's army. The measures of administrative reforms on the other hand invited the hostility of the vested interests in bureaucracy. Therefore the powerful traditional vested interests became hostile to the new government. The King's sympathies and support understandably lay with the traditional interests. In the weakening of these interests, he saw the weakening of his own position. More so because B P Koirala's expressed unhappiness with the King's potentially powerful position in the Constitution was a source of direct threat. It appeared much more magnified and imminent in view of the sudden shift of authority from the King to the representative government with the latter's coming into power. The King, therefore, had to strike before it was too late.

The important point which has missed proper emphasis is that the sense of insecurity created among traditional forces, *vis-a-vis* the new government, resulted from the too strong a push toward modernisation given to the still largely traditional Nepalese society. Within a period of 18 months, the government had disturbed all the constituents of the hitherto existing structure of power. In the process, all the traditional vested interests were alienated at one time. While doing so, not enough was done to mobilise support in favour of the forces of moder-

nity. Comparatively very little time energy and resources were spent to entrench the party and propagate the achievements of the government i.e. march towards the goals of modernity. This created an imbalance between the push towards modernisation and the degree of the flexibility of traditions ; between the change and the society's willingness and capacity to change. The result was the breakdown. If the Nepali Congress government had moved with more care and tact ; weakening the traditional forces one by one and gradually, as was done in India, with respect to the feudal institutions, the course of political developments in Nepal could have been different. The Maoist tactics of isolating and attacking the enemy by forging a "united front" of the remaining classes could also provide fruitful guidance to the Nepali Congress government in this respect.

The "anti-thesis" to the representative government and the parliamentary system, was a *mix*, represented by the traditional vested interests, the King. and also the peripheral modern-elites who had been reduced to the status of political none-entities owing to their electoral defeat. The Gorkha Parishad and the Communist Party had also registered their protests against the government's policies, but these protests were within the democratic framework and in conformity with parliamentary processes. These parties were not the part of the "anti-thesis" and instead had stakes in the maintenance of the parliamentary system of government. The King's action of 15 December 1960 proved to be against them as well. The "anti-thesis" did not dissociate itself from rhetorics of the modernisation ideals. It was claimed by the King in his proclamation of 15 December and subsequent statements that his action was guided by the concern for "the good of the country and the people".

Re-emergence of Monarchy Under the Panchayat System

Following the dissolution of parliamentary system, the King made swift moves to re-establish his hold over the orthodox infra-structure of power. He brought about changes in the administrative structure and personnel, offered additional facilities to the army, removed the sense of insecurity generated by the previous government from among the landed aristocracy and other traditional vested interests, and strengthened the

potential and efficiency of the state's coercive force.¹¹ On the ideological front, he invoked traditions to explain and legitimise his action against the parliamentary system by emphasising two points : (i) that the King was the supreme authority according to the *sacred* traditions and customs of the kingdom ; and (ii) that the system of parliamentary democracy—including the political parties—was unsuitable to, and incompatible with the genius and tradition of the Nepalese society.¹²

There was a sense of urgency in the King's political and ideological moves since many of the modern elites having stakes in the dissolved system had gone in exile, in India, to escape arrest and from there were trying to disrupt the Royal regime through violent activities. This confrontation did not let the King wholly abandon the rhetorics of the modernisation ideals. The emphasis on egalitarianism and reference to "the people" continued to find a prominent place in the King's statements. There was one notable exception. The ideas of popular participation and representative institutions were played down, the sanctity of fundamental rights was rejected and instead, the individual's subordination to the society and the authority was highlighted¹³.

This new ideology was concretised in the system of "Panchayat Democracy", brought into being by the King through a Constitution promulgated on 16 December 1962. This system legitimised the Monarchy's absolute powers. Nevertheless it was a *mix* of traditional and modern elements. The institutional structure evolved under the system provided for indirect and heavily controlled popular participation in political processes, but loud professions were made to ensure civic amenities and welfare measures to the common citizen. The system had no room for political parties¹⁴.

The Panchayat system suffered from some very serious structural inconsistencies. For instance, the *Class Organisations*—of peasants, labourers, women, youth, ex-servicemen and children—contrary to their underlying assumption, did not represent homogenous classes. The divisions within a class—resulting from caste, economic conditions, social status and regional identities—proved to be more powerful and decisive than the sense of identity and mutuality of interests imposed from above. Another example of structural flaw was evident

in the mode of elections permitted under the system. The members of the Panchayats except the four graduates' representatives to the Rastriya Panchayat were indirectly elected. The fact that this provision of direct elections did not prove conducive to the otherwise closed system became clear when in 1971 all the four graduates' representatives elected after an intense political activity stood for drastic liberalisation of the system by favouring adult franchise and direct elections to the National Panchayat, representative government responsible to the National Panchayat and the open sessions of the National Panchayat. Some of these flaws have been removed now through constitutional changes introduced in December 1975. Under these changes class organisations and the "Graduate Constituency" have been abolished ; and Rastriya Panchayat debates thrown open to the press and people. However, it remains to be seen as to what extent these new changes will succeed in revamping the Panchayat system.

Closely interlinked with the Panchayat System's structural flaws was its failure in certain vital areas of performance. First, the system failed to encourage the desired kind of leadership. The panchayat elections at the village and district levels were contested on the basis of ethnic and regional loyalties. As a result, the traditionally dominant high castes : Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Newars, had further entrenched themselves under the new system¹⁵. The backward and tribal castes have been left by and large unintegrated. A study of Illam district in Eastern Nepal shows that the Limbus kept themselves away from Panchayat elections and activities due to the dominance of the Brahmins.¹⁶ The factions and rivalry amongst the panchayat leaders brought about the failure of experiments like "Back to the Village" campaign and administrative decentralisation programme. The recent constitutional provisions of December 1975 for strengthening and streamlining the "Go to the Village National Committee" and making it a principal organ to channelise political processes not only underline the failure of the earlier provisions but also reflect the concern for making the whole system workable.

The mobility of elites from village and district levels to the zonal and national politics was regulated strictly by governmental control and the Monarch's personal discretion. This greatly

undermined the relevance and credibility of the panchayat institutions, and created confusion regarding the location of responsibility at various points in the system. Its results have been rampant corruption and inefficiency. Also the elite who fall from the King's favour, consequently, lose their stakes in the system. A large number of elite became alienated in this way since the King's selections and rejections for the national leadership have been rather frequent. There were a number of instances of the one-time exponents of the system turning into its opponents.

On the economic front, the gap between the promises and achievements appears to be ever widening. The prospects of industrialisation are far from satisfactory. The small and short-term progress that was made since 1964 in this respect due to the proliferating stainless steel and synthetic textile industries were served with almost a fatal blow under the provisions of the Indo-Nepalese Trade Treaty signed in August 1971. Some of the industrial units like cigarettes, shoes, bricks and tiles could be established with the help of foreign aid, but their impact on the overall economic growth of the kingdom remained minimal. More serious failure on the economic front was in the agricultural sector. The land reforms stipulated under the Lands Act of 1964 remained largely unrealised to the great disadvantage of the landless. The tenancy regulations under the Act were discriminatory "not only for the tenants of the different regions but also of the same region".¹⁷ Whereas the provisions of the Act were not favoured by the landholders, its deliberately slow, inadequate and discriminatory implementation brought frustration to the landless.

The government was the biggest employer, particularly of the educated people. During the first 4-5 years of the Panchayat System, the administrative apparatus of the government marked a phenomenal expansion and almost all those who were seeking jobs were employed. Since 1966, however, the situation had been deteriorating. Many of the skilled hands were either unemployed or under-employed. The expectations of many of these skilled hands were raised through their exposure to the more developed countries visited during the period of study and training. The Panchayat System obviously did not have "enough" to satisfy all those expectations. Though there

is no dependable account of the employment conditions, the number of job seekers was expected to reach 5,25,000 by the end of the current plan period (1971-76).¹⁸ The government's concern about the problem of educated unemployment was duly reflected in the new Educational Plan.¹⁹ The growth of population, which reached 1,12,90,000 by 1971, is going to put more strains on the system's economic-performance capabilities in general.

The system made considerable headway in the physical integration of the kingdom. Roads and other means of communications were developed, much with the help of foreign aid. But with physical integration, new tensions have also come up. The construction of roads facilitated the migration of hill people to the better-off Terai region which, in turn, led to the problems of social and economic adjustment between the two peoples. The dominance of traditional "client families" in the kingdom's administration continued to block the mobility within the system and thus hampered national integration in the real sense,²⁰

Future Prospects

The structural flaws of the Panchayat System and its failure on the performance-front constituted the sources of the system's "anti-thesis" which in future is likely to be composed of: (i) the hardcore modern elite, and (ii) the disgruntled sections of the traditional interests and the new panchayat elite. The peripheral modern elite who have failed to serve their selfish interests under the Panchayat System may also join in. This "anti-thesis" obviously will be a *mix* of tradition and modernity. All of them are likely to mobilise the general discontent among the masses which is resulting from the system's failures. The mobilisation of discontent is posing and will continue to pose, serious difficulties in the face of the system's coercive potential and the lack of unity among the constituents of the "anti-thesis".

The clues about the emerging pattern of the "anti-thesis" can be drawn from some of the recent developments in the kingdom. Reference has been made above to the graduate elections of 1971. Most of the traditionally dominant-castes' graduates who were manning the Panchayat System's bureaucracy defied

the official directives and voted for radical changes leading to the replacement of the system. This happened while King Mahendra, the father of the Panchayat System, was alive.

Ever since King Mahendra's death in January 1972, demands for liberalisation and broadening of the system have been gaining momentum. These demands ultimately precipitated a crisis in July-August 1972 when the resignation of Bista-Ministry was asked for. The crisis clearly revealed the composition of the "anti-thesis". In Kathmandu, the protests were led by Surya Bahadur Thapa, Dr K I Singh and others who were all deeply involved earlier in building the system. Students also played a significant role in these protests. The hardcore modern elite, BP Koirala's supporters and the Communists, conducted armed raids in the Terai, including one on a police station.²¹ It is possible that there was no coordination as such, between the activities of the hardcore elite in the Terai and those of the peripheral and 'new' panchayat elites at Kathmandu. Yet the coincidence of the two marked a trend. This coincidence practically repeated when the hijacking of a Nepalese plane in the Indian side of the Terai (in Bihar) was followed by the devastating fire in Kathmandu which completely gutted historic *Singhdurbar*.

The question arises as to how the King will respond to the emerging "anti-thesis" to his system. The available indications show that he will maintain his present supreme position and try to sustain the Panchayat System. King Birendra, soon after his coming to the throne, gave hints that he was prepared to make some compromises with the emerging "anti-thesis" and change the Panchayat System accordingly. The constitutional changes of December 1975 are a delayed and a hesitant step in that direction. At the same time the option of suppressing the dissent and opposition through use of force has not been given up. Besides, the young King firmly maintains that traditions and customs are the source of his power and authority and that the Panchayat System and its partyless character would be sustained for ever.²²

In the face of the King's firm posture, the re-grouping of the forces comprising the "anti-thesis" and further efforts to mobilise the discontent are very likely to take place. Many small sporadic instances of protest against the system are a pointer in this

direction. If the King is bent upon pursuing his present strategy, his dependence upon the instruments of coercion—the police and the army—is bound to increase. This, in the long run, will make the army a significant political force in the kingdom, which it is not so till this day. That development would also limit the scope of the King's discretion, and ultimately, his overall position in the political processes will be adversely affected. The Panchayat System may not survive the thrust of such developments.

Having said that, the prospects of a change in the King's present cannot be altogether ruled out. At some later stage, when the "anti-thesis" becomes better crystallised—through the articulation, aggregation and mobilisation of the discontent by the constituents of the emerging "anti-thesis—the King might be forced to make some compromises. The King's awareness about the system's weaknesses prompted him in the past also, to adjust with the hardcore modern elite. The general amnesty granted to the Nepali Congress "outlaws" and the release of B P Koirala in October 1968 and appeal to all of them to participate in the Panchayat System, can be recalled in this context. Similarly, in December 1975 following the announcement of constitutional changes, a number of political detainees were released. There is nothing to suggest that this kind of a gesture will not be repeated in future. In fact, the King's gestures of October 1968 and December 1975 had paid good political dividends. It divided the ranks of the hardcore elite and thus damaged the potential for discontent-mobilisation. In future also, it may yield similar results. If and when such a shift takes place in the King's strategy it will result into yet another *mix* and advance political change in the kingdom.

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Crises of Political Development

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Over the last decade there have been a number of scholarly works on the subject of nation-building and modernisation. The factors and techniques required to bring backward countries into the mainstream of modern life have been analysed and certain tentative conclusions arrived at. Although these solutions require a longer time span for testing in the world of realities, the intrinsic merit of the new approach to the basic problem of nation-building cannot be questioned. Modernisation as used in the following paragraphs merely implies the amelioration of the condition of life and the growth of alternative prospects or choices for the society and its members. Lucian W Pye's studies in political development and Samuel P Huntington's enquiries into the modernising role of traditional monarchies have direct bearing on an evaluation of the prospects for nation-building in Nepal. Lucian W Pye lists six of what he characterises as "crises of development" which a developing country must resolve to achieve modern nationhood. These crises are of (1) Identity, (2) Legitimacy, (3) Penetration, (4) Participation, (5) Integration and (6) Distribution.¹ Here we will analyse the Nepalese situation in the light of these crises.

Identity

Nepal will easily satisfy a vital element of Pye's first condition which is (physical) identity. For slightly more than two centuries, Nepal has been, a sovereign nation state ruled by the Shah dynasty. King Prithvinarayan Shah of Gorkha (1742-1769) gave Nepal a single name and a strong central government. Even before the Shah dynasty came into prominence, Nepal had a long established identity and its history is characterised by antiquity. Centuries before the start of the Christian era Nepal had acquired a distinct territorial entity.

However, Nepal has yet to resolve the psychological aspect of the identity-crisis. Even until recently, the common people of Nepal from the outlying regions, when asked where they were from, named their own local areas rather than the name of the country. This had led foreign observers to think that not all Nepalis identified themselves with Nepal as their country. This state of affairs has, however, slightly changed with the spread of education and also because of the extension of the central government's contact with the people in remote areas. But there still remains the problem of making the educated elite, who are the only hope for the future, identify themselves more with the nation and its problems in psychological and emotional terms.

The modernising political elite had little or no place in the traditional power structure that prevailed in Nepal during the Rana rule. A great majority of the English educated elite, though their number was limited, were absorbed in the Rana bureaucracy and remained indifferent to the movement for liberalisation and democratisation. Only a handful of them who had come under the influence of the Indian nationalist movement provided the hardcore leadership of the 1951 political revolution. The political change, of course, conferred the highest administrative posts and responsibilities on the English educated bureaucratic elite of the Rana period itself and also provided vastly increased job opportunities to the English educated elite in general, all of whom were readily absorbed into the newly created and expanded administrative structure. The English educated bureaucratic elite who had thus acquired a new social status without even having to struggle or compete for it, developed the irresponsible habit of promoting its self-interest in disregard to the larger interests of the society as a whole. This also applied to the military elite and the soldiers.

The educated elite, however, is subject to innumerable pressures because of poverty. And the degradations of poverty can be resisted only through a basic sense of integrity which unfortunately has been found wanting. The relative prosperity of some members of the more fortunate elite has created in them an utter indifference to the principles of social morality. One even wonders whether the level of social consciousness or res-

possibility has suffered a decline. In the old Nepalese society, the individual at least thought beyond himself in terms of the interest of the family, the tribe or the clan whatever the case was. Now the old social ties are fast disappearing but the elite have not been able to forge new social ties in the shape of increased awareness of their responsibility towards the nation.

The modern educated elite has thus neither been able to withstand the strain of poverty nor that of prosperity. They have developed a split mentality which is the worst enemy of national character. Their education in western values has made them 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 neither here nor there. In the present circumstances, people living in the hills, valleys and the Terai plains can be imbued with a sense of identity and national purpose only if the people of those various regions are allowed to participate fully and without discrimination in the political and economic process of modernisation and development.

Legitimacy

Prithvinarayan Shah established modern Nepal by the right of conquest. No wonder that in Nepal, Pye's second point i.e. legitimacy was based on the right of the sword for a long time. The Ranas also claimed to have come to power by the sword following the *Kot* massacre on the night of 14 September, 1846.

The political culture of Nepal had always been characterised by authoritarian tendencies. Both religion and society had reinforced the authoritarian tradition by encouraging blind obedience to autocratic authority. Just as the will of the head of the family was a command for the family under all circumstances, the ruler's word was a law for the country. Nepal was ruled for centuries by a fiat or decree of one strong man or the other. There had always been a persistent emphasis on the merit of military tradition or profession with special stress on unquestioned obedience to superior authority. Consideration for the common people seldom figured in the calculations of the rulers.

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

The concept of legitimacy based on the right of the sword and the familial core of politics suffered a modification only after the revolution of 1951 which abolished the Rana family oligarchy, obtained the Monarch's commitment to constitutional rule and brought the beginnings of democracy to the people. But during the period between 1951 and 1960, constitutional notions and democratic sentiments could not be realised in essence and practice, notwithstanding, the attempt of the modernising political elite to introduce some of the legal and political forms of parliamentary democracy in Nepal. General Elections were held belatedly in 1959 and the first-ever elected government was not allowed to remain in office for more than 18 months. Thus the concept of popular legitimacy based on universal adult suffrage was not spared long enough to gain respect and sanctity. The royal take-over of 15 December 1960, virtually amounted to the restoration of absolute monarchical rule that had prevailed before 1846. The Crown was once again regarded in theory and in practice as the source and the dispenser of executive, legislative and judicial authority.

However, the late King Mahendra was a master tactician and used considerable skill to conceal his real intentions and the true nature of his political system. To present his scheme of politics in an acceptable form, he professed his climate-and-soil theory of government which, though apparently based on an ecological view of the social system, was, in practice, subtly contrived and manipulated to exploit, 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 caution 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

even professed his faith in the concept of popular sovereignty by emphasising in public the principle of decentralisation, without however, making clear whether it actually implied in practice the gradual dimunition of his own royal powers and prerogatives.

He was also never tired of repeating in public, though purely for rhetorical purposes, that his Panchayati System was basically democratic. When for the first time in the Panchayati decade, King Mahendra, in 1963, appointed a cabinet on the recommendation of Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa, he even pretended to hand the power back to the people, as though, he had temporarily held it in trust for them. This concept of holding the power as a trust on behalf of the people is again a traditional Hindu concept of the King's power, which 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 explanation for this would be that the King did not wish to appoint any other Prime Minister in place of Kirtinidhi Bista and preferred to delay the appointment of Prime Minister until after Bista was once again returned unopposed to the Rastriya Panchayat. All in all, King Mahendra sought to retain intact his position as the traditional custodian of absolute authority and the source of all legitimising powers.

Penetration

The process of Hinduisation or Sanskritisation has been a dominant social phenomenon in Nepal and has penetrated into all levels of the Nepali society for many centuries.² Sanskritisation may be characterised as the process of assimilating 'low' caste by making them acquire some of the accepted norms of Hindu culture and religion (*Samskara* and *Dharma*). Some of the sub-clans of the Magar tribe in central Nepal like Bhujal, Budathoki, Mudule Khadga, Thapa, Gharti and Rana and the liquor-consuming tribes of western Nepal (Matwali Chhetris) may have been promoted to the status of the Chhetris through gradual absorption into the superior culture of the "twice born" (*Dvija*). The dominant peasant castes seem to have acquired the

status of Chhetris by gradual stages over a period of years.

The Malla dynasty which ruled Kathmandu Valley from the 13th century until 1768-69 and 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 Sanskritisation of Nepali culture, at least on the official level, if not on a comprehensive popular scale. From the Thakalis in remote central Nepal to the Magars, Gurungs, Rais, 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. As further evidence of the impact of this phenomenon, it may be pointed out that during the Rana period, some of the more pronounced Mongoloid ethnic groups like the Tamangs and Thakalis had applied to the government for initiation into Hindu religious tradition through acceptance of restrictions on beef eating and through the acceptance of Brahmins as priests. The Thakalis are at present claiming connection with the Thakuris by imitating surnames ending in Chand. Some of the lower occupational castes of the Terai like the Teli (oil crushers and dealers), Kalwars (liquour-dealers) and Sundis (liquor distillers) have surreptitiously changed their family names from Sahu or Sah to the Thakuri title Shah and even married Chhetri girls. This shows that the principle of Sanskritisation in a way represented the egalitarian aspect of the caste system and afforded a scope, however limited, for political and economic mobility in the caste hierarchy.

The slow but steady Sanskritisation of the socially unifying links over a period of several centuries had made the multi-communal pattern of life and communication feasible before other visible unifying links appeared upon the scene. The central Himalayan region initially consisted of independent principalities inhabited by diverse ethnic groups. There was no permanent system to regulate their relations. The situation was anarchic in the extreme and defied integrated politics, or even permanent working alliances. The society in each case was based on familial and caste considerations and was extremely

parochial in its outlook. But the process of Sanskritisation gradually paved the way for the unification of the entire area under a single dynasty. The standardisation, however minimal, of social, political and economic norms brought about by the process of Sanskritisation harmonised behaviour and value-patterns to the point of making rationalised interaction between various groups possible. It may be pointed out here that, although some of the aspects of Sanskritisation may be at complete variance with the modern outlook, the experience and knowledge of the working of the Sanskritisation process may be profitably applied in the task of transmitting the new message and method of modernisation to the people and inculcating upon their minds the culture and values consistent with it.

In the modern context, however, the problem of reaching down into the 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 not so far proved themselves as the principal and efficient authorities in actual practice. In such countries, the government's attention is merely confined to raising revenues, maintaining law and order and implementing foreign-aided development projects. Specially, in absence of political parties, the message of modernisation inspiring attitudinal changes, cannot be carried to the people, because it is not possible for the governmental machinery alone to infiltrate ideas into the masses on a wide scale. Only political parties with a network of organisation at the grass-root level can reach all sections of the people and help induce changes in popular attitude.

Again, the wide gap between a handful of educated elite and the masses of the people who are illiterate and steeped in age-old beliefs cannot be reduced unless something is done to arouse political and social consciousness among the people in general. In Nepal, unlike in some other developing countries, the problem is not one of excessive politicisation accompanied by a relatively low pace of institutionalisation, but that of under-politicisation combined with an utter neglect of institutionalisation in all spheres.

Participation

The best way to get the people interested in development is to provide them opportunities to participate in the process of development. In the Nepalese situation, the people at their present stage of development cannot be expected to supply all the policy inputs. The public administrators themselves have to provide the policy inputs in some measure. But, the administrators, consisting entirely of the socially privileged elite, cannot be trusted, in the absence of an adequate level of social consciousness among the people in general and specially in absence of people-oriented political platforms and parties, to discharge their duties with a sense of public accountability,

If modernisation and development are the aims, there is no getting away from creating fully representative political structures both at the national and local levels. However, the non-party Panchayat System as an attempt to rationalise the political process has proved to be a dismal failure, because it has failed to arouse public enthusiasm and promote popular participation both at the local and national levels and for that very reason, has not been able to mobilize support for development on a wide scale.

Although the Panchayat System, at least in theory, provides a structure on a popular base, it had an extremely limited scope for political participation. The total membership of Nepal's national legislature, the Rastriya Panchayat, was 125. It included fifteen nominees of the King. Out of the 109 elected members, ninety members were indirectly elected by fourteen Zonal Assemblies (Anchal Sabha). Fifteen members of Rastriya Panchayat were elected by the officially recognised and controlled class organisations. Four members of the Rastriya Panchayat were elected from the Graduates' Constituency.

The ninety Rastriya Panchayat members, who were elected through the Zonal Assemblies (Anchal Sabhas) were directly elected only by a simple majority of 44 votes (as in the case of Mahakali and Karnali zones) to 121 votes (in the case of the Bagmati Zone). Further, the restrictive electoral regulations enabled the ninety members of Rastriya Panchayat elected directly only by a fraction of a total number of 1018 voters.

The electoral arrangement to have the Zonal Assembly (consisting of the total number of district Panchayats in a particular zone) elect members from each of its districts to Rastriya Panchayat made it possible for a member to represent his district in the national legislature, even with a very little support in his favour.

This method of election was undemocratic insofar as the candidate elected through this process as a representative of a particular district may not always possess a representative character. Further, the procedure for election discriminated against the people in the Terai in two ways : firstly, by allowing the Terai districts with a much larger population the same quota of eleven member representation as that of the hill district Panchayat and secondly, by making it impossible for the Terai candidate to be elected to the Rastriya Panchayat from his own district without the support of the members of the hill district Panchayats in every zone.

The representatives of the class organisations in the Rastriya Panchayat were till recently elected on the basis of Preferential Proportionate Representation by the total strength of the Central Committee of these government controlled class organisations, which, in each case, did not exceed 150 members. In 1972, the electoral colleges for election of members to the Rastriya Panchayat from the class organisations was expanded but, even then, the total number of voters in the case of the Rastriya Panchayat constituency represented by the Peasants' Organisation was increased to only about 800 in the 1972 election.

Despite the limited nature of the franchise, the Graduates' Constituency, composed of about 10,000 college graduates in the country, 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 Proportionate Representation and every college graduate could freely contest the election from this nation-wide constituency.³

Direct elections for the Village (Gaun) and Town (Nagar) Panchayats, although held by a 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 dis-

strict officers of the government, but the 1967 amendment of the Constitution provided for an independent election commission to prepare electoral rolls and to supervise the conduct of elections not only for various Panchayat bodies but also for the different tiers of class organisations. But the capacity of the government to influence the outcome of elections through their officers at various levels did not decline because the Election Commission had, in practice, to seek the assistance of the regular government servants in its work.

Revival of Medieval Autocratic Institutions

The self-same contradiction inherent in a theoretical concept of decentralised political and administrative system and the existence or maintenance in practice of a highly centralised political-cum-administrative structure is highlighted by the attempts to revive the traditional institutions of the old Shah and Rana despotism like *Pajani* (Annual Renewal of Service), *Daudaha* (Inspection Tour Commission) and *Salam* or *Darshan-Bhet* (Direct individual or group audience with the ruler), the parallel of which can be found only in the Moghul administration of India.

The frequency of the changes in the administrative personnel euphemistically described as "administrative reorganisation" was nothing but the revival of traditional practice of *Pajani* or annual renewal of service in a different way. The *Daudaha* (Inspection Tour Commission) was a temporarily appointed body which was sent to an outlying area with wide discretionary powers to inspect all government offices, suspend higher government officials and dismiss subordinate staff. It had powers to hold summary enquiries and trials and dispense quick justice on the basis of on-the-spot investigations. Its judicial authority was similar to that of a District Court (*Zila Adalat*) and it openly entertained petitions for justice. It was also authorised 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. This practice, in its traditional form and spirit was

subtly resuscitated. King Mahendra's much-talked-about tours in the country-side were an example in the point.

In addition to the above mentioned institutions, special tribunals largely reminiscent of the Star Chambers 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 anti-thetical to both the spirit and methods of institutionalisation and modernisation. These practices interfered with the recently established legal and constitutional forms and obstructed the healthy growth of due processes of law and democratic institutions, which were vital to the process of nation-building in the modern sense. The renewal and prevalence of the above traditional practices during the post-1960 era led everyone to believe that what King Mahendra had attempted since 1960 was to institutionalise his personal rule within the Panchayati framework.

Separation of Responsibility from Power— Dyarchy in Operation

No survey of the new administrative set-up in Nepal will be complete without a reference to the dominant policy and decision making role of the Palace secretariat which was not defined anywhere in the law or constitution of the country. The Palace secretariat once again became the nerve-centre of administrative and political structure as during the pre-Rana period (1769-1846). It assumed the same key role and importance as that of the *Bintipatra-Niksari Adda* or the Prime Minister's private office for the disposal of petitions during the time of the all-powerful hereditary Rana Prime Ministers (1846-1950). The Palace secretariat which also included Investigation and Enquiry Centre (*Janch-Bujh Kendra*) functioned 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.

In the Panchayat System, the real power consisting of the control of means (finance) and man-power (service personnel) was vested in the King and the Palace secretariat, whereas the responsibility for policy-making and implementation, though

only apparently, was entrusted to the elected Panchayat bodies and officials. Budget proposals could not be introduced in the national legislature without the prior consent and approval of the King. On the other hand, the responsibility for development and for meeting popular criticism of the policies of the government and the working of the system was placed on the shoulders of the Panchayat bodies at various levels including the Rastriya Panchayat, ironically enough the nation's highest legislature in the words of King Mahendra. The in-camera meetings of the nation's highest legislature made a mockery of popular participation and by concealing legislative activities from full public gaze, prevented the popularly elected legislators from drawing sustenance from the people, who were the main source of their strength. King Mahendra was opposed to political parties as such because he viewed every kind of organised popular force as a threat to the absolute power of Monarchy. It did not bother him that organisation-building was the most important pre-condition of nation-building.

Even in the case of a Village Panchayat election campaign, the absence of political platforms and parties in the partyless Panchayat System, had no significance in terms of political education or socialisation. The annual general meeting of the Gaun Sabha or the *Village Assembly* proved to be nothing more than a routine formality. The root cause of all this was the lack of freedom of political expression and organisation, without which political mobilisation is impossible. Under these circumstances, there can be no meaningful interaction between the polity and the society in the shape of the harmonious inflow and outflow of popular demands and public policies so as to promote a stable and ordered progress of the nation.

King Mahendra's fear of excessive politicisation was understandable in the context of its consequences in some of the other Asian countries but the fact remains that a degree of politicisation is vital to the inculcation of any ideology in the minds of the people including King Mahendra's "Panchayati political philosophy". In the present day Nepalese context, the fear that excessive politicisation may produce insatiable popular demands which in their turn may contribute to a chronic state of anarchy and instability, appears to be as unrealistic as the initial contention of some of the military rulers

and dictators of Asia that political stability which in their eyes merely implied absence of political freedom of expression and organisation was the primary requisite or the pre-condition of economic advance and social security.

The Panchayat System thus failed even to rationalise the administrative machinery by delegating suitable authority to officials at the various levels of the bureaucracy. No transfer of the powers and functions of the office of *Badahakim* to the elected district Panchayats (the office of *Badahakim* was abolished in 1965) as recommended by the 1963 report of the Decentralisation Commission were effected. The powers and functions of the traditional *Badahakims* were assigned to Zonal Commissioners and Assistant Zonal Commissioners. The abolition of the office of *Badahakim* in itself did not answer all questions concerned with the distribution of powers among locally elected and centrally appointed officers of various types.

There was no scope for political decentralisation within the existing framework of the Panchayat System. Political power was entirely concentrated in the hands of the King despite the constitution itself described the Panchayat System as having incorporated the principles of decentralisation. All too often the new procedures or methods of institutionalisation did not appear to be compatible with the traditional Nepal's concepts of authority and responsibility.-

Integration

The problem of integration will become more serious as the demand for equitable allocation of development resources to different regions acquires force. The integration of various geographic regions and ethnic groups in socio-psychological terms may be promoted in future only through implementation of a comprehensive long-term national development plan aiming at the harmonious development of the country as a whole. 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 maximise the interests of all groups. But in Nepal as in most of the transitional countries, the processes of modernisation and industrialisation have not advanced so far as to

create a wide range of specific interests to provide and sustain a differentiated social structure.

The so-called class organisations in Nepal did not represent any specific economic interest and, for this reason, their specific, concrete, political interests were either highly personal demands of individuals or the unyielding and unacceptable demands of distinctive ethnic, religious or other communal groups such as the stand of the Kirantis on the question of the Kipat land. King Mahendra thought that political parties by their very nature were faction-oriented and were, therefore, incompatible with national unity. He intended class organisations as substitutes for parties as a means of mobilising popular energy and putting it to use for nation-building purposes. But unlike political parties, these class organisations could neither aggregate and co-ordinate the diverse interests they represented nor provide an elaborate communications network on a country-wide scale. Professional associations such as the Bar Association, Medical Association, Engineers' Association, Teachers' Association, Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Commerce and Industries representing the modernising elites were also in existence in Nepal for a number of years. But their failure to articulate their interests in a meaningful way hampered the growth of a rationally-based system of interest aggregation. The purpose of political articulation in the transitional societies was not merely to educate and train the electorate to assess public affairs and issues critically but also to instil in the people new values and new outlooks consistent with the needs of modernisation.

Nepal's official abandonment of the path of parliamentary democracy resulted in the revival of authoritarian trends and institutions as manifestations of traditional culture which were apt to hinder the process of modernisation in Nepal. It is only within the framework of what Pye characterises as 'the logic of competitive politics' that both individuals and a society can harmonise elements of modern cosmopolitan world with their own historic sense of individuality. If the transitional societies are to achieve a new level of integration, they must provide representation to both of these forces and for that, representative government becomes absolutely necessary.

Some of the measures, adopted during the Panchayat decade

to promote integration, may be listed as follows : (1) a new legal code abolishing laws based on caste rules and differences, (2) a legal provision to make knowledge of the Nepali language mandatory for citizenship, (3) an attempt to standardise the system of education, (4) the improvement of roads and communication with the help of foreign aid and (5) the introduction of land reforms which were, however, characterised by incoherent conception, ambiguous legislation and inefficient implementation. The standardisation of national symbols including the flag, flower, and the animal, and the patronisation of Nepali songs, dances and dramas at the state level may also be mentioned as symbolic moves to promote national unity and integration.

Distribution

The Central Government in Nepal failed to enforce an equitable distribution of goods and services throughout the society, owing to physical, psychological and historical reasons. For a long time, the vision of the government at Kathmandu did not extend beyond the four walls of the valley. More than one-half of the development budget for a long time continued to be spent on Kathmandu valley and its vicinity. Kathmandu valley alone was treated as Nepal for all practical purposes. During the Rana days, people from the Terai needed a permit from their own government to visit Kathmandu. The lack of roads, transport and communication also posed a handicap to the central government in this respect. The people, therefore, by force of habit, seemed apathetic toward the central government and did not expect prompt action from it to benefit them. Nor were the people politicised enough to formulate their demands upon the central government in an effective manner. The local and national elites continued to come from the traditional old families as in the past and there had been no change in the traditional power structure in the country-side both in the hills and the Terai.

The tentative nature of political experiments over the last twenty years prevented the growth of a rational task oriented administrative machinery. The low morale of the new bureaucratic elite was largely due to their insecurity of tenure. The

absence of a sound, continuing, merit-based administrative apparatus also proved to be the most serious obstacle to the modernisation and development of Nepal. It was regrettable that despite all the talk about development, the most frustrated among the new administrative elite happened to be the technicians—engineers, scientists and other experts—who have spent much time and efforts acquiring their professional skills abroad.

Nepal during the Panchayat decade and ever since 1951 followed a self-consciously nationalistic policy which no doubt enabled it to withstand pressures from outside at times and also brought it greater recognition and prominence in the world. But, as a result of this policy, the people did not gain in terms of increased welfare nor was there any appreciable decrease in Nepal's heavy dependence on foreign aid for development. According to the statistics published by the Government itself, there was no increase either in the per capita income or the annual economic growth rate even after the implementation of the two periodic economic plans during the Panchayat decade. Most of the developmental expenditure during the period was also met out of foreign aid grants. The recruitment of Gorkha soldiers for both the British and the Indian armies continued as in the past.

Nepal is at present ruled by King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, a hereditary monarch, who, ever since his accession to the throne in 1972 has laid considerable stress on development. 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. All this, however, boils down to the political capacity and sagacity to invest the available human and material resources in such a manner as to maximise the total production.

But the institutional and behavioural variables of the production-function deserve notice because economic development is a complex process and cannot be analysed and explained only in strict economic terms. The institutional variable relates pure economic function to the history, culture and value-system of a particular society and the explanation for the failure of the economic plans has to be sought in sociological, psychological

and political terms.

The Nepalese society is in a transitional stage. The extent to which the institutional and behavioural factors affect the course of economic variable over a period of time is a question of considerable importance. Defects in the institutional framework affect the productive function adversely. The ability of the governing elite to maintain stability in any given situation depends on how far the equilibrium disturbing inputs can be controlled and absorbed by the system. The gap between the rising aspirations of the people and the level of actual economic achievement results in frustration which may lead to a discrete change in the institutional framework.

For the purpose of providing Panchayati development cadres for the future, a national system of education oriented toward technology and applied science was introduced in 1973 with considerable emphasis on socialisation into the Panchayati system as its aim. The newly introduced education plan provided for selective admission into the institutes of higher learning (university) on the basis of man-power planning and needs and also for compulsory social service of a voluntary nature 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 together adequate human and material resources to implement them. But the socialisation of the students through this new system of education into the Panchayati culture whatever it may stand for, may prove to be counter-productive to the cause of education in view of the performance of the Panchayat system so far and also in the light of the modern educated elite towards it as indicated by the successive results of elections to the national legislature from the Graduates' Constituency.

Prospects for the Future

Two forces may assist the process of transformation in Nepal; pressures and trends of the emerging world culture which will inevitably carry Nepal along in some fashion, and the feeling of optimism and buoyancy among the Nepali people even in the face of their social and physical deprivations in the past. Backwardness in science and technology has made Nepal and

other developing countries lag behind in the march of progress and also accounts for their stagnation in modern times. Stagnation cannot be avoided without change, and change in basic ideas, ideals and attitudes implies modification or rejection of tradition which always dies hard. Political and psychological motivations common to under-developed countries in general are applicable also in the case of Nepal. There is a desire of new self-conscious nationalism to maintain independence at all costs and to free itself from foreign political or economic dominance, real or imagined. The desire for self-respect, status, and prestige is strong as in other developing countries. Prestige, not economic calculation, has sometimes been the motive force behind the development plans.

Nepal's position on the acceptance of foreign aid and advice for development is to this day characterised by an attitude of ambivalence based on an ambiguity of regard for the donor countries. On the one hand, there is an acceptance of the fact that the technological and intellectual aspects of scientific culture are of universal significance and bear universal application. It is also generally admitted that if Nepal is to get anywhere in this fast-moving world, it must master the tools and techniques of modern progress without delay. On the other hand, there is at the same time an emotional resistance against slavish imitation of others because Nepalis are conscious of their own ancient heritage of civilization and values. Nepal does not want its traditional ethical and philosophical precepts eroded in the name of westernisation or modernisation merely on the imagined pleas of tolerance and equality. But, Nepali tradition in religion, philosophy and culture, which at its best has been characterised by an eclectic spirit of tolerance and understanding in the past, will certainly permit the logic and demonstration of science to correct the archaic, obsolete and superstitious aspects of their religious and social heritage and practices. What is needed to reduce the tension and explosiveness of the process of modernisation in Nepal is a gradual but steady transformation of social structure, of loyalties and values, of methods of government and modes of political participation, of prospects for education, skill acquisition and employment. The mere establishment of the legal and administrative structures of a modern government like the government secretariat, the legisla-

ture and the court-system is never enough. They must be related to political processes that would make them responsive to political forces in the society.

Aid from the developed countries specially from the western countries is concentrated on the improvement of the quality of administrative machinery and its personnel with an eye to successful implementation of development projects. 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 Nepal has neither effective administration nor bases for stable political processes.

There should be a greater realisation on the part of Nepal that the benefits of revolution brought about by science and technology in the world cannot be, without a major shock or explosion, assimilated into a traditional society unless some other liberal and human elements of world culture are meanwhile introduced into it. Respect for the dignity of man and rule of law, majority-rule, direct elections on the basis of universal adult suffrage are not just features of western civilisation but have been accepted as elements of any developed system of polity and culture in today's world. Economic or technological development cannot take place in a vacuum. Such developments presuppose a certain level of political freedom and culture.

References

- 1 See Lucian W Pye, *Aspects of Political Development*, Little Brown & Co., Boston, 1966, 62-66.
- 2 For the concept of 'Sanskritisation' see M N Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, University of California, Berkely, 1966. 6.
- 3 For details of Graduate Constituency elections see Lok Raj Baral's contribution in the present volume—Editor.

Intellectual Foundations of Monocracy

P C MATHUR

The new states' quest for "suitable political forms" has revived interest in Montesequeian concerns regarding ecology of democracy. Are there certain specific climatological, topographical or ideological correlates or pre-requisites of democracy? Can democracy work in all types of climates and all types of societies or is democracy uniquely associated with specific socio-physical, environmental constraints? Is democracy a product of a given pattern of historical change which is non-repetitive as well as non-replicable? Can democracy be "imported" or "introduced" into political cultures which have not experienced the developmental crises handled by certain countries of Western Europe during a specific period of time? Are the non-Western societies "incapable" of understanding and/or operating Western-style democratic political systems? Is it "desirable" on part of the now-developing polities of Asia and Africa to imitate Western democratic model?

With the dismantling of European overseas empires in Afro-Asia, a new set of answers to these questions has begun to emerge which not only reject the well-established Euro-American norms of democracy but also rebuke the "indigenous" intellectual tradition developed during the era of Afro-Asian resurgence when the Afro-Asian leaders were trying to secure political freedom from imperial domination. The Afro-Asian elites' innate belief in the suitability of the Western-style political structures was, for example, reflected in the first-generation post-Independence constitutions adopted by the ex-colonies which, in most cases, were prepared under the direct inspiration of Western constitutional experts.

The constitutional consensus generated during the era of the anti-imperial struggle did not, however, last very long as most ex-colonies plunged into a series of crises soon after attaining freedom. Even in case of countries which continued to operate

the first-generation constitutions, the utility of the Western political systems began to be questioned in terms of their compatibility with the indigenous physical conditions and political traditions. Taking the specific example of South Asia, while the political elites of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Burma had gladly adopted the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy in their respective constitutions just after gaining freedom, the imported models were either discarded or drastically modified within a few years. What is more important, the consensus regarding the suitability of Western models of political development began to wither under sustained assault from a variety of quarters. In other words, while the leaders belonging to the freedom struggle era had, by and large, taken for granted the possibilities of institutionalisation of Euro-American political systems their successors reopened the issue of their compatibility with the "genius" of the non-Western peoples.

Nepal furnishes an excellent case for in depth-study of the motivational foundations of a contemporary Afro-Asian elite with regard to adoption or rejection of Euro-American political models. As it is wellknown, Nepal was one of the few countries in Asia and Africa which escaped direct Western imperial rule and, hence, its political elite had lesser opportunities for internalisation of Euro-American political norms.¹ Yet, a powerful movement emerged in Nepal demanding political innovations and at one time it seemed as if Nepal was well-set on a path of political development which was likely to result in the ushering in of Westminster-style parliamentary government. However, within less than a decade of introduction of rudiments of parliamentary democracy, the politics of Nepal took a sharp turn. The newly-introduced political apparatus was swept away and replaced by a political system in which "democracy"—the centre-piece of Euro-American political life—is conspicuous not only by its absence but by the systematic attempts being made by the Nepali power-elite to demonstrate the intrinsic "unsuitability" or "incompatibility" of democracy for Nepal.²

The analysis here is not addressed to the "actual" or "objective" reasons for the demise of parliamentary democracy in Nepal ; nor an attempt is being made to evaluate the validity and/or replicability of the arguments advanced by the Nepalis

elite to justify the abrogation of parliamentary institutions and short-circuiting of the democratic processes. The objective here is limited to an elucidation of the intellectual bases on which the Nepalis power-elite are trying to build their case against the re-introduction of parliamentary democracy and justifying the consolidation of a monocratic regime in terms of its compatibility with the needs and conditions of Nepal and the Nepalis.

Post-Rana Political Developments

Before delving into the content-analysis of the pattern of the anti-democratic ideas of the Nepalis power-elite it may be useful to recapitulate the recent history of political developments in Nepal. Nepal, a small landlocked country situated on the northern border of India and sandwiched between India and China, acquired its present political domain only in 1768 when Prithvi Narayan Shah carried out what Organski would characterise as "primitive unification" and established the Shah dynasty to which the current monarch, King Birendra Vikram Shah, belongs. The unbroken reign of the Shah dynasty in Nepal, however, does not mean that all Nepalis kings have exercised autocratic powers like other Asian monarchs in the 18th or 19th century. The Nepalis kings were, in fact, little more than prisoners during the hundred year period of 1846-1950 when the effective authority had passed into the hands of the Rana Prime Ministers who kept the successive Kings confined to the royal palace and effectively ruled the country. While palace intrigues were quite common in all Asian ruling circles, the Nepalese case of the century-long usurpation of the King's effective power by the Rana nobility is comparable only to the fate of the Japanese monarchy under the Tokugawa Shogunate before the restoration of 1868.

The Nepalese monarchy was liberated from the tutelage of the Rana polity in 1950-51 but, unlike the Japanese case where at the time of "Restoration" the Western concepts or institutions of democracy were unknown, the liberation of the Nepalese monarchy was accompanied by the hope that in post-Rana Nepal would be launched upon a course of democratic political development utilising the constitutional form of a

parliamentary government and institutional mechanisms of a stable party system.³ Both these expectations were, however, belied soon⁴ and the Nepali Kings started playing a dominant role in the political and governmental affairs. This ultimately led to what has been described as a 'royal take-over', in December 1960, when King Mahendra removed the Koirala Government, which was enjoying a clear majority in the Parliament, banned all political parties, arrested the key political leaders and outlawed political activities. The dethroned Nepali democrats tried to oppose the royal 'take-over'. However their movement inside Nepal was efficiently suppressed and, while their efforts to topple the royal regime from outside met with partial success for some time, the Nepali exiles' activities were also effectively curbed in the wake of certain political developments in the external environment of Nepal in 1962.

The establishment of a monocratic form of government in Nepal in which the King is the fountainhead of all authority is, thus, a puzzling phenomenon specially from the point of view of students of political legitimacy because the monocratic Kings of Nepal do not wield either 'Traditional' or 'Legal-Rational' authority in the familiar Max Weberian classification of types of authority. A certain amount of 'charisma' is, no doubt, attached to every Shah ruler of Nepal, but the fact of dynastic charisma is not very useful in explaining the tremendous centralisation of power effected by the Kings whose fore-fathers had been virtual prisoners, totally isolated from the craft of *mach-politics*. In the absence of detailed monographic studies of the Nepalese domestic politics carried out by the Nepali scholars themselves, it is really difficult to identify the authority-bases of Monarchy in Nepal and all estimates about the degree of the routinisation or institutionalisation of the royal monarchy are likely to be biased. An attempt to understand the authority structure in Nepal can, however, be made by analysing the intellectual explanations and/or rationalisations offered by the Kings themselves personally or by their admirers and supporters in order to justify the existing political system and criticise all other types of political systems which are canvassed as possible alternatives to the current political system.

Categories of Arguments

The Nepali power-elite and intellectuals have advanced a variety of reasons to support the prevailing pattern of political governance and to characterise any other political model, specially the Western democratic model, as inherently unsuitable for Nepal. For purposes of analytical convenience these can be clubbed under four major heads as follows : In the first place, there are certain propositions which refer to the existential parameters—location, size, topography etc—of Nepal and imply that they are either totally different from the conditions in which democracy grew or operates in the West or they pose insurmountable barriers in the way of the smooth working of a decentralisation-oriented political system. Secondly, one comes across propositions which refer to the structural parameters of the Nepalese society and assert that the Western-style democracy is unknown and/or alien to the “Nepalese way of life”. A third category of propositions and arguments relates to the institutional parameters of Monarchy in Nepal and asserts that not only the political culture of Nepal has been monarchical in all its history, but the Shah dynasty in general and King Tribhuvan and King Mahendra in particular have played a notable role in the welfare of the people and advancement of the Nepalese society ; and, finally, one finds a number of statements which emphasise the domestic failures and fragilities of democratic political institutions and the external pressures and compulsions under which Nepal has to solve its problems of identity and independent existence.

Before undertaking a detailed analysis of the various types of arguments and propositions mentioned above, it may be appropriate to note that the basic necessity for choosing a political system of one's 'own' choice has been taken for granted by the Nepali kings and their intellectual apologists. The latter have, in fact, dubbed the parliamentary system of government as an “institutional hangover of colonialism” which was not destined to last : “From Indonesia to Pakistan, along the sweep of the Middle-East and from Zanzibar to Ghana, in a monotonous succession, parliamentary democracy has been tried and rejected”, note these anonymous apologists and add that “In the wide expanse of South America few are the states which

have opted for and managed to maintain their option for the model of American Democracy".⁵ Not being content to cite examples from Asia, Africa and South America, they boldly refer to one of the most wellknown Western democracies and assert that "France herself, highly developed and with long years of the essence of Western civilization behind her, has cancelled her connection with this political heritage"⁶. The Nepali Kings themselves have not taken such a forthright stand on the world-wide failure of democracy and, indeed, King Mahendra went out of the way to offer a sort of apology for the failure of parliamentary government in Nepal to Queen Elizabeth in the following words :

Although, on account of many and diverse errors and shortcomings, my desire to work out a strong and unalloyed form of parliamentary democracy for the betterment of my kingdom could not be a success at the moment, I am still firm in my earlier belief that your experiences in the development and working of your institutions can be and are of great value to us.⁷

This speech must, however, be regarded as a formal window-dressing because in other speeches delivered on the occasion of visits of other Heads of the States and Governments, specially the President or Prime Minister of India, King Mahendra always emphasised Nepal's right to evolve a distinctive political system which was appropriate to its needs and circumstances.

The case for the necessity of Nepal evolving its own political system does not rest mainly on the proposition that the alien political systems have failed or are failing elsewhere, but is also buttressed by the argument that the Nepali advocates for adoption of such political systems as parliamentary democracy have not paid due attention to the actual conditions prevailing in Nepal and their advocacy for importing this or that system is based on uncritical acceptance of theories and political concepts which have no relevance for Nepal. This argument, as we shall see later, acquires an exceptional potency in the case of Nepal because most of the proponents of parliamentary democracy were politically baptized in India and some of them are still operating from bases in India. Hence, many arguments

and propositions regarding the alleged weaknesses and handicaps of Western-style parliamentary government in the Nepalese context acquire a special meaning because, in the Nepalese perceptions, India is trying to operate a Western-style parliamentary form of government since 1947. The nature and form of the Indian system are, no doubt, a matter of considerable debate in India, but the Nepali kings and the royalist critics of parliamentary democracy evidently regard the Indian political system to be a form of parliamentary democracy and their intellectual conviction in this regard is fully reflected in their critiques of parliamentary democracy which they tend to portray as an Indian rather than as a Western product. The authors of the 'Panchayat' study (n. 5) even quote an Indian scholar—Anirudha Gupta—in support of their contention that most proponents of the parliamentary democracy in Nepal had been out of touch with the realities of the situation in Nepal and add that: "Even the most distinguished of these leaders (a reference to B P Koirala ?) ... failed to allow for their ignorance of the objective situation in Nepal. Their measures and intentions were born of the logic that what suits India suits all countries"⁸...

One of the most important intellectual foundations for the Nepali monarchs' prejudice against a particular form of political system, thus, emanates, paradoxically, not from any ill-will against parliamentary democracy as such but from their perception of the Indian political system as a form of parliamentary government and their apprehension that while Monarchy may be compatible with parliamentary government it may not be so with *monocracy* or untrammelled exercise of power by one person.

Ecological Suitability

The Nepali royalists' case against the ecological suitability of democracy or parliamentary government contains numerous references to Nepal's geo-physical condition such as size, location, topography, physical differentiation and fragmentation but the correlations between the physico-territorial parameters and socio-political system obtaining in Nepal are never spelled out with precision or clarity. In fact, the references to the geo-

physical conditions of Nepal are invariably mixed up with references to socio-cultural factors such as the type of Nepalese society and the cultural values of the Nepali people. Defending the system of Panchayat Democracy, thus, King Mahendra in a speech on 13 April 1962 observed :

Our country with its numerous hills and mountains and streams and rivers has developed its culture and civilisation within the framework of the Panchayat system. The meeting of the Panchas in order to give the final verdict on the disputed points of our many social and religious customs is even now a common practice in our country ... The times demand that the Nepalese people once more adopt and implement the Panchayat System because only a democracy growing *naturally* out of this system can be understood by the people. The parliamentary system of democracy proved to be out of tune with the natural genius of the people.⁹

While one may grant the proposition that the "meeting of Panchas" has been and, to some extent, is even today an important device for dispute settlement in Nepal, one can only wonder as to whether the use of the term "naturally" in the foregoing quotation implies that King Mahendra is trying to assert that nature or natural phenomenon like numerous hills and mountains and streams and rivers have been responsible for shaping the genius of the Nepali people in such a way that it can understand only the Panchayat System and "proved" to be out of time with the parliamentary system.

A careful reading of King Mahendra's speeches etc further buttresses the conclusion that the royalists do not rest their case on pure geo-physical determinism, but tend to utilize Nepal's geo-physical compulsions as a factor supporting their advocacy of a highly centralised political system in order to cope with Nepal's problems of ensuring internal integration and independent international existence. Thus, Nepal's small size, landlocked situation and location between two very large countries (India and China) are invariably mentioned in King Mahendra's speeches as factors necessitating the concentration of political authority in the institution of Monarchy. The "necessitarian" rather than "deterministic" nature of the argu-

ment can be discerned from the following extract from the *Panchayat* study which defends the royal takeover of the reins of authority :

“Landlocked and lying at the watershed of the two civilisations of China and India, Nepal’s history has always been sensitive to the course of events in the north and south. The opening of the country unleashed the winds of international diplomacy. It had become clear that Nepal could not enjoy the luxury of political instability. A firm and positive policy of non-alignment *demanded* stable governments and lasting ministries with consistent policies” (italics supplied).¹⁰

This passage implies that Nepal’s geo-physical parameters (small, size, landlocked situation, location between two large neighbours and sudden termination of century-old isolation) required a specific type of policy-makers and or ruling elite to cope with the external forces and powers and it also asserts that this ‘requisite’ could not be generated by a political system which was characterised by frequent changes in the government personnel. The royalists in Nepal do not argue that Nepalese ecology *per se* determines the nature of the polity, but they certainly believe that Nepal’s geo-physical location requires a stable and strong government to cope with the foreign policy problems.

One intriguing feature of the royalists’ advocacy of Monarchy in Nepal is the constant emphasis on the smallness of the country and the need for a strong centre to maintain national unity. Thus, while taking over the reins of government, King Mahendra spoke of a situation which was likely to “have the effect of imperilling the national unity”.¹¹ He subsequently emphasised the integrative role of Monarchy very frequently. The concern with the problems of national unity and territorial integrity of a small country like Nepal is explicable only in terms of the intellectual perceptions of the Nepali rulers regarding the dangerous consequences of political decentralisation in the territories adjoining India and China and is, thus, at once a political challenge to nation-building in Nepal rather than an invariant corollary of the territorial size of the country which renders Nepal unsuitable for democratic decentralisation of authority.

Structural Barriers and Monarchy's Unifying Role

While the ecological arguments against the adoption of a democratic or parliamentary form of government remain unclear and indirect in the royalists' case, the arguments relating to the structural barriers or sociological handicaps are marshalled with greater clarity as well as greater frequency. On numerous occasions King Mahendra hammered upon the nature and structure of the Nepalese society as imparting a distinctive quality to the "Nepalese way of life" and ruling out all possibilities of importing, imitating or imposing a western-style political system in Nepal. The intellectual premises of this theme have been spelled out with greater details by the authors of the *Panchayat* study who have emphasised that the communitarian pattern of the Nepalese society and organic character of the loyalties of the Nepali people are totally unsuited for Western-style political systems which work well only in an individual-centred environment in which 'community' no longer provides a viable fulcrum for social existence. Analysing the varying patterns of individual-state relations (an issue which lies at the heart of all political analyses, especially post-medieval Euro-American political philosophy) the authors of this study assert that 'liberal democracy' as well as 'communist democracy' are unsuitable for Nepal because they fail to establish the right balance between the former's tendency to exalt the individual *vis-a-vis* the state and the latter's tendency to dehumanise the individual under an all-pervading state.¹² The real issue in the context of the Nepalese society, it is argued, is not to make a choice between "rootless individualism" and "dehumanized statism" but to evolve a political system which is appropriate for the communitarian society of Nepal in which an individual is not a socio-political isolate but intermeshed in a web of cellular and pyramidal relationships.

Although the 'Panchayat' study nowhere makes a reference to Jaya Prakash Narayan's well-known 'plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity', the logical structure of the argument developed in this study bears a close resemblance to Jaya Prakash's thesis which has been subjected to academic analysis by several critics and, on the whole, this thesis has found very little support in the Indian context either from the academic scholars or the

ruling elite.¹³ With all the prestige that Mahatma Gandhi's name can give to it, Panchayati Raj in India bears very little resemblance to a political order consisting of small-scale and self-sufficient village communities and the Nepali royalists' assertion the Panchayat Democracy in Nepal would resolve the political philosopher's age-old quest for optimization of individual-state relationships seems to be an exercise in intellectual utopia rather than an empirical demonstration of the political compulsions of Nepalese social traditions.

These traditions emphasise the special and unique role of Monarchy in the Nepalese life. Nepal's population throughout its known history has been overwhelmingly dominated by adherents of Hinduism. The theological and theoretical imponderables of treating Hinduism as a "religion" notwithstanding, the royalists' claim that Nepal is the only "Hindu State" in the world and that the religious tenets of Hinduism prescribe that Nepal should be not only a Hindu state but a Hindu Kingdom as well. They, however, hasten to add (motivated, perhaps by their intellectual anxiety to differentiate Nepal from India which is also overwhelmingly populated by Hindus but makes no claim to be a Hindu State) that the Nepalese Monarchy is not merely a Hindu Monarchy but has made special contributions to political and social developments in Nepal and is characterised by certain features and traditions which are specific to Nepal.

Reviewing the vast literature on 'Hindu Polity' or 'Hindu Political Thought' the authors of the *Panchayat Study* maintain that "the theories of state that emerged in the civilisation of the subcontinent grew up in a deeply religious atmosphere".¹⁴ They proceed to argue that the ancient Indian philosophers never adopted a rigid or ritualistic interpretation of Hinduism but rather propagated a meritocratic, universalistic and relativistic code of conduct which is even today relevant for meeting the contemporary adaptability or suitability of Hinduism as a basis for the Nepalese state, the authors of this study observe that

the weight of Hindu tradition is firmly on the side of monarchic sovereignty (in so far as we can relate Hindu tradition to this concept) in making the King divine and in permitting him the discretion for the re-interpretation (of Hinduism keeping in view the needs of the time).¹⁵

The current dominance of Monarchy in political affairs of Nepal is, thus, justified in terms of contemporary relevance of ancient Hindu religious tenets in the sense that the traditional concept of kingship in Hinduism was that of duty-bound kingship i.e. the king was not an autocrat but was only one of the several inter-dependent organs of the state which was itself subordinate to the "Dharma" and Dharmic injunctions of Hinduism.

The philosophical arguments based on concepts like "monarchic sovereignty" and "duty-bound kingship" are supplemented by the royalists by reference to concrete socio-economic and political circumstances in Nepal in which Monarchy acquired its present status. The authors of the *Panchayat* Study, thus argue that kingship in Nepal is not a class-bound institution because, while bourgeois or feudal developments in Nepal are as yet in a stage of infancy, the Nepalese Monarchy does not represent the single most powerful class in the Nepalese society viz the landed aristocracy which monopolised all the political authority during the regime of Rana prime ministers, and hence, when King Tribhuvan overthrew the Rana yoke he emerged as a champion of masses rather than acting as a symbol or agent of vested interests.

The theme of a 'natural alliance' or 'coincidence of interests' between the King and the people of Nepal recurs in almost every speech delivered by King Mahendra who not only argued that the Nepalese Monarchy is people-oriented but also made several references to the role played by his father, King Tribhuvan, in ushering in an era of democracy in Nepal. Thus, in a message to the Nepali people on the occasion of passing away of his father, King Mahendra referred to King Tribhuvan's conviction that "the general masses of Nepal are bent upon adopting the democratic system of governance" and added that "he, albeit secretly, lent his cooperation and blessings towards this end—events since 1940 bear testimony to them".¹⁶ Again, on 18 February 1957 King Mahendra asserted that "Democracy has been ushered in through the joint efforts and sacrifices of my father of blessed memory and untold number of martyrs".¹⁷ According to Dr RS Chauhan's analysis, one of the major reasons for King Mahendra's dismissal of BP Koirala's government in 1960 was the latter's reported declaration that "If I

come to power I will put too things in the Nepalese Museum—the Crown and the idol of Pashupatinath” and the King’s counter-belief that Monarchy’s right to rule could not be questioned and that Monarchy “had not led the revolution to hand over the reins of power to others”.¹⁸

Another important intellectual premise of the royalists’ case for royal monopoly in political affairs derives from the fact that the King of Nepal is not merely a political office-holder but is also traditionally regarded as the head of the Gorkha family. Since the present-day boundaries of Nepal are largely the creation of the Shah dynasty, which originated in Gorkha, this enables the royalists to relate Monarchy to Nepal and justify its existence in terms of Nepalese history in addition to the philosophical rationalisations derived from ancient Indian literature. The authors of the *Panchayat* Study, thus, assert that “...although Nepalese monarchy is a Hindu one it is more specifically on the Nepalese tradition of the Shah dynasty, that it is based” and conclude that “...nationalism and monarchy are intimately branded together in Nepal”.¹⁹ In a pamphlet entitled ‘The Shah Kings of Nepal’, Chitta Ranjan Nepali further elaborates this linkage between Nepal’s national identity and Shah dynasty by observing that “Not once or twice but several times in her long and chequered history, Nepal had to face up and surmount razor-sharp crises meaning her independent existence” and adding that “that Nepal could hold high the banner of independence during those critical days was largely due to the wise and statesman-like leadership and guidance provided by the Crown”.²⁰

Finally, a mention must be made of a note struck by King Mahendra in his 14 January 1965 message of good wishes to the Hindu Cultural Rally organised by the RSS at Nagpur which sought to justify the existence of the Nepalese Monarchy in terms of a pan-Hindu appeal in the following words :

The awakening of the most refined Hindu force of irresistible potency based on a renewed passion for altruistic and spiritual attainments is the leading demand of the day...Even today, we Hindus are best fitted to live such exemplary lives and make the ideal of world brotherhood a reality. Nepal is, therefore, proud of the fact that she has the fortune of

presenting herself as a Hindu kingdom. Nepal is conscious that Hindus all over the world feel joy and glory to find in Nepal an independent and sovereign Hindu kingdom.

Weaknesses of the Political Parties

The case for the King's monarchy in Nepal, in the ultimate analysis, does not rest on special features of philosophical, sociological or historical traditions of Nepal, but is mainly founded upon the weaknesses of the political parties in general during 1950-60 and the failure of the major democracy-oriented political party viz Nepali Congress, in particular, to legitimise and institutionalise parliamentary form of government during the brief spell of its unquestioned political dominance in 1959-60. King Mahendra's speeches (including some speeches dating to the era when he was only a Crown Prince) are replete with scathing criticisms of the various political parties and key personalities associated with them and all such critiques are invariably accompanied by a reference to the ultimate responsibility of Monarchy to take charge of the national affairs in the interest of the country.

Thus, as early as 18 September 1951, HRH Crown Prince Mahendra issued a statement denying certain rumours regarding his anti-King inclinations and also used this opportunity to castigate Nepalese political parties in broad and sweeping terms:

In Nepal today, parties are having mushroom growths. It has become a commonplace here for one party to be organised this day and be split up on the very next. From the third day such parties would forget all about their aims and objectives and would be flinging mud at one another.²²

That King Mahendra's party-phobia outlasted the anger generated by the circumstances immediately connected with the foregoing statement is evident from his bitter castigation of the activities of the political parties in his speech to a conference of social and political organisations called by him on 8 May 1955 :

Before this conference I would repeat a remark that I have often made, e.g., four years have passed since democracy

was brought in by the joint efforts of us all. During this period the government has been run by several cabinets of ministers from several political parties turn by turn and the number of such ministers are now about thirty. Homogenous cabinets of one single-party, coalition cabinet and counsellors' government were formed and in between Advisory Councils were also brought into being. The balance sheet of profit and loss to the people from these experiments is before the people...When every new cabinet was formed for the first two or three months they would call themselves new in the field, then would follow two or three months of bickerings and in the following two or three months deliberations for the dissolution of the Cabinet would go on... concrete achievements could not ensue from such a state of affairs.²³

King Mahendra reiterated his view that Nepal was in a political mess in a speech on 30 January 1960 after having undertaken personal visits to several remote corners of Nepal and issued a warning that unless remedial action was taken he would be "constrained" to take "whatever step that may be necessary and at whatever cost" to perform his duties and responsibilities which he enumerated as follows :

to maintain the sovereignty of the country, to maintain the national integrity : to improve our relations with other countries ; to initiate actions oriented to the public good.²⁴

In the proclamation dissolving the Koirala cabinet and the parliament, King Mahendra clearly alluded to this and other similar warnings and reiterated that he had "assumed unto ourselves the entire administration of the country" because "ours is the ultimate responsibility for protecting national unity, nationality and sovereignty, maintaining law and order, and for saving the country from the critical situation facing it".²⁵

King Mahendra's speeches delivered after the royal 'take-over' of 15 December 1960 constitute a continuing indictment of the Nepalese political parties in general and the policies as well as activities of the Koirala government in particular. Thus

on 5 January 1961, he delivered a long 'message' to the people in which he pointed out that "though, during the interim period, we ourselves would have assumed the reins of administration, we gave the opportunity to the prominent leaders of almost all the wellknown parties to carry on the administration in a democratic manner" and added that "during this period of eight years, no tangible progress was made nor could an atmosphere conducive to democracy be created".²⁶ Referring to the Nepali Congress Government, the King elaborated a Charter of mis-management which is well worth reproduction in full because, no full-length academic analysis of the achievements and failures of the Koirala government has appeared so far.²⁷ King Mahendra stated :

This Government being an elected one, it was only natural that it would have more powers than its predecessors. It received assistance from friendly governments in plenty. It had before it the experience of the last eight years as a lesson. In spite of all this, the ministry constituted after the election failed even in maintaining law and order, which is the primary task of every civilised government. It is wellknown that as a result of the arbitrary steps taken in the name of reorganisation and improvement of the administrative system, the administration virtually came to a standstill. The difficulties and hardships of the people remained unresolved. The Ministry did not pay any attention to the miserable and poverty stricken conditions of the people. On the contrary, an atmosphere of uncertainty and instability was created in the country on account of abuse of power and the lack of a spirit of mutual trust and cooperation even among the ministers. Those at the highest level were found involved in bribery and corruption. Communalism, regionalism and other anti-social and anti-national elements acquired an ascendancy in the affairs of the country, as a result of which not only the peace and tranquility of the country was disrupted at the roots but a direct threat to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation was posed.²⁸

Whatever might be the verdict of scholars regarding the truth or otherwise of this formidable charge-sheet against the

Koirala government the fact remains that in King Mahendra's intellectual make-up 'political parties' came to acquire the position of chief villain and he left no opportunity to castigate them in round terms. Thus on 18 February 1961, he declared : "...It has been hence proved that the previous government was run by a few self-seeking individuals who, in the name of democracy, flouted the interests and aspirations of the people and did not even hesitate to imperil national unity, solidarity and sovereignty".²⁹ With the passage of time, a new positive theme began to dominate the King's speeches viz emphasis on the virtues and achievements of the Panchayat Democracy but he continued to harp on the theme of the toxic effects of political parties' domination of political system. Thus, addressing a conference of Intellectuals in June 1962 the King delivered a blistering attack on the Nepalese political parties in the following words :

...The party system initiated in 1951 failed to bring into existence the vital feelings of national unity and solidarity among us Nepalese even in ten long years... efforts were made to divide the Nepalese people into various political parties under the label of various political ideologies...all that happened was that from time to time united fronts were formed by some parties with the design of destroying the other parties and then even these united fronts would liquidate themselves as a result of dissensions among themselves. Not only that, no single party showed a capacity for maintaining its unity and thus parallel parties would spring up. The net result was that the people were at a loss to understand the very motives and purposes of the political parties.³⁰

On 30 August 1964, while issuing certain directives to the Council of Ministers, the King remarked that

the present day world is changing at an ever-accelerating rate and Nepal cannot retain her independent entity without keeping pace with it. For this, Nepal must telescope two centuries of progress within a decade or so. Ten years of parliamentary democracy in Nepal achieved approximately less than two per cent per annum during the same period.³¹

The royalists' case against the political parties is, however,

not based merely on concrete "breakdown" or "decay" of the Nepalese party system. The most glaring defect or deficiency of the Nepalese political parties in general and the Nepali Congress in particular was viewed to be the obsession with foreign theories and orientation towards countries other than Nepal. The fact that the roots of the Nepalese party system lay in a country other than Nepal is, of course, wellknown. In the circumstances prevailing during the Rana regime political activities were ruthlessly suppressed and politically conscious Nepali leaders had no choice but to operate from outside Nepal rather than trying to oppose the repressive Rana regime from inside the territorial limits of Nepal. In the process these Nepali leaders also imbibed some of the political norms and beliefs of the political leaders of the country where they had found political sanctuary. The extent of political socialisation of the Nepali leaders was slightly greater than is usually the case with most political refugees because the 'host' country concerned was not a far-away land but Nepal's next-door neighbour, India. This fact not only helped the Nepali exiles to sustain their struggle but also strengthened their conviction that the political values and institutions cherished by the Indian political leaders were also relevant and replicable in Nepal. The Nepali royalists, however, do not agree and the attempt of these Nepali exiles to create a India-type political system when they returned to Nepal after the fall of Ranas in 1950, singled them out as the major opponents of the King's attempt to create a royal hegemony in the Nepalese polity. The fact that after the royal take-over of 15 December 1960 some of the key Nepali leaders once again sought asylum in the Indian territory and began to launch anti-King activities from their bases inside India provided fuel to the fire and not only made King Mahendra brand them as "anti-national" on many occasions but forced him to raise the issue of the activities of these exiles with the Government of India from time to time.

Whatever might be the inter-state dimensions of the India-based Nepali exiles' anti-King activities, there is no doubt that this has provided a very handy intellectual theme for the royalists to characterise the case for democracy or restoration of parliamentary government as an example of "imitative idealism", which is based upon a blind reliance upon foreign 'isms'

which do not suit the 'genius' and 'traditions' of Nepal. Thus, on 13 April 1961, King Mahendra declared that

For us, the vital question is the question of national development, not the question of the superiority or inferiority of any 'isms' or ideology based on pure theories. We have to solve our problems in our own way and accomplish the development of our country. We are all fed up with the devastations wrought in our national life by blindly copying 'isms'.³²

Analysing the depth of political penetration of the India-based political leaders, the authors of the *Panchayat* study state that

...The root of the trouble lay in the obsession of the political leaders with the institutions of liberal democracy. The polished paraphernalia of parliamentary rule, the peculiar joys of party infighting seduced these leaders. They were educated in and inspired by the mainstream of British socialist thought as accepted and interpreted by the Indians.³³

The foregoing series of quotations reveal the structure of the intellectual logic of the royalists: The Nepali political leaders during their stay in India had imbibed a fascination for the theory of liberal democracy and its institutional form of parliamentary government but on account of their physical and political isolation from Nepal, could not care to examine the issue of the suitability of these theories and practices in Nepal; their uncritical endorsement of ideas and ideals derived from a foreign country led to a series of political crises. This necessitated the royal takeover of political management of Nepalese affairs in consonance with the objective conditions of Nepal.

The royalists case, however, received a greater intellectual impetus when some of the political leaders who had been dismissed from office and against whom the King had launched a series of repressive policies, re-entered India and tried to topple the King from his newly-acquired position of political ascendancy. At this stage the King's anti-India and anti-democracy stances began to merge and the King's arguments against the

activities of these exiles began to take the form of a justification for Monarchy-dominated Panchayat democracy :

... When all the people of Nepal are straining every nerve for the success of this new order, there are still certain self-exiled elements who are trying to undermine the cause of the country from the foreign soil. Basing themselves on foreign soil, these elements are still bent upon deceiving their own country and countrymen and are still trying to act against the interest of their country and countrymen with an unabashed partiality for all sorts of distortions.³⁴

King Mahendra reiterated this theme in successive speeches on, 13 January 1962 (at Rangeli), 15 January 1962 (at Jhapa), 16 January 1962 (at Chandra Garhi), 16 January 1962 (at Janakpur), 17 January 1962 (at Jaleswar), 19 January 1962 (at Birgunj) and 2 February 1962 (at Kathmandu).³⁵ While the King's condemnation of the exiles' activities is understandable, one can detect in all these speeches an intellectual conviction of debateable credibility, that the exiles have been emboldened on account of the tacit support lent to them by the Government of India and this even comes out clearly in his Jaleswar speech wherein he remarked : "Our Nepal can never go to ruins by the wicked attempts of those who seek to harm their own motherland from the motherland of others. This is not the Nepal of 1951 : this is the Nepal of 1962".³⁶ The reference to "Nepal of 1962" not being the "Nepal of 1951" reveals the King's anxiety about the repetition of the events of 1951 wherein India is generally regarded as having played a pivotal role in toppling the Rana autocracy.

External Environment

Reeling under the unexpected blow of the Chinese military invasion into NEFA—a territory politically and strategically close to the Himalayan Kingdoms of Bhutan, and Nepal—the Government of India moved swiftly to check the Nepali exiles' (anti-King) activities and this provided further intellectual grist to the royalist mill in Nepal. What should have been normally regarded as a typical act of *real politik* and diplomatic fence-

mending, was presented by the King and his supporters as an endorsement on India's part, of the political system working in Nepal under the monarchical hegemony. Thus, in a speech on 11 June 1963, King Mahendra observed that

*Today. India too has shown a proper understanding of our stainless objectives and a concordant change in the direction of friendship and cordiality towards us. And those evil-doers who deserted their own country and subsequently tried to harm it have been dazed and driven to a reconsideration of their ill-conceived policy.*³⁷

The Sino-Indian conflict, thus, removed an important irritant in the domestic political structure of Nepal because the legitimacy of the royal 'takeover' had been considerably eroded by the public statements of disapproval of this step by the Indian Prime Minister, who had now to accommodate the sentiments of the Nepali royalists and put a curb on the exiles' attempt to restore democracy and parliamentary government in Nepal. The fact that Lal Bahadur Shastri, who succeeded Nehru in May 1964 paid a personal visit to Nepal in April 1965 further enhanced the King's prestige and enabled him to present this and subsequent visits by Indian dignitaries as an endorsement for Nepal's domestic political system.

The royalists have, in fact, been systematically utilising Nepal's foreign policy achievements as a supportive input for the monarchical political system on the basis of the argument that under the dynamic leadership of King Tribhuvan and King Mahendra, Nepal's international horizon has been expanded and diversified to an extent which could have been hardly conceived before 1950. From an isolated landlocked territory whose external relations were routed and guided through India for well over a century, Nepal after the overthrow of the Ranas became a full-fledged member of the international polity securing admission to the UN in 1955 and gradually moving out of India's "tutelage" mainly by taking advantage of the increasing tension between its two neighbours viz India and China³⁸. Whatever might be the facilitative factors responsible for increasing Nepal's international image, the improvement in Nepal's external relations was appropriated

by the royalists not only as an intellectual justification for the role and status of Monarchy but also as an international recognition of the Nepalese domestic political system. The term "appropriated" is being used advisedly because one finds more continuities than changes in the foreign policy system of Nepal before 1960 and after 1960 and it is difficult to sustain the royalists' claim that monarchical hegemony of the Nepalese political system has contributed an additional input into the conduct of Nepal's external relations.

China's ambivalent posture towards foreign policy and domestic politics of Nepal, in fact, constitutes an important intellectual prop for the Nepalese Monarchy. While the Peoples' Republic of China and its leader Mao Tse-Tung had been harping on the ideological imperatives of 'World Revolution' and "Peoples' Democracy", the growing warmth and cordiality in Sino-Nepalese relationship has been interpreted by the King to argue that the Chinese communists have no objection to the type of political system prevailing in Nepal which, therefore, is in no danger of being replaced by the communist ideology or institutions. Thus, debunking the criticism that the building of the Kathmandu-Lhasa Road would be tantamount to an invitation to communism, King Mahendra in a speech on 18 November 1961 observed :

...If...some individuals, ready to give cold storage to their human rights and independence for gaining some nefarious favours, blindly shout that communism immigrates in a taxi, I have no reply to these persons who have mixed loyalties and who, even though vanquished, can argue still.³⁹

Apart from reiterating the intellectual formula that the "ideological" component of foreign aid can be divorced from its "technological" component, the foregoing statement also highlights the intellectual device, frequently used by the royalists, of attributing anti-Chinese propaganda to pro-India political leaders who had been ousted from power in the royal take-over of December 1960.

The political pay-offs of the excellent Government-to-Government relations subsisting between China and Nepal since

1960 have been reinforced by the support lent to the Nepali King by most of the leftist and communist political leaders inside Nepal. Ever since the "1950-Revolution" the Nepali communists have been divided on the question of the strategy of revolution to be adopted in case of Nepal⁴⁰ and a large majority of them have preferred to ally with the King in order to keep the Nepali Congress out of the corridors of power. The communists' support to the King had reached to such an extent that at one stage Mr Ajoy Ghosh, the then Secretary of the Communist Party of India, was constrained to issue a warning to one of the faction leaders that "he should not make the Nepal Communist Party a King's party".⁴¹ While some factions of the Nepali communists gradually adopted an anti-King posture, the bulk of the communists continued to lend their support to the King thus indirectly legitimising the royal hegemony in the Nepalese political system and diminishing the utility and potency of anti-monarchical arguments based on the intellectual apparatus of Marxism-Leninism.

Monarchy and the Panchayats

While this contributinn is not focussed on the merits and working of the system of Panchayat Democracy, whose operative gains and losses invariably enter into the assessment of the legitimacy and durability of the Nepalese monocracy, it would be appropriate to take note of the manner in which the Nepali royalists establish a "necessary" linkage between Monarchy and Panchayat Democracy. Historically speaking, Panchayat-like institutions have been reported to be operating in the earlier times in almost all countries of the world although the specific term viz 'Panchayat' appears to be found only in the Indian sub-continent.⁴² Reacting strongly to the Western charge that the Asiatic societies did not possess indigenous traditions or institutions of self-government, the non-Western scholars as well as political leaders had, in the specific case of the Indian sub-continent, portrayed the 'Panchayat' as an institution of democratic self-government with indigenous origins and continuous history of development over a long period.

The Nepali royalists have, however, chosen to avoid the specifics of the developmental context. They have tried to use

the terminological connotations of 'Panchayat' to argue that the contemporary Panchayat Democracy is a genetic outgrowth of the Panchayat System prevailing in ancient Nepal. The assertion that 'Panchayats have been working in Nepal since antiquity' is further linked up with the assertion that Panchayats and Monarchy have been intimately associated in the Nepalese history. Thus, King Mahendra in a speech under the auspices of the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi declared :

...There are two institutions in Nepal, namely, kingship and panchayat, that are commonly known and understood by the people, and that work for unity and stability and peaceful progress, and it is through these institutions that the edifice of Nepal's progress has to be built.⁴³

The linkage between Monarchy and Panchayats, however, has not been clearly established in any speech by King Mahendra or King Birendra. Even the sophisticated intellectual analysts, as the authors of the *Panchayat* study, offer a very disjointed answer in reply to the question of relationship between Monarchy and the Panchayats.⁴⁴

Conclusion

Does the foregoing survey of the intellectual evidence and arguments propounded by the Nepali royalists yield any conclusive verdict on the issue of ecological correlates of democracy? It is difficult to give a clear answer to this question partly because of the limitations of the sources used and partly because "intellectual" responses or rationalisations cannot be fully evaluated in isolation from the "empirical" trends, forces, and processes obtaining in a given political system. One thing can, however, be said with reasonable certainty; The Nepali monarchs' attempts to justify the abrogation of parliamentary democracy rests, principally, on political rather than ecological or existential imperatives rooted in the territory or past history of Nepal. No doubt, the royalists' public rhetoric contains many references to the geography (size, location, etc.) and history (independence from British rule, sensitivity to influences

from outside, fall of the Rana autocracy, etc.) of Nepal but these references are invariably focussed on their 'dynamic' rather than their 'constant' aspect and once a regime starts justifying itself in dynamic terms it can no longer claim that it is only responding to the dictates of the historical determinants and/or geo-physical forces or formative influences. To what extent the people in Nepal, including the tiny class of academic intellectuals, believe in the truth and validity of the royalists' assertions is, however, an open question which can only be answered after a survey of the empirical political situation in Nepal—a task beyond the scope of the present study.

References

1. For a graphic description of Nepal's isolation from the rest of the world and its impact on its internal political culture see: DR Regmi, *Whither Nepal*, Kathmandu, 1952.
2. For a general survey of Nepalese domestic politics during 1950-1970 one can conveniently refer, RS Chauhan, *The Political Development in Nepal, 1950-70* Associated Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971.
3. One such expression of this "hope" came from Mr Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, who, speaking in the Indian Parliament on 17 March 1950, said : "Freedom interests us in the abstract as well as in the guise of a practical and, in the context of Asia, a necessary step. If it does not come forces that will ultimately disrupt freedom itself will be created and encouraged. We have accordingly advised the Government of Nepal, in all earnestness, to bring themselves into line with democratic forces that are stirring in the world today. Not to do so is not only wrong but also unwise from the point of view of what is happening in the world", Crown Prince Mahendra, in a statement on 28 July 1951 (his first recorded speech) also echoed this view : "In this twentieth century it has become an irrefutable fact that unless the governance of a country is placed on sound democratic lines the country and its people cannot hope to prosper", *Proclamations Speeches and Messages*, Publicity Department, HMG. Nepal. Kathmandu 1967 vol. 1, part 1:1.
4. Thus, as early as 19 February 1952, Crown Prince Mahendra began to speak of the failure of democracy in Nepal ; "...Our one-year-old democracy is willy-nilly lying on its death-bed. We all should be united to bring it back to life", *Proclamations Speeches and Messages*, n. 3, vol. 1, part 1:5.
5. *The Panchayat : A Planned Democracy*, Research Division, Hsi Majesty's Government Nepal, Kathmandu, 1967, 1.

6. *ibid* : 1.
7. This was stated on the occasion of the Queen's goodwill visit to Nepal in February 1961. *Proclamations Speeches and Messages*, n. 3, vol. II, 14-15
8. *The Panchayat*, n. 5 : 19.
9. *Proclamations Speeches and Messages*, n. 3, vol. II : 111-2.
10. *The Panchayat*, n. 5 : 26,
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Shifting Elite Loyalties : The Non-Congress Leaders

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Leadership has been generally regarded as the varying degrees of ability to guide and influence the behaviour and conduct of others in a social relationship.¹ A person in a position of exercising leadership is distinguished by his pre-eminence. The political leadership basically involves the attempt to exercise power in order to make policy-choices between alternative courses of action affecting what Easton has called "authoritative allocation of values".²

In case of Nepal, one can safely identify two sets of leaders. One was constituted by those who were committed to the modernisation of polity and politics in general and to the system of parliamentary democracy in particular. With the exception of a section of the communists this set of leadership was represented by the Nepali Congress. The remaining parties and their leaders, by and large, belonged to the second set. The party-identities mentioned here are based upon the situation prevailing before King Mahendra's takeover on 15 December 1960 under which political parties were banned. Nevertheless, despite this ban, leaders continued to function and be identified with their respective former party affiliations. Their loyalty to the ideals of political modernisation and democracy had been vague, fluctuating and only vocal. In this chapter we propose to study the behaviour of the leaders belonging to the second set, i.e. the non-Congress leaders. *vis-a-vis* King Mahendra's action of 15 December 1960, dismissing the parliamentary system and the first popular government led by the Nepali Congress; and the formative phase (December 1960 to April 1963) of the Panchayat system. The basic formulation of this chapter is that the non-Congress leaders proved incapable of guiding the people. Owing to their desperate and ruthless search for power, which

ultimately turned out to be a futile one, they belied their role-expectations in the crisis-situation.

An analysis of the non-Congress leaders' behaviour provides a clue to the fact that they were not socialised into a central value system which could sustain representative institutions. Ill at ease to accept the rules of democratic polity, these leaders adopted a style which proved detrimental to the revival of parliamentary democracy and also incompatible with the progressive democratisation of the new political structure, the Panchayat system, emerging under the leadership and guidance of King Mahendra. This style of the non-Congress leaders only accentuated their internal conflicts and their "personality-needs" remained unrealised. Not surprisingly, their actions reflected the deeply entrenched ambivalence in their values and interests. As such, they could not contribute any thing to the growth of responsible political leadership. Their performance showed that they were prone to be used by, and play into the hands of, a strong traditional ruler.

Strategy and Interests of the Non-Congress Leaders

King Mahendra's move of December 1960 heralded a new political phase in Nepal. He not only dismissed the popularly elected government of the Nepali Congress and terminated parliamentary democracy but also banned political parties and suspended fundamental rights. His task was facilitated by the role of most of the non-Congress leaders who acclaimed his every action. Ever deficient or vague in ideologies, dilettanti and doctrinaire, egocentric and opportunistic, vengeful and gullible, reward-oriented and ambivalent, they predictably made peace with the King after their arrest following the change. After the detention of less than a week, they signed statements justifying and supporting the royal step.

The King could correctly anticipate the conformist behaviour of the non-Congress leaders. For one thing, their total defeat at the 1959-general election had amply demonstrated their lack of power base among the people. They had, therefore, been desperately looking for a short-cut to power and eminence. The royal move had apparently instilled hopes in them for attaining their ambition. But then there were many questions. What

would be the new political set-up advanced by the King and whether the non-Congress leaders would be accommodated in it on a political *quid pro quo* basis? How would the new political set up be shaped and organised? If democracy was to be restored, to which all expressed their commitment, then why not parliamentary democracy? One had not to wait long for answers to such questions. It soon became clear that despite the King's proclaimed commitment to democracy, he appeared anxious to create a congenial milieu for the consolidation of his monopolised leadership. The royalist non-Congress leaders were largely responsible for this situation on account of their role.

In the light of past practices, it was generally assumed that the King had two alternatives in the transitional period (1961-63), to rule directly, or set up a new government under a generally acceptable Prime Minister. The first alternative, was ruled out in the belief that it must, in time, give way to the second, as it could neither benefit the country nor Monarchy. Keeping in mind the tone of royal proclamations following the royal takeover, observers had grounds to doubt as to how the King would give up the reins of administration once he had acquired them. Yet there were high expectations for a new order of democracy after the termination of the King's direct rule, if imposed at all. What was thought essential, then, was a set-up that would be "liberal, just, practicable and acceptable to all".³ There were suggestions that the people should wait patiently with total faith in the King and that the King too should not be unduly hasty in accounting the new set-up.⁴ Though there seemed to be great differences of opinion among the non-Congress leaders as to how the King's direct rule would give way to a new set-up, there was nevertheless a common consensus that the new set-up would be established with due regard to the interests of the country and the people, that it would be consistent with the principles and traditions of democracy, and that it would not give any chance to the already discredited elements, that is those who had once proved to be corrupt and unfit for administration.⁵

Most non-Congress leaders had become ministers in the past at one time or the other, and hence it was believed that despite the zeal with which they had welcomed the royal step the King's favour was not going to fall on them. Nevertheless, specula-

tions were ripe about the likelihood of their being included in the new set-up as a political *quid pro quo* when they supported the royal action to the hilt and exhibited their deeply entrenched animus against Nepali Congress leadership. In order to secure royal patronage, most non-Congress leaders preferred not to bother about the termination of parliamentary democracy, suspension of fundamental rights and the consequences of absolute monarchy whose prospect of revival had greatly increased. How universal among them were the high expectations of acquiring positions of power and prestige was indicated to a great extent by their statements issued immediately after their release on 21 December 1960 in which they were as grandiloquent in avidly eulogizing the King as they were cynically vitriolic in condemning the Nepali Congress and its rule. In all their acrimonious rantings against the party not one of them cared to say anything about the termination of parliamentary democracy.

The reasons were obvious. Parliamentary democracy had been ushered in with the Nepali Congress coming to power. These intractable leaders had attacked the party in and out of season, showing that they lacked credo or confidence in themselves and, even at a great cost to their own credibility, could shift their basic loyalties. What was more, they did not feel any need to challenge the King's action of terminating the party system which had, after all, ensured them the leadership status. To the extent these leaders obliged the King by conforming to whatever action he took, they became the key factor in emaculating opposition which however disorganised and fragmented, harassed and hampered, threatened and intimidated with coercion by the royal regime, was not blown to bits.

The attitude of most non-Congress leaders generally betrayed mutually incompatible sets of expectations. In the first place, being rabidly anti-Congress, they seemed delighted at the dismissal of the party government. In the second place, glibly showing their concern for democracy and believing that the King would before long strengthen democracy, they declared that any step taken by him in the form of a preliminary step for democracy would be welcome.⁶ For the non-Congress leaders, also, there were only two choices: to fight back for the restoration of parliamentary democracy, or to calmly acquiesce in the *status quo* created by the royal step. They chose the latter

course. They readily conformed to the royal move rather than challenge it. While doing so, they sowed a myth that democracy, more liberal than ever before, was safe in the King's hands. This was reminiscent of their familiar pattern of behaviour of getting into government by royal favour and patronage. It has been alleged that soon after the royal takeover most of these non-Congress leaders sent a petition to the King to be invited for heading the next government, making it all the more obvious that their profession of political radicalism, if any, was superficial. This was forswearing of their so-called ideological conviction, an aspect of their behaviour no one failed to take notice of, still less the King whose estimation of national character of "amoral familism" was seldom imperfect.

Even a casual observer could fairly surmise that the non-Congress leaders were anxious to acquire positions of power by royal patronage. However, their tactics proved a failure when none of them were included in the Council of Ministers set up on 26 December 1960 by the King. As if to keep them still hopeful, the King later doled out small temporary patronage jobs to a few of them. To assuage them further, lest they become recalcitrant, he patronised them intermittently and turn by turn, to be ensured of reducing them always as tools for destructing political leadership and for weakening opposition. Thus, most non-Congress leaders were incapacitated to induce confidence in the people about the worth of their leadership. As such the people had reason to suspect them for any oppositional activity. Tanka Prasad Acharya, KI Singh and Randhir Subba, to name a few, typified such a body of yesterday's men, who now suffered from the strain of atomisation and alienation from self and others, remained fragmented and *d'eclasse*.

Reactions Against the King's Take Over

The way most non-Congress leaders became fawning royalists conclusively proved their incapability to provide leadership or support for any organised political activity in favour of the revival of democracy in the kingdom. Their failure to lead when the country suffered from a want of meaningful leadership was bad enough. It became worse when they deliberately chose to mislead the people, emphasising to the point of a tautology,

that the King's action of terminating parliamentary democracy was a genuine step towards democracy and not a move to re-entrench absolute monarchy of a traditional order. They further maintained that all-encompassing royal leadership had alone the potential of designing and developing democratic institutions.

The attitudinal behaviour of most non-Congress leaders would be illustrated by the comments they made on the royal step and the opportunistic stance they took subsequently. These comments have been collated under the rubric of their parties. However, it may be made clear that the parties have been mentioned not in order of their seniority but in terms of the frequency with which their leaders made news.

Nepal Praja Parishad

One of the first non-Congress leaders to welcome the royal move was Tanka Prasad Acharya, Chairman of the Praja Parishad faction. He assumed the posture of a royalist, a nationalist, an alarmist, an oppositionist, all rolled into one. While expressing his full confidence in the King's commitment to democracy, he justified the dismissal of the Nepali Congress government as a necessary step to avert a 'civil war' which was in the offing. Such remarks were not strange since he had accused the Nepali Congress leadership of anti-nation and anti-monarchy conduct. After supporting the royal action, Acharya even conceded disarmingly that he followed no particular ideology and his only desire was that the country should achieve national development and prosperity. Though known to be a Marxist, he did not, however, explain as to how this was going to happen. Maintaining that the King was a non-controversial and the most competent leader, he expressed confidence in the government headed by the King. Acharya also hoped that the government would keep itself above party interests and give inspiration for national development in all directions.⁷

Acharya's posture was not unexpected. In the meantime, he had been appointed the Chairman of the Royal Commission on Taxation and Birta Abolition set up early in February 1961. The term of the Commission came to an end towards the end of March when it submitted its report to the King. After that

Acharya was asked to head the Royal Land Reform Commission set up towards the end of May. However, by this time he seemed to have become disenchanted with the prevailing political situation, which he believed would have been different had the King followed his advice.⁸

Acharya's line of thinking was reflected by some of the "old guards" of his faction. In an "open letter" addressed to the King, Ram Hari Sharma, declared that "democratic parties" had supported the ban imposed on political activities and suspension of fundamental rights at a time when the country's security was jeopardised by the "dictatorial mentality" and "anti-national activities" of the Nepali Congress government. Now the situation was under control and hence to keep the people deprived of fundamental rights was no longer justified. Sharma's stand was obviously in concurrence with Acharya, otherwise the seniormost minister of the day, Tulsi Giri, would not have charged the latter for not cooperating with the present regime. Giri also criticised Sharma for indulging in propaganda about fundamental rights without representing the matter to the King, and maintained that this was a destructive action intended to weaken the present regime.⁹ Another *confreere* of Acharya, Pushkar Nath Upreti, charged that there was not much difference between the budget prepared by the Nepali Congress government and the new "unrealistic" budget announced by the present regime, except for the latter's proposal of levying some additional extreme taxes.¹⁰

For a few days, no action was taken against these former leaders of the Praja Parishad. Perhaps encouraged by this, Ram Hari Sharma declared that he was not afraid of Giri's threats because his demand was "prompted by the conviction to the good of both the King and the people". The people, Sharma added, wanted fundamental rights and he hoped that the King would respect the public opinion. A couple of days after this statement, Ram Hari Sharma, Chuda Prasad Sharma, another leader of the party, and Pushkar Nath Upreti were put under detention. Commenting on their arrest, Acharya supported the demand for fundamental rights and held that through these arrests, the regime sought to feel the pulse of the people who should, therefore, make it known whether they wanted these rights or not.¹²

The fact that 'fundamental rights' had lost their sanctity under the King's new political experiment, was amply clear. In an interview with Nepal Samvad Samiti on 24 August 1961, the King declared that no one would be permitted to disturb the peace or create disregard for the legal authority in the name of fundamental rights about which nobody had said that they were not necessary or they would not be granted.¹³ National Guidance Minister Vishwabandhu Thapa held that nobody could have the right to oppose the existing system in the name of these rights. Finance Minister Rishikesh Shaha, justified restrictions on fundamental rights on the ground that "otherwise no democracy would be able to last long".¹⁴

The demand for the restoration of fundamental rights was also made by a former Nepali Congress leader, Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, after his release from detention on 15 August 1961. No action was taken against Surya Prasad Upadhyaya and Tanka Prasad Acharya. The detained Praja Parishad leaders were released towards the end of February 1962 and from then on, they preferred to remain silent. Acharya, however, tried to survive as a political entity by intermittently advocating the formation of an independent political organisation under various names for the purpose of fighting against "antinational elements"¹⁵ or giving vent to the popular feeling. Even in so doing, he was not prosecuted. Why was this so? It would appear that he had found out his escape route by alternating the postures of conformity and confrontation towards the existing regime, arguing that "though the Panchayat system was a very good one, yet it was ten times more difficult than parliamentary democracy". Equally revealing was his contention that the regime had achieved much in the task of national reconstruction.¹⁵ All this manifested his underlying ambivalence, lack of leadership qualities, and a conflict-tossed mind. This became particularly obvious when, speaking at the Intellectuals' Conference in Kathmandu held under the aegis of the regime between 6-13 June 1962, he charged that ministers were suppressing political organisations and fundamental rights lest their "black" deeds should be exposed. According to him, again, though the King envisaged a rule of law, no one could raise the question of fundamental rights. Further, declaring that the present system could not prove successful in the

absence of these rights, he stressed the importance of a political organisation on a national basis.¹⁶ To be sure, whatever he said underscored his deep sense of frustration bred by shifts in his loyalties.

Nepal Praja Parishad

Bhadra Kali Mishra, Chairman of another faction of the Nepal Praja Parishad, typified the few detainees who used their pledges of cooperation to the King only for securing release. Soon after his release on 21 December 1960, he left Kathmandu and joined the Nepali Congress in exile in India to strengthen opposition to the royal regime. Several Nepali Congressmen had by now assembled at different places in India and were issuing statements condemning the King's step. Like them, Mishra too deplored the royal action and held that the explosive reaction of the recent political developments would be detrimental to the sovereignty, national unity, peace and progress of the country. He further declared :

It will be against history and human nature to think that the Nepalese, nourished in democratic environments for ten years, will patiently tolerate the ban on political activities... A situation in which the people may be forced to choose between the King and democracy should be avoided.

After joining the Nepali Congress, Mishra appealed to other members of his faction to do the same. His action had been in response to a statement issued on 27 February 1961 by Subarna Shamsher, Nepali Congress leader, then living in Calcutta, in which he had appealed to Mishra and all "lovers of democracy" to join the Nepali Congress to consolidate the cause of democracy in Nepal. Predictably, Mishra was dubbed as an "anti-national element" and "a coward speaking nonsense in a foreign country".¹⁷ This did not deter him to remain faithful to the Nepali Congress.

United Democratic Party

Like Acharya, KI Singh, Chairman of the United Demo-

cratic Party, remained basically ambivalent in his reaction to political situation prevailing in Nepal after the royal takeover. What he said after his release on 21 December 1961 along with other detainees was equally marked by incoherence and generalities. Expressing full confidence in the King and believing that very soon he would take further democratic steps, he said that the United Democratic Party maintained that the royal proclamations after the takeover were a victory of the people as well as a check on the increasing dictatorial tendency of the Nepali Congress. The Party also issued instructions to all its branches to support fully all actions taken by the King.

For his part, Singh not only pledged himself to support every action of the King but also maintained that the King had acted in accordance with world opinion.¹⁸ However, it did not take long for Singh to change his posture. Three months later, he expressed the view that if non-Congress political parties had been able to unite before 15 December 1960, the Nepali Congress would have been unable to act arbitrarily, and hence there would have been no need for the King to "purge" the political leaders.¹⁹

Soon thereafter a conflict developed among the rank and file of the United Democratic Party regarding the line to be taken in regard to the royal action. In May 1961, Kashi Prasad Shrivastava, General Secretary of the Party, held a Conference of a group of the Party workers at Gorakhpur in India and there it was decided to merge with the Nepali Congress for the sake of democracy. Singh dissociated himself from this move, pointing out that there had always been acute differences of opinion between the Nepali Congress and the United Democratic Party. He has also disclosed that he had directed his party members against this merger. He added that Shrivastava had written to him about the merger proposal, but had taken a decision before receiving any reply. Singh, however, did not attach any significance to the Conference alleging that it had not been called at all.

At the same time Singh expressed his desire to go to his home in Western Nepal, implying that he would like to meet Shrivastava to sort out political matters. He did not leave Kathmandu reportedly for lack of money. The reason was not

convincing even to a casual observer. After a few weeks he went home from where he returned to Kathmandu in June 1962, after about a year, to participate in the Intellectuals Conference referred to above. At the Conference he broke his long spell of silence to accuse the Panchayat administration of its failure in utilising public cooperation. He found faults with village panchayat elections recently completed as the first preliminary to the Panchayat system. Though he regarded the Panchayat system as suitable for a predominantly Hindu country like Nepal, he had his own misgivings about the panchayat elections.²⁰ Still later, speaking on a different occasion, he doubted the genuineness of the elections, saying that those in his village had been held in a "dramatic way".²¹ In his usual *volte-face* style he praised the Panchayat system suggesting that it was better than parliamentary system but nevertheless declared that the way it was being introduced did not make him optimistic. What was more, in the beginning of 1963 he was even reported to be contemplating a *satyagraha* (peaceful civil disobedience movement) to press his demand for political reforms, but nobody took him seriously.

Gorkha Parishad

The Gorkha Parishad was fanatically royalist and mortally against the Nepali Congress from the very beginning of its establishment, but just before the royal step it was divided into two rival groups on the question of its strategy towards the Nepali Congress government. One group was led by Mrigendra Shumsher and the other by his son, Bharat Shumsher, the party's General Secretary and leader of the Opposition in the dissolved House of Representatives. The release of Mrigendra Shumsher along with other party leaders after a few days' detention following the royal takeover, but not of Bharat Shumsher, further underlined the rift between them. Mrigendra Shumsher's statement welcoming the royal action was criticised by Surendra Prasad Upadhyaya, the Chief Whip of the party in the dissolved House of Representatives, who in a statement issued from Forbesganj in India said that the views expressed by Mrigendra Shumsher had no backing from the party which had faith in democracy and representative government of the

Nepali Congress.²²

Still more intriguing was the stand of the party's other stalwarts. Chairman Randhir Subba after welcoming the royal action in the beginning of March was staying silent. Bharat Shumsher was released on 29 March 1961, and in the beginning of April he along with fourteen party members of the dissolved House of Representatives issued a joint statement supporting the King's action. In addition, this joint statement expressed confidence that the King would ultimately restore political freedom.²³ Notwithstanding this, some 45 Gorkha Parishad members, including Surendra Prasad Upadhyaya, decided in May 1961 to merge the party into the Nepali Congress. All this suggested that there was a deep cleavage in the rank and file of the Gorkha Parishad on the party's line of action in relation to the King's takeover.

In November 1961, Bharat Shumsher took political circles by surprise when he told a Press Conference at Delhi that his party had decided to launch a struggle for the restoration of parliamentary democracy in Nepal and hoped to see Nepali *e'migres* in India united in opposition to the King under the leadership of Subarna Shumsher. Declaring that he had earlier supported the King under duress, Bharat Shumsher scathingly criticised the royal regime for widespread corruption and unsatisfactory implementation of development projects in the country. He accused the King of having engineered his move in a long-drawn conspiracy against an elected government and of maintaining "a reign of terror and torture". He also charged that the King had signed a secret non-aggression pact with China and one-third of the country's budget was being spent on the royal family. He suggested that the King should have consulted India before concluding any non-aggression pact with China, and his policy might bring Nepal under Chinese domination.²⁴

Other Smaller Parties and the Communist Party

Whether it was the Nepali National Congress or the Rashtriya Janata Party, the Nepali Prajatantrik Mahasabha or the Karmavir Mahamandal, the reaction of almost all the leaders of all such minor obscurantist parties to the royal

action was uniformly favourable. However, in the case of the Nepal Communist Party, as well as of the Gorkha Parishad, the matter was not quite so. Both were confronted with serious dilemmas and split in their leadership on the line to be taken in regard to the royal step. The Communist Party endeavoured to survive to make a political capital out of the move even though it got divided into two factions : the pro-Peking faction, whose leaders remained in voluntary self-exile in India, opposed the King, while the pro-Moscow faction leaders remained in the country to toe the official line.

Responses to the Evolution of Panchayat System

A further insight into the behaviour of the royalist non-Congress leaders may be had from the new political processes whose deficiencies they often pointed out in private and in public. It was generally expected that since they had unequivocally pledged support to the King, they would participate in the first series (started in February 1962) of the panchayat elections ; prerequisites to the institutionalisation of the new polity. But perhaps feeling sore at the advent of a new set of political actors, whom they regarded to be inferior to themselves, the non-Congress leaders totally boycotted the elections. It seemed obvious that they had neither any regard for the representative institutions, as is evident in the context of parliamentary democracy, nor any willingness to eliminate the suspected entry of feudal elements in the country's political affairs. Their boycott of elections only helped the King who could now safely eliminate them from the centre of political activities in order to remain firmly in the saddle.²⁵

These non-Congress leaders may have displayed a spirit of reconciliation to the new political life for fear or favour, but their reconciliation was misplaced. For if they had shown the same sort of reconciliation to the political situation created after the institutionalisation of parliamentary democracy and adjusted themselves to the rules of political life, they would not have seen the wreckage and obscurity of their political leadership after the royal step. What was more, they neither showed keen interest in crucial public issues after the royal move nor in the crises and conflicts in the new institutional structure for the

purposes of injecting those goals and values into the structure which they claimed to have cherished. Thus their apathy to the new institutional structure showed that they were not loyal to the new polity.

Conclusion

The royalist non-Congress leaders may be generally described as normless persons, behaving as atomised individuals, divorced from the realities of political life. They were personally jealous of the growing stature of the Nepali Congress. Their animus against the Nepali Congress indeed created a situation for the polarisation of political parties for and against the resurrection of parliamentary democracy. But these leaders were unwilling to modify their behaviour and became all the more obsequious towards the King for their political "ennoblement". When the casting of their lots with the royal regime did not bring them expected rewards, then only did they assume opposition posture, but that, too, jitteringly and intermittently, and hence of no avail.

At times the royalist non-Congress leaders indulged in strong criticism of the royal regime, thereby manifesting the undercurrent of frustration at unfulfilled expectations, but since they could not stand united among themselves to act as a task-oriented team, mainly because of their inter-personality conflict, there was hardly any force in their individual acts of opposition. They were basically motivated by their self-orientation to gain social and political status which could neutralise the loss in their prestige resulting from their humiliating defeat in the general election of 1959.

This is not to say that they were completely unconcerned with the deficiencies in the new political system in which political freedom had almost been extinguished. But they were ambivalent and their approach in this direction was devoid of any convictions. They became much too politically deideologised. They were slow and hesitant to act. Their opposition to the Panchayat system was an individual affair ; and inasmuch as they were much too small in number, and amorphous at that, it was doomed to be ineffective. They, thus, strikingly served to illustrate "perfect *anomie*" by the situation in which they were

entirely without "normative directives".²⁶ They strengthened the royal step which became not only potential but even actually authoritarian. And when they saw that this had happened because of their role, they found themselves reeling in conflict, unable to rectify the inescapable realities.

These leaders were further conflict-tossed when they saw that they had been relegated into an inferior position by the new *panchayatocrats* and remaining isolationists in the post-take-over political processes, partly by their own choosing and partly when ignored by the new generation of political actors, they suffered diminution in their stature. Thus, writhing in anguish and conflict they tried to prevent their self-destruction. Their strategy took a variety of forms and passed through several phases of conformity and conflict, giving testimony to the ineffective nature of their leadership. Their conflict continued to grow. Thus, two recurring tendencies i) conformity to the royal action for a feasible political *quid pro quo*, and ii) conflict created by the crisis of identity, leading, in turn, to their internal fragmentation, characterised their behaviour. They had too few political resources to instil confidence in the masses about the viability of their leadership in the body politic.

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15. *Nepal Sandesh* (Patna), 21 December 1961 ; *Naya Samaj*, 28 December 1961.
16. *Samaj*, 10 June, 1962,
17. *Gorkhapatra*, 24 February 1961 ; *Dainik Nepal*, 26 and 28 February 1961 ; *Halkhabar*, 29 February 1961.
18. *Nepal Samachar*, 7 January 1961.
19. *Ibid.*, 26 April 1961.
20. *Samaj*, 9 June 1862 ; *Swatantra Samachar*, 13 June 1962.
21. *Samaj*, 26 November 1962.
22. *Swatantra Samachar*, 3 January 1961.
23. *Naya Samaj*, 11 April 1961.
24. *Naya Samaj* and *The Times* (London), 14 November 1961. See also *Keesing's Contemposary* Archieves, XIII (1962), 19024-25. For some time Bharat Shumsher continued vigorously campaigning against the King while repeating his earlier charges against his "undemocratic" actions. See also *Hindustan Times*, 19 December 1961, *Nepal Sandesh*, 31 December 1961.
25. For a detailed analysis of the implications of these elections see LS Baral, "The First Panchayat Elections in Nepal; 1962-63 ; The Emergence of a New Political Generation *International Studies*, XII. 3, July-September 1973,
26. RM Maciver, *The Ramparts We Guard*, Macmillan, New York, 84, 85, and the whole af chapter X.

Dimensions of Student Politics

R S CHAUHAN

One of the basic characteristics of modernised countries is that the national politics and policies are crystallised on a certain set of political ideologies, and they are largely influenced and carried out by the professional politicians. But in the developing countries, where political modernisation is in initial stages, politics is undifferentiated and is carried out intensively by numerous political and non-political organisations on conflicting issues. Political parties and student organisations among them cut across parochial issues and attempt to provide ideological solutions to national problems and view international issues from the same angle. In many developing countries, backwardness and under-development tempt an absolute Prince or a military dictator or a junta to outlaw political parties so that they may not pose a threat to their political hegemony in the country. In the absence of political parties, the student community, a politically conscious cluster of the society, assumes significant role. In Nepal, political parties were not allowed to operate for more than a decade, first by the all-powerful Rana Prime Ministers, then by the Shah Kings. The present chapter attempts to deal mainly with the political role assumed by the Nepali students in the politics of the Kingdom after the ban was imposed on political parties, following the overthrow of parliamentary system by King Mahendra in the year 1960.

The Beginning

The students in Nepal have played a greater and more decisive role in the politics of the Kingdom than their counterparts in other South Asian countries. For instance, in the overthrow of the Rana oligarchy in 1950, in the final exit of the Ranas from power in the following year, in compelling the assertive King Mahendra to concede to the popular demand for holding general elections, in the fall of the parliamentary system in 1960, in strengthening the King's hands in suppress-

ing the movement for the revival of parliamentary system in the following years, and in opposing the present Panchayat democracy tooth and nail, the students of this Kingdom have made a significant contribution.

How could the students become a force to reckon with in the Nepalese politics? The political parties in the Kingdom could not develop organisationally owing to various factors. In the growth of political party system the Ranas had visualised a threat to the absolute rule of the privileged few over the toiling masses. Any attempt to create political consciousness among the people was severely dealt with by the Rana rulers. Their suppressive policy led the politically-oriented leaders to take shelter in India, where they established political parties. Having been born outside the Kingdom, these parties could not develop a mass base in the country. With the fall of the Rana oligarchy in 1950 it was expected that the political parties would have a phenomenal growth. Instead, they remained dwarf and fragmented.

Political structure and socio-economic conditions were mainly responsible for such a state of affairs. The Shah Kings, who had remained politically inactive under the Rana oligarchy, now in the absence of a strong political party system, found an opportunity to resurrect their traditional position, and hence, King Tribhuvan adopted a policy which aimed at keeping political parties divided and weak. For this purpose he and his successor, King Mahendra encouraged the mushroom growth of political organisations, set one political party against the other and indulged in the character assassination of important political leaders.

But it would be unjust to lay all the blame for an anaemic growth of political parties at the doors of the Monarchs. Political parties themselves were also engaged in a battle of mutual-destruction. In the initial stage they hardly cared for the organisational development, ideological cohesion and party discipline. Their major attention was directed to capture power by hook or by crook. Dissensions beset them. Their wretched conditions were fully exploited by the reigning Monarch. While political parties were disintegrating and were being disintegrated the student community came forward as a political force. Various factors viz. the expansion of education, gradual penet-

ration of various foreign political ideologies among the people, pressing and unresolved domestic and foreign policy issues that had made the people disgruntled against the policies of the government—threw the students into political activities. Besides, the attempt of the Monarch to withhold the general elections as far as possible made political parties disinclined to contact the people. Thus, they developed a tendency to depend upon the students as they were easily accessible.

Ideological Orientation and Division of the Students

Thus, the Nepalis students closely aligned themselves with various political parties. On what ideological ground were the alliances made? During the late 1940's when Nepalese political parties were preparing to launch an armed insurrection against the Ranas, the majority of the students were democratic or social democrats, as they used to call themselves. But immediately after the revolution a powerful section of the students came under the communist influence, because they found that the 1951 events did not change the domestic situation fundamentally, and far from ushering in an era of progress and egalitarianism, the change meant only a replacement of oligarchy by a powerful Monarchy. To their utter dismay they found that the high echelons of the Nepali Congress—a social democratic party, which shared power immediately after the 1951 events—appeared to have forgotten the miserable lot of the people. Internal squabbling and self-aggrandising activities of the leaders of the Nepali Congress further alienated the students from the party. The students also came under the spell of anti-Indianism, which was widely prevalent in the Kathmandu valley, owing to a number of historical factors.

The Newars, who constituted a majority in the valley, were traditionally anti-Indian because, in their view, the Shah dynasty which replaced the Newar rulers, had come to power with Indian support. Moreover, their monopoly in trade and in religious matter was challenged by the Indian traders and the Indian priestly class. Another factor responsible for anti-Indianism was the prevalent view that the Nepali Congress which shared power after the 1951 events did so because India supported it at the expense of other political parties which had also participated

in the anti-Rana agitation. These political parties, therefore, blamed the Indian government as well as the Nepali Congress for keeping them out of power. In their outburst they were joined by the ousted but powerful Ranas who were well-entrenched in the capital. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship, Treaty of Trade and Commerce between India and Nepal, stationing of Indian check-posts at the Nepalese northern border and the establishment of the Indian Military Mission in Kathmandu provided ample opportunity to the anti-Indian elements to arouse the sentiments of the conscious Nepali people, including the student community, who believed that India was out to make Nepal a vassal state. They alleged that the Indian government was realising its objectives through the Nepali Congress. Moreover, the Nepali Congress had its strong base in the Terai and to the inhabitants of the Valley, the Terai people were more Indian than Nepali. Thus, it was feared by them that if the Nepali Congress came to power, they would be governed by those "dhotiwalas". This anti-Nepali Congress atmosphere prevailing in the capital, where most of the educational institutions had been established, alienated a large section of the students from the Nepali Congress organisation and they joined leftist political groups. Students, in fact, became the backbone of the leftist parties in Nepal. A section of the students, however, remained wedded to democratic ideals.

These two politically-oriented groups of the students were not only, more or less, equally powerful but were deadly set against each other. According to the communists two domestic forces—Monarchy and the Nepali Congress—stood squarely opposed to the realisation of a people's democracy in the Kingdom. They, however, realised that Monarchy was also opposed to the rule by the Nepali Congress. Tactically, therefore, they decided on a four-pronged strategy. First, to align with the king who had assumed the leadership of nationalist forces; secondly, to oppose the Nepali Congress tooth and nail; thirdly, to spread anti-Indian movement with a view to weaken the Nepali Congress, on the one hand, and to eradicate India's influence from the Kingdom, on the other; and finally, when the backbone of the Nepali Congress was broken and Nepal insulted itself from Indian influence, then to wipe out the Monarchy itself and establish a people's democracy. On the other hand, the

Nepali Congress was convinced that the popular institutions could not be formed in the Kingdom unless two forces were weakened thoroughly—Monarchy and the communists. The students community was likewise divided into two hostile camps.

Activisation of Leftist Students (1951-1955)

Immediately after the restoration of monarchy to its traditional position in 1951, the leftist students plunged head-on in the politics of the kingdom. But the students had neither a requisite leadership nor an organisational base to play an independent political role. They, instead, became a ready tool in the hands of disgruntled political leaders. Eager to play a political role, hitherto denied to the people of Nepal, the leftist students of the valley, thus joined the opposition during the early fifties. They led processions, and raised slogans demanding the release of all political prisoners, the formation of a national government, the introduction of radical reforms and asking for the Kingdom to be saved from Anglo-American imperialism and “Indian capitalism”. These students at times became violent leading to police-firing. In one such incident one student, Chinia Kazi was killed. This created a political storm in the capital and led to the final disintegration of the crisis-ridden coalition government.

The dust of the storm had hardly settled down when a dissatisfied political leader of western Nepal, Dr KI Singh, staged a coup d'état in Kathmandu. Anticipating the coup's success, the Marxist students who till then avowed their allegiance to Monarchy, campaigned in favour of the coup. The coup, however, was short-lived. It provided the Monarch an opportunity to impose a ban on the Communist Party of Nepal. While the communist leaders went underground, the student-wing of the party intensified its political activities. Under the chairmanship of Tanka Prasad Acharya, the *Jatiya Jantantrik United Front* was formed. This Front was obviously influenced and backed by “United Front” strategy which aimed at establishing “world peace” in the early period of cold war, on the one hand, and the consolidation of various opposition forces under the hegemony of the Communist parties, on the other.

Since the Communist Party was outlawed, the students, under the banner of the above Front, demanded that local feudalism in Nepal be destroyed and the Kingdom should dissociate itself from Anglo-American Imperialism and 'Indian Capitalism'. They demonstrated for the introduction of land reforms and for the amelioration of the conditions of the workers. They also demanded the end of direct rule of King Tribhuvan and the formation of an all-party government. The prevailing chaotic conditions and political uncertainty helped the leftist students to mount their campaign which was successful to a great extent in influencing the people of the valley. Their impact became known when in the Kathmandu Municipal elections the communist sponsored candidates swept the polls defeating even the Nepali Congress candidates. The relative success of the leftist students during this period was mainly due to the dissension, division and consequently the decline of democratic forces in the country.

Consolidation of Democratic Students (1956-1959)

The year 1956 introduced a new trend in the student politics. The disintegrated and dislocated democratic forces not only demonstrated the remarkable sign of revitalisation but also started revamping, to launch a movement on a wider scale to force the King to hold elections for a Constituent Assembly. At the same time, the communist oriented students, under the banner of a United Front, were reduced into insignificance. The compulsions of internal politics in respect to the Nepali Congress and the besetting of dissensions in the Communist Party were responsible for such a development. King Mahendra, who succeeded King Tribhuvan in 1955, threw all the pretensions of ruling the Kingdom through democratic institutions and made it clear that he would not let political parties spread their tentacles in the country. Envisaging a mortal threat to the very survival of democratic institutions and forces, the warring factions of the Nepali Congress started shedding off their parochial, short-sighted attitudes and made concerted efforts to launch a protracted movement to force the King to hold elections for the Constituent Assembly.

In the struggle of the Nepali Congress, the democratic

students played a vital role. When the Sixth National Conference of the Nepali Congress was held at Birganj in January 1956, the student leaders assisted in drafting the party's manifesto. In the campaign, the student community was employed by the party to explain the manifesto to the people. But it was in the vigorous movement launched by the Democratic Front against the King's decision to postpone the general elections that the students played a nation-wide and decisive role. They observed Black Day on 8 October 1957 throughout the country. The same day, a *Satyagraha* movement was launched. The government used strong measures to deal with the movement. The police resorted to 'lathi-charge' and threw tear gas shells on the picketing students at the gates of the Central Secretariat (Singh Darbar) and the Supreme Court. This incident and arrest of the student leaders further brought a great number of the students-community into the movement. Apart from Kathmandu valley, the other important places where the students participated in the movement included Kalay Bhojpur, Nuwakot, Sindhuli, Upardang, Garhi, Hitaunda and Biratnagar.

This movement paralysed the administration of the country and made it difficult for the King to continue further with his direct rule. He had to concede to the demand for elections. The King, however, made it clear that the elections would be held for the Parliament and not for a Constituent Assembly. The democratic forces spearheading the movement accepted this and did not continue their movement. This only exposed the weakness of the democratic forces who appeared to be more after power than for the achievement of ultimate objective which demanded more intensified and sustained struggle.

Though the communist students had belatedly associated themselves with the movement, yet their impact on the Nepalese politics during the above period had been insignificant owing to the dissensions in the communist ranks. The issue which divided the party was whether to extend support to the Monarch in his struggle against the Nepali Congress and India or not. While the hawks in the party were in favour of a frontal attack on Monarchy the doves preferred to continue with the former line. The student wing of the party was also paralysed as a consequence. The party, therefore, could not enter the

election fray effectively. A section of the student-wing even suggested a boycott of the elections as they were not being held to elect the Constituent Assembly. As a result, the party could secure only four seats out of 109 with 7.2 per cent of the total votes polled. It is noteworthy that among all the Nepalese political parties, the Communists had heavily depended upon the students and youths. But owing to internal dissension and division the party could not demonstrate its real strength in these elections.

Search for Opposition (1959-1960)

The first general elections threw up the Nepali Congress as a dominant party in the politics of the Kingdom. All other political parties were pushed into political oblivion. They therefore decided to oppose the ruling party in the streets rather than in Parliament. Since the political activities and the academic institutions of the Kingdom were concentrated in and around Kathmandu the student community belonging particularly to the Communist Party took a lead in organising oppositional activities. Their tirade was directed towards India and the ruling party, which, it was alleged, was collaborating with the Indian ruling elites in the realisation of Indian objectives in the Kingdom. It was the time when the Chinese claim over the border states had created tension in the Sino-Indian relations. The Communist Party toed the Chinese lines. It disputed the Macmahon Line and the student-wing of the party demonstrated against the remark of Indian Prime Minister in the Parliament that an aggression on Nepal by any foreign power would be considered as an attack on India. They alleged that India was attempting to drag Nepal in her dispute with China and was thus violating Nepal's neutrality. The communist students held a rally in Kathmandu and branded India as an imperialist power out to turn the kingdom into its satellite. These students also agitated against the unequal Trade Treaty that, according to them, was imposed by India in 1950. They vindicated the Chinese stand that India was the only country in the region which had refused to have a border agreement with China and which had ulterior design toward its neighbours.

The ruling party was also subjected to severe criticism by

the leftist students. Mammoth demonstrations were held in which opposition parties along with the students protested against the government's decision on the Gandak Project with India. The economic policies such as taxation and the abolition of birta system were described merely as "eye-wash" and the corruption in the administration was highlighted in various meetings. However, the communist students suffered a setback in their attempt to influence the people when the Chinese army crossed the Nepalese border and killed a security man in Mustang in violation of the border Agreement that had been reached between the two governments.

The democratic students, however, did not counter the hostile propaganda of their leftist counterparts. Instead they created confusion and controversy in the mercurial politics of the kingdom. They raised a tirade against Monarchy and demanded reforms in the constitution so as to clip the power of the King. They did not try to explain to the people the egalitarian measures adopted by the democratic government and the difficulty it was facing in their implementation. But when the Communist party launched a "receipt movement" according to which the indebted peasantry was asked not to pay back the debt, the democratic students also launched a similar movement, lest the initiative might pass into the hands of the communists. This preaching of unlawful activities only created problems for their government.

Demand for Political Parties, 1961-1973

After the overthrow of the parliamentary system in December 1960 and the subsequent ban on the activities of political parties, the students again came into the limelight in the Nepalese politics. Political parties now carried on their activities through the students to attain their political objectives.

A study of the Nepali politics clearly indicates that the wrath of King Mahendra was directed against the democrats as they had posed a formidable challenge to his personal and direct rule in the country. This situation was quite advantageous to the communists. Their main enemies in the Kingdom were the democrats and the Monarch. As noted earlier, their

strategy had been first to defeat the democrats and then to turn towards the latter. Consequently, the communists joined hands with the Monarch in his drive against the democratic elements. The communist students, in spite of a ban on political activities, held public meetings and organised rallies in which they labelled the democrats as anti-social and anti-national elements.

King Mahendra was anxious to secure the support from various forces to subdue the democratic force in the Kingdom. Thus, state patronage was given to the communists to fight out the democrats. The King had also taken up the leadership of the 'nationalists'. Since the revolution of 1950, the anti-Indian bogey was a convenient tool in the hands of the rulers to maintain themselves in the saddle of power. By taking up an anti-Indian stand, the King as well as the communists attempted to win over the people. Since the communists were willing to play this role, the administration encouraged them to whip up anti-Indian hysteria in the kingdom. The communist students organised meetings and held demonstrations demanding the expulsion of those Indian personnels who were manning the Nepalese check-posts along the Tibetan border, the withdrawal of Indian Military Liaison Mission, the discontinuation of Gorkha recruitment for Indian Army and the evacuation of Susta area by the Indians. The communist students supported the Chinese stand on Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 and accused India of committing aggression against Pakistan with a view to dismembering it. They criticised the Soviet armed intervention in Czechoslovakia and protested in front of the Soviet embassy in Kathmandu. The "northern students" (as the Peking supporter students were commonly called in Kathmandu) mobilised the people at Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Bharatpur and Dharan several times to protest against the inhuman killings in and naked aggression on North Vietnam by the United States of America,

The above activities of the communist students were just a national and progressive cover under which they started working for their real objectives. They procured communist literature through Indian extremists, the North Korean and Chinese embassies and distributed them among the people. They laid greater emphasis on building their base among the

youths, students, peasants and workers. They held secret meetings attended by foreign communists and discussed the possibility of launching an armed struggle in the Kingdom. The students instigated the landless peasants to revolt against the feudal lords asking them not to pay the debt either to their lords or to the government. It is alleged that some extremist students also indulged in creating lawless and terrorist activities including the murder of a landlord and his son in eastern Nepal.

The government, however, became aware of the clandestine activities of the communist workers including the students. It decided to deal with them firmly lest they become a serious threat to the system. And one of the ways evolved to deal with the communist students was to release the democratic leaders and to encourage the democratic students to fight out their leftist counterparts.

The democratic students had borne the major brunt of the King's assault against the Nepali Congress since 1961. In the initial period of the working of Panchayat system the democratic students remained subdued. But with the increase of discontent among the people against the unsatisfactory functioning of the Panchayat system they started asserting themselves and soon assumed a vital role in the politics of the Kingdom. Their first action had been to fight for the formation of an independent students union as it was formed by the communists. The government declared the democratic students union—the *Vidyarthi Sangh*—an unlawful body. After a ceaseless struggle and suffering they ultimately succeeded through a verdict of the Supreme Court to have their own students union. They again launched a struggle through demonstrations, meetings, distribution of pamphlets and raising of slogans for the release of political prisoners, introduction of radical reforms in the Panchayat system and the elimination of the atmosphere of terror and insecurity. The democratic students demanded the restoration of fundamental rights and the curtailment of the powers of the crown. Soon the democratic students made a strong base among the educated section of the people which was clear from the number of student unions which they captured from the hold of the communists. Their popularity among the enlightened and literate sections became apparent when in 1971 only those candidates were elected for the Graduate Constituency who

had demanded the restoration of fundamental rights, direct elections for the Rashtriya Panchayat, election of the Prime Minister from among the members of the Rashtriya Panchayat, holding of the session of Rashtriya Panchayat in open and making the ministry responsible to the Rashtriya Panchayat. It is noteworthy that these democratic candidates were elected in spite of the government's attempt to mobilise its resources in favour of its 'official' candidates.

The Prospects

The prospects of the students to bring any substantial change in the present Panchayat system appear remote and dim. Not because the government is firmly set against them, but because of the in-built limitations of the Nepalese politico-social conditions. The communist and democratic leaders are not only hostile to each other but they are working at cross purposes, thus nullifying their respective energies. Moreover, there is division among the leadership of both the forces. The communists are divided roughly into six major groups ; the democrats, at least into two. There are slim chances of having a unified leadership in both the parties. Moreover, important leaders of both the parties are staying in India and they are not able to maintain a regular and smooth contact and communication with their student-wings.

Besides, the students are powerful only in a few pockets—in the Valley and in some parts of the eastern region and the Terai areas. The northern belt and western Nepal are relatively free from student movements. Moreover, with a lack of means of transport and communication, the students cannot launch an organised and nation-wide movement and since they are active in isolated and disjointed areas, their activities are easily curbed. But what handicaps the students' struggle is their doctrinaire approach and lack of popular base and their limitation in fighting for the people's cause.

The important factor that restricted student movement in having a definite dent on the panchayat politics is the prevailing opportunistic attitude of the student leaders. The government wins over "dangerous" students through money, civil posts or lucrative jobs. Hardcore, ideologically-oriented,

students who are ready to sacrifice all these for their political commitments are few and so are their chances of moulding the politics of the kingdom according to their objectives.

Yet the student movement has made a definite contribution in the political development of Nepal, particularly at a time when the system attempted to suppress all political forces. Their major achievement had been that they kept alive the two major political and progressive forces of the kingdom. They are serving as a strong media of opposition in the partyless system. The student struggle and suffering provide apprenticeship in political life. Moreover, the student movements have spread political consciousness among the people at a time when the country was face to face with a serious political crisis.

Graduates' Elections : Political Arena for Opposition

LOK RAJ BARAL

The Nepali graduates occupied a significant place in the Panchayat system until the constitutional changes introduced in December 1975. They were required to elect four representatives for the 125 member National Panchayat which is the highest legislature of the kingdom.¹ And this election of four graduate representatives used to take place directly through a secret non-transferable ballot on the basis of the principle of proportional representation. This was in contrast to indirect elections permitted under the system for its various Panchayat units and class and Professional Organisations.

The provisions for the graduate representatives' elections under the Panchayat constitution do not constitute only a *structural* anomaly. Functionally also, these elections brought about periodic upheaval in the then existing political milieu. Since the *literati* (the graduates) constituted the "constituency", the contestants made electioneering an issue-oriented battle. It generated hectic campaign activities and vigorous ideological debates which further resulted into anarchic fervour and extremism within the otherwise "closed", "partyless" polity. These elections, therefore, created unpalatable situations for the authorities and the ruling elites. On the other hand, they attracted the "radicals" and the opponents of the system who utilised the occasion not only for ventilating their resentment against the Panchayat overlords who "betray" national interests, but also for challenging the basic tenets of the system. Accordingly, the elections of Graduates' Constituency brought the internal contradictions of the Panchayat system into sharp focus and this was perhaps the reason behind the elimination of this constituency from the Panchayat structure in 1975. An intensive study of this constituency is therefore called for.

The First Election : A Stage-Managed Show

The first election took place in March 1963, immediately after the promulgation of the Panchayat Constitution in December 1962. The political situation in the Kingdom was tense at the time due to anti-regime activities carried out by the Nepali Congress 'rebels' from across the borders. The general atmosphere was characterised by "fear, suspicion and anxiety". Both the candidates and the voters of the Graduates' Constituency were not clear about the short term significance and long term consequences of the election.

There were about 2,200 graduates who constituted the electorate for the first election. Of this number, 1,639 belonged to Kathmandu valley. The electioneering activities were conspicuous by the absence of former political activists. Even the Students' Union of Tribhuvan University gave a call to boycott the election which was contested only by the "vested interest". This call was in protest against the non-registration of about 300 student-graduates and it was alleged in this context that the authorities did so under the fear of anti-establishment voting by the student graduates.² The authorities were naturally keen to get pro-system political non-entities elected so that a facade of intelligentsia's support to the new system could be erected and used for system-maintenance purposes.

Under the combined thrust of all these factors, the elections turned out to be a tame affair. The candidates had no programme except to pronounce as loudly as possible, their loyalty to the King and the Panchayat system. Only one candidate, Basudev Dhungana, who was a member of the now outlawed Communist Party, demanded the conduct of the National Panchayat proceedings to be in the open. He, along with Negeshwar Prasad Singh (an Assistant Minister), Kumar Dass Shrestha (a dismissed government servant) and Ramji Prasad (headmaster of a local High School) got elected.

Second Election : Rise of Political Militancy

The second election held in 1967 was significant in many respects. By this time, of a total estimated number of 6,604, some 6,004 graduates were registered as voters.³ During the

period from 1963-67 the system had already experienced a number of undesirable trends that brought its inherent contradictions into light and also showed disenchantment on the part of former members of the royal entourage from King Mahendra's new political ideology. Besides, a few political activists who had been aloof from the system from the beginning decided to join the fray, thereby generating tremendous amount of enthusiasm amongst the voters. It was partly due to the changed political situation and partly to the initiative taken by former political workers to infiltrate into the system that the second election brought to the fore the yearning of radical reformers for change in the present political structure. It was, therefore, evident that politically conscious elements were more attracted to the open contest that would take place in this constituency than to other elections being held under the Panchayat system. Even though the Panchayat system did not give any recognition to former political groups and identities, it was hardly disputed that they would be the sole criterion guiding the voters. It was being thought that the Graduates' Constituency should become the political "laboratory to democratise the Panchayat system to the maximum extent".⁴

So far as issues in this election were concerned, neither they conformed to the *ancient regime* morale nor were confined to its boundary. The candidates in general were seemingly guided by those values of liberal democracy which had been abrogated by the royal action in 1960. The demand for the revival of political parties was first started by Shankar Ghimire, an ex-Congress activist. He was followed by Nirmal Lama, a former communist activist and Ram Raja Prasad Singh, a Supreme Court lawyer. In addition to this demand, there was near unanimity among them for ; (i) adult franchise ; (ii) relaxation in fundamental rights : (iii) release of political prisoners ; (iv) grant of amnesty to the emigre party leaders ; and (v) freedom of the Press. The government was blamed for the worsening political situation. The atmosphere became so charged with the anti-system sentiments that the government considered it unnecessary to force a candidate to pledge faith in the partyless system, while signing nomination papers.⁵

Meanwhile, the election took a serious turn when three candidates, viz., Shankar Ghimire, Nirmal Lama and RRP

Singh were put under arrest. The Prime Minister flanked by the Inspector General of Police and the Bagmati Zonal Commissioner, charged them at a press conference on 3 May 1967 that taking undue advantages of the government's 'liberal policy' "they crossed the limits and hence the government had been compelled to act...whatever repercussions this might have abroad."⁶ 'Obviously this was a desperate step on the part of the authorities to deal with an uncomfortable situation. Rishikesh Shaha, another candidate criticised the government for its repressive action and also upheld the demand made by the arrested candidates. He stated :

since the Constitution accepts popular consent as its basis, grants the fundamental rights of thought and speech, and also prescribes a procedure for constitutional amendment, the mere advocacy for non-conformist political thought or suggestions for such amendment cannot constitute an illegal act.⁷

Shortly thereafter, confronted with the legal proceeding, the government hurriedly amended the existing Elections (offence and penalties) Act and disqualified the arrested candidates from contesting the election.⁸ Nevertheless, the Graduates' Constituency election in August (after three months of its earlier schedule), manifested the victory of the issues by both militants and moderates.

The election was contested by 24 candidates. The four successful candidates were Rishikesh Shaha (Thakuri Chhetri of Kathmandu Valley), Prayag Raj Singh Suwal (a Kathmandu Newar), Birendra Keshari Upadhyaya (a Brahmin from Okhaldhunga district of eastern Nepal) and Basudev Dhungana (a Kathmandu Valley Brahmin).⁹

Third Election : Rise of Extremism

The third election held in 1971 was more or less similar in spirit to that of the earlier one with the difference in the methods employed by the contestants. The socio-political background of the contestants was also similar to those of their predecessors.

Of the 10,887 estimated number of graduates in the country, the number registered in the voter list was 9,898. This showed an increase of 3,894 in the number of registered graduates since the last election. Thus, the increase was 64.8 per cent in four years (1967-71), showing an annual increase of 16.2 per cent, i.e. 1,070 additional graduates were registered each year.

The district-wise distribution of the growth of graduates' number in Nepal in absolute and relative terms is shown as follows :

No. of Graduates	Districts in 1967	Districts in 1971
Over 3,000	1	1
Over 200-600	1	5
100-199	4	10
75-99	5	5
50-74	10	16
25-49	18	9
10-24	11	9
5-9	13	9
1-4	—	4
No Graduates	7	—

Source : Harka Gurung, n. 3.

The election in 1971 was contested by 12 candidates, of whom 17 formed a coalition for broad-based political demands. The demands were : (i) universal adult franchise ; (ii) provision of an elected Prime Minister ; (iii) end of the *in camera* proceedings of the National Panchayat ; (iv) relaxation in fundamental rights and (v) end of indiscriminate arrests under the Public Security Act. This group of seventeen candidates was formed under the aegis of Rishikesh Shaha. The group disintegrated later as members failed to arrive at a common minimum programme during the election campaign. Consequently, each candidate decided to evolve his own independent line of action.

However, there was no sharp difference in the demands published by them in their own ways. The candidates did not sufficiently indicate their respective socio-political backgrounds, but their manifestos and election campaigns provided enough clues to their basic objectives. It was notable that most of them claimed their commitment to liberal democratic values.

The issues involved in the election were also varied in nature though political issues were placed higher. One of the extremist candidates, Ram Raja Prasad Singh declared :

Panchayat system at its very activity was infatuated with genocide, civil war, hatred and opposition...Under such legacy and heritage the present Panchayat Constitution was whisked-in to provide a constitutional mask for the ensuing misrule.¹⁰

He also said that if elected, he would table "a resolution in the Rastriya Panchayat seeking to advise His Majesty the King to abrogate this present Constitution...and to switch over to pre-1st of the *Poush* 2017 era". He criticised the current Land Reform programme saying that it served quick propaganda purpose. He called Article 17 of the Constitution as a "mockery of the fundamental rights".¹¹

Another candidate demanded 'structural transformation' in the existing state of affairs.¹² Shankar Ghimire declared that no democracy could prosper under the control and guidance of the government. He assured the electorate that he would not betray his political career as well as the confidence of the voters by accepting any kind of office. Ram Hari Joshi termed the royal takeover of 1960 as an "anti-national act", and charged the government for starting "the process of indoctrination". Only a very small number of candidates dwelt upon the economic scene of the country.¹³

All those candidates who in their election campaigns tried to identify with the parliamentary democratic political processes and the anti-establishment forces got maximum applause. Their radical postures and their links with former party leaders proved to be additional assets. The voters appeared to be attracted towards politically aggressive candidates. This was

an indicator of their total disenchantment with the system. They seemed to be least concerned with the Panchayat elites and their pronouncements which had nothing new to offer.

The preference of the voters became evident from the election results. All the four winning candidates were members of the group of 17 which had earlier emerged as an anti-establishment united front.

Election Results¹⁴

S.No.	Name	Caste	Political identity	Votes polled
1	Prayag Raj Singh Suwal	Newar (Kathmandu)	Former Nepali Congress worker, Democrat.	1,438
2	Ram Raja Prasad Singh	Rajput (Eastern Terai)	Democrat	1,438
3	Krishna Prasad Bhandari	Brahmin (Tarai)	Pro-Moscow Communist but supported by the democrats	1,268
4	Prakash Chandra Lohani	Kumai Brahmin (Kathmandu)	Democrat	1,008

Another important feature of this election was that no independent candidate or dismissed government officials could win the election. In earlier elections in 1963 and 1967, a few dismissed officials could get sympathy of the voters and were able to win the election. In the 1971 election caste affiliation of the candidates also influenced the voters' choice to a considerable extent. It was widely believed that almost all the Newars of Kathmandu voted for Kathmandu Newar, Prayag Raj Singh Suwal.

It may also be mentioned that the former activists played a catalytic role in influencing the voters' preferences. But the role of such activists was governed more by their emotive behaviour than by prudence. Another significant feature was that none of the tradition or *status quo* bound candidates could win despite their personal resources and backing of the establishment. Perhaps, the 'dysfunctional' and counter-innovative features of the system were too costly to be sold to graduate electorates.

Intensity of Political Crisis

The last two elections of the Graduates' Constituency produced a series of crises which greatly undermined the position and prestige of the government. In 1967 the decision of the Supreme Court to acquit the three arrested candidates upheld the constitutional compatibility of the right to demand the revival of political parties. The momentum gained by this demand during the election campaign underlined the fact that the Panchayat system had not struck viable roots in the kingdom. Influenced by this, King Mahendra announced his 'Back to the Village Campaign' which was a kind of purge movement that *inter alia* tried to eliminate "party feelings" from the body politic. The deepening of the political crisis on the eve of elections in 1971 was an indication that the King's campaign had eventually been a dismal failure. However, this time, the government did not undertake drastic measures to eliminate anti-system candidates from the election scene.

The staunchest anti-system candidate RRP Singh, had created a stir in Kathmandu's political circles by his election manifesto distributed only a few days before the polling day. He went underground on the polling day but his sudden appearance in the National Panchayat for taking oath as its member dramatised the situation. A few members objected to his taking oath of office on the ground that he lacked faith in the system. However, Ram Raja's affair served as an instrument for deviationist National Panchayat members to polarise among themselves at least for the time being in two broad divisions: one in favour and other against him. Ultimately, the National Panchayat Chairman refused to administer the oath to RRP Singh. This led to a pandemonium inside the House. The

police broke into the National Panchayat while members were wrangling among themselves, and whisked RRP Singh off from the midst of the irate members.

RRP Singh was brought to trial on charge of sedition. He was subsequently sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment and ordered to pay a fine of Rs 2,500. At this time King Mahendra chose to intervene to resolve the political crisis. Pardoning RRP Singh for this opposition, he allowed him to take oath as the member of the National Panchayat. The King also censured the government for being slow and tactless in resolving the crisis. He also expressed the view that anti-system views should have been countered politically.¹⁵

In view of the King's censure of the administration, the Council of Ministers, and the National Panchayat members, Prime Minister Bista had no choice but to submit his government's resignation on 26 August 1971. Subsequent developments made it evident that although the King had censured the government *in toto*, he was only dissatisfied with certain ministers. He reinstated Bista by dropping three ministers from the cabinet.¹⁶ It was interpreted as an act of Royal grace shown to Bista who had expressed his total loyalty to the King while submitting his resignation.

As ever intractable, RRP Singh resolutely reaffirmed his faith in what he had said earlier and later in speeches on different occasions, to bring about a revolution so as to achieve what he called the "Golden Age" of the pre-1960 period. Subsequently he was disqualified from the membership of the National Panchayat on the charge of violating the code of conduct prescribed for National Panchayat members by the King in 1967.¹⁷

Equally important was the resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner in the wake of the above crisis. It was generally believed that he did not bow down to the dictates of the government for manipulating the election results in favour of the so-called government-backed candidates.¹⁸ The Chief Election Commissioner, P P Brahman, expressed the view that he was happy with successfully holding the election despite the pressure of the government. Earlier he also clarified his impartiality by assuring the voters that the election was secret and nobody should be afraid of it. This was also taken as an affront by the government on the eve of election. To the great surprise

of many, Brahman's resignation was immediately accepted by the King.

The Implications

The elections of Graduates' Constituency posed a number of problems for the Panchayat system. First, the last two elections held in 1967 and 1971 were characterised by the ideological polarisation. The candidates with pronounced radical views were elected. The underlying proclivity of the candidates and the voters decisively gave an impetus to forces of opposition within and outside the system. It was this consequence that the authorities were particularly concerned about.

Secondly, these elections were characterised by group versus individualistic approaches of the Panchayat system. The Panchayat system did its best to remove 'groupism' or 'partisan spirit', and yet it could not thwart group formation or old party identities in these elections.

Thirdly, the election results revealed that the preponderance of liberal political thought was very much in existence in the country despite various attempts made at the official level to eliminate it from the body politic. Every candidate, irrespective of his former political affiliation or family background, was seen anxious to identify with the values pertaining to a liberal society. This, in a way, also underlined the emerging consensus in favour of reforms within the Panchayat System.

A considerable amount of emotional exuberance was witnessed during the elections which strengthened aggressive campaigning. As such it might also have influenced voting preferences, particularly among the young voters. More so because the new generation was evidently far from being fully socialised in democratic values. For instance, students' behaviour was marked by their shifting loyalties and support for different candidates at different times in the same election. Nevertheless, student-graduates played a prominent role in deciding the results. Then, the attitude of the so-called politically conscious voters was, to a considerable extent, determined by their respective castes and other parochial loyalties.

The elections also raised a question about their relevance in the Panchayat system. Why this constituency was incorpora-

ted into the four-tiered structure is still a matter for conjecture. The outcome of this structural peculiarity tended to conform to the widely prevalent belief that political action on the basis of programmes and issues is likely to characterise direct elections.

Territorially, the Graduates' Constituency was scattered throughout the Kingdom. However, the elections were contested on individual basis. Thus the candidates residing outside Kathmandu Valley were at a disadvantage because the concentration of voters was in Kathmandu Valley and the physical features and under-developed communication system of the kingdom hindered easy contacts and mobilisation. The geographical imbalances were also responsible to divide the voters along regional or caste lines.

Despite these handicaps, the elections of Graduates' Constituency became a forum for oppositional politics. The opposition that came to the fore through this forum despite being sporadic and intermittent, proved to be so powerful and effective that the provision of Graduates' Constituency had to be taken out of the Panchayat system's constitutional structure.

References

1. The Constitution of Nepal for this purpose defined a graduate as one, who had at least a Bachelor's or Shastri degree from a University or educational institution recognised by His Majesty's Government, *Nepal Ko Samvidhan* (Constitution of Nepal), Kathmandu, 1968, 72.
2. *Swatanta Samachar* (Kathmandu) 5 March, 1963.
3. Harka Gurung, *Graduates in Nepal*, National Planning Commission, Kathmandu, 1972, 3.
4. *Nepal Times* (Kathmandu, 19 April 1967.
5. *Dainik Nepal*, 30 April 1967.
6. *Nepal Times*, 4 May 1967, SP Upadhyay, Home Minister in the dissolved Parliamentary Government, VB Thapa, a former Panchayat ideologue and Minister after 1960, and Indrakant Misra, an editor of a local daily, were also arrested on the alleged charge of their connection with the demand for the political parties.
7. *The Motherland* (Kathmandu), 19 May 1967.
8. According to this Act, "No person who is punished with imprisonment for any offence under the 1963 organisations and associations (control) Act and the 1963 Treason (Crime and Punishment) Act, shall be entitled to contest any election as long as he is so imprisoned or until 2 years have elapsed from the

date when he completed the prescribed term of imprisonment in case any person who is already standing as a candidate in any election suffers from this disqualification. his nomination paper shall *ipso facto* lapse", *Nepal Gazette*, 21 July 1967.

9. For distribution of votes along caste lines and other details see : Nabin Prakash Jang Shah, *Chunab ra Jana Pratinidhitwa* (M.A. Dissertation, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, 1971); and, Pashupati Shumshere JB Rana, *Nepal's Fourth Plan : A Critique*, Kathmandu, 1971, 20.
10. Ram Raja Prasad Singh, *Let the Great Age Begin Anew*, Laheriasarai, n.d.
11. *Ibid.*
12. KP Bhandari. *Ma Umedbar Kina ?* (Pamphlet, n.d.)
13. Prakash Chandra Lohani, an economist, dealt extensively on the wretched economic conditions of the country. See Prakash C. Lohani's election manifesto *Industrial Policy : The Problem Child of History and the Planning in Nepal*. Kathmandu, n.d.
14. Election Results of the Election Commission. See also Nabin Prakash Jang Shah, n. 9, 73.
15. *Gorkhapatra*, 26 August 1971. In this context, RRP Singh issued a statement in which he termed the Royal Pardon as an indication of the possibility of a peaceful change through constitutional means. *Nirmal Weekly* (Kathmandu). 27 August 1971.
16. Three Ministers dropped were GB Raj Bhandari, Minister for Foreign Affairs, R.P. Giri, Home and Panchayat Minister and N R Subedi, Industry and Commerce Minister, *Naya Sandesh*, 22 October 1971.
17. A code of conduct for National Panchayat members prohibited them from indulging in groupism or any other activity that tended to inhibit the development of the Panchayat System. National Panchayat members were forbidden to do any work that was detrimental to the cause of consolidating the partyless Panchayat System, activating class and professional organisations and coordinating their activities. *Gorkhapatra*, 27 October 1967.
18. Five candidates who did not share the views of the seventeen were called government candidates on the ground that they toed the official line on a number of issues, including the up-holding of the Panchayat principles. An interview with a large number of government officials and the Ministers substantiated the fact that government had issued instructions asking government servants to vote for any four of the five candidates.

District Development Administration : Problems and Prospect

DWARIKA NATH DHUNGEL

The post-Second World War is an era of the emergence of new nations and their quest for development and modernity. The new nations, because of the pressing needs of the times, have launched different development programmes to improve the socio-economic conditions of their people. "Nepal, a poor country in Asia with the lowest per capita income in the world, of approximately \$68, has set for itself the goals of development and modernisation".¹ The present chapter proposes to deal with the efforts of His Majesty's Government of Nepal to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people during the Mahendra-period. The scope of study is limited to developmental activities in the districts. The focus of study is on the Institutional Structures—which are responsible for the development activities—and the related problems and prospects.

The concept of "development" has been given various meanings and interpretations. In this chapter, development is considered as "a state of conditions in which the general standard of living of the people as reflected in better food, better clothing, better housing and increased opportunities for education of children are available."² In the light of this definition, the Nepalese government's efforts to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people will be discussed.

Development Administration

The Ranas maintained a policy of complete indifference towards public services and welfare activities. Accordingly, general life in Nepal remained in a primitive state up to 1951. Immediately after the overthrow of the Rana-autocracy, the Government of Nepal was confronted with the problems of

poverty, illiteracy and disease and could no longer remain isolated from the sweeping current that was blowing in the new nations. The men who led the movement against the Rana-autocracy were well aware of this fact and they were committed to doing something for the welfare of the people.

The developmental efforts of the government in Nepal have to be analysed in the light of the socio-economic conditions of the country. Nepal, as already mentioned, is a poor country with 97 per cent of its population living in the villages. More than 90 per cent of the population depends upon agriculture for their livelihood. The literacy is 13.9 per cent, which is very low. Communications are very poor ; education, medical facilities and other social services have hardly been developed. In short, people continue to live, for centuries, in poverty, disease, and ignorance. In such a state of affairs any programme which aims at the development of the country must concentrate on the rural areas.³

For the herculean task of development, the machinery available to the post-1951 government was far from being adequate. The only agency present in the districts through which developmental activities could be launched in the rural area, was the institution of *Bada Hakim* (District Governor) which was viewed by the people as the symbol of suppression and repression in the district. "The government was committed to break down the barriers of suppression, apprehension and indifference which have so long isolated the rural people from their government."⁴ Towards that end, a new Village Development Scheme was launched in the country. The Bada Hakims were not kept completely out of this programme. They were to supervise implementation of the scheme in their respective districts. A Bada Hakim, thus, remained "the pivot of administration in the districts with the added-responsibility regarding land reforms, economic and social administrations, agriculture and cooperatives, village development programmes, education and industries, etc."⁵

The Village Development Scheme was developed according to the principles of Community Development. For this, the country was divided into 150 blocks. The basic objectives of the Scheme were :

to assist each village in planning and carrying out an inte-

grated multi-phased family and village plan directed towards increasing agricultural production, improving existing village crafts and industries and organising new ones, providing minimum essential health services and improving health practices, providing required educational facilities for children and an adult education programme for village women and youth.⁶

A Block Development Officer, along with other specialists, was made responsible for implementing the programme in the block. A Block Advisory Committee for each block was constituted to assist him in speedy and successful implementation of the programme. At the village level, there was a multi-purpose worker known as the Village Development Worker—who was in charge of the group of villages.⁷

The second phase of development administration in the districts began with the introduction of the Panchayat system in January 1961. After the dissolution of the Parliamentary system, the late King Mahendra, in a statement, emphasised the co-operation of the people in the process of development and declared that “for national development and reconstruction... it is our aim to associate the people in the administration at all levels and to develop village, district and town panchayats, with a view to enabling them to take active interest in the problems and progress of the country.”⁸

To associate the people with the development activities, Block Advisory Bodies were organised in all blocks. But these Block Advisory Bodies did not arouse much enthusiasm among the people. The common man never considered the Village Development Scheme as his own programme, because political leaders were not involved in it and their cooperation was not enlisted. When the panchayats were organised in 1962-63, the government decided to merge the Panchayat Development Centres (the former Village Development Blocks) with the District Panchayats and to entrust the village development activities to the Panchayats⁹. It was declared that a Village and District Panchayat would be responsible for the execution of development projects in areas under its jurisdictions.¹⁰ The new arrangement would give no occasion for the people to feel that it (Village Development Scheme) has been imposed from above.

It was aimed at a gradual change in their habit for looking to the government for help and could evolve an active, alert and awakened village community. Moreover, under the Panchayat system, the local panchayats had to be charged with the duty to implement the district and village level programmes of the government.¹¹ As a result of the new arrangements, the panchayats would be responsible for performing the development activities such as :

- (a) departmental programmes, the entire cost of which is to be borne by the department concerned. The Panchayats will implement these programmes according to the methods prescribed by the department;
- (b) works to be carried out on the basis of subventions made to the panchayats with or without specifying any programmes. The plan for such works will have to be drawn and executed within the framework of the national plan;
- (c) programmes as are to be implemented by locally available resources in men and material. The panchayat will enjoy full freedom to frame and implement such programmes.¹²

His Majesty's Government with a view to achieving decentralisation ; promulgated the Local Administration Ordinance on 16 December 1965 (later on enacted by the National Panchayat and known as Local Administration Act 1966) and published the Decentralisation Scheme (*Vikendri Karan Yojana*). Accordingly, the traditional structure of the district administration (i.e. the institution of Bada Hakim) was abolished. The District Panchayat was declared as the centre for development and administration.¹³

The emergence of elected representatives at the district level had created problems of relationship between the Bada Hakim and the District Panchayat. With the promulgation of the new Ordinance, the dichotomy between the district administration and the locally elected institution was removed. The post of the Chief District Officer was created to represent the Central Government in the districts. These officers were appointed as the Secretaries of the District Panchayats. As such, they were

responsible both to the respective District Panchayats and the Central Government and the Zonal Commissioners. The Chief District Officers also enjoyed powers to supervise and coordinate district affairs in petty judicial matters,¹⁴ administration,¹⁵ and matters concerning Health and Cottage Industry Departments.¹⁶

After 1965 the responsibility for law and order in the district was delegated to the Zonal Commissioner and Assistant Zonal Commissioner.¹⁷ The latter was replaced in 1969 by the Special Officer (a newly created Class II post). As a result of this new arrangement in 1965, law and order was separated from development activities. This created some problems. In 1971, through an amendment to the Local Administration Act 1966, the Chief District Officer was removed from the Secretaryship of the District Panchayat and replaced by the Panchayat Development Officer. Accordingly, he had to perform the following functions : liaison between the District Panchayat and the government and coordination between the District Panchayat and the District level offices as also among the various district level officers.¹⁸

The Problems : Relationship between Officials and Non-Officials

As stated earlier, the Local Administration Act 1966 abolished the dichotomy between the institutions of the Bada Hakim and the District Panchayat. The bureaucracy was brought under control of the representative institutions. But the Chairmen of District Panchayats, who had witnessed the pomp and show of Bada Hakims assumed themselves to be the successors of Bada Hakims. They began to treat the Chief District Officers as their personal secretaries rather than the representatives of the government. They started interfering with the administrative responsibilities of the Chief District Officers. When ever the Chairmen could not be successful in their efforts, "they contemptuously criticised the officials, for their laziness, lack of initiative, ignorance about the rural life, real needs of village people, and red-tapism." They also resented the open and subtle refusal of officials to accept them as their superiors and show equal considerations as they show to the ministers. In the same way the Chief District Officer could not adjust to

the new set up. They felt "hurt because somebody else whom he so far considered to be inferior to him now sits over him and takes decisions."¹⁹ The Assistant Zonal Commissioner and Special Officers who were of the same category as the Chief District Officer also became more powerful than the latter in effect, since they controlled the law and order machinery. As a consequence the Chief District Officers felt humiliated and they could not move with the Chairmen of the District Panchayats. In other words, there was a frequent conflict between the District Chairman and the Chief District Officer—the impact of which was felt in the work of the District Panchayat.

The tensions could not be averted even after the amendment to the Local Administration Act in 1971. The situation became more complicated. Under the new set up, the Chief District Officer had to implement the decisions of the District Panchayat.²⁰ But there was no specific provision according to which the Chief District Officer was made accountable to the District Panchayat. If the Chief District Officer refused to implement the decisions of the District Panchayat, the Chairman, had no authority to take action against him. At the most, the Chairman could take a delegation to the Home Panchayat Minister against such Chief District Officers. This would not make much difference as the Ministry generally favours the administrators. In such a situation, the Chief District Officer could emerge as a powerful institution at the expense of the District Panchayat. There was no other institution to challenge the growing strength of the Chief District Officer. The political parties could do that but they are considered unsuitable to the soil of the country. When the Bill to amend the Local Administration Act of 1966 was introduced in the National Panchayat, the members severely criticised the proposed legislation which was termed as :

the victory of bureaucracy and the defeat of Panchayat system, since it aims at the administrators' active part in panchayat politics. If the administrators are allowed to control the system, issue directives to panchayat members and involve themselves in politics, this will encourage bureaucracy and thus prove detrimental to the Panchayat system, and its democratic aspects.²¹

The growing strength of bureaucracy at the district level in the form of Chief District Officer's institution posed a problem, because, "the presence of a strong bureaucracy in many of the new nations", as Riggs noted, "inhibits the growth of strong executive, political parties, legislatures, voluntary associations, and other political institutions essential for a viable democratic government."²² According to S P Singh, the Chief Election Officer and the former Home Panchayat Secretary, this problem could be solved if the Chief District Officer was entrusted with the responsibilities of both maintaining law and order and implementing the decisions of the District Panchayat as its Secretary. He argued that as the Home Secretary was responsible for law and order but he had to work under the Home Panchayat Minister, why could there be no such arrangement at the district level.

This, however, does not seem practicable. If the same person is empowered to implement the decisions of the District Panchayat and also to maintain law and order, the Chairman is very likely to interfere. In that case there is every possibility of a never-ending conflict between the Chief District Officer and the Chairman of the District Panchayat. One possible way out lies in reverting to the unified structure of district administration. But the change in the structure, alone, is not going to solve the problem of officials and non-officials. The most important cause of conflict between the District Panchayat Chairman and the Chief District Officer is the attitudes of the one towards the other. This might continue for some more years. However, as a result of both the spread of education and awareness about social responsibilities and the emergence of mature leadership, "the present socio-psychological gulf between the officials and non-officials" may be bridged.²³

Coordination

The problem of coordination, as in the case of the other developing countries, was the product of the expansion of social welfare activities of the Nepalese government. Following the Ranas' fall the number of field offices of various ministries and departments increased. The Central Departments set up their regional headquarters in the districts and brought their field or-

or district offices under the control of regional offices. This restricted the "Bada Hakim's authority over their field officers only to the general supervision."²⁴ Still the Bada Hakim continued to exercise the supervisory role over the activities of district offices.²⁵ When the institution of the Bada Hakim was also abolished on the plea that it was a legacy of the autocratic regime, the problem of coordination got further complicated.²⁶

Under the new set up, the Chief District Officer had to exercise general supervision and control over the activities of district offices, provided necessary authority was delegated to him by the concerned departments and ministries. In practice, however, no department, except the Departments of Health and Cottage Industry, delegated such authority to the Chief District Officer. When in the case of field offices of the Health Department, the Chief District Officer was empowered to exercise administrative control over the Medical Officer, and other Junior Health Officials in those districts where there were no Zonal Offices of the Health Department. The Cottage Industry Department had only ten district offices where the Chief District Officer exercised administrative control over them.

There were, on an average, ten to fifteen district level offices in every district.²⁷ But the Chief District Officer was exercising the administrative control over the district level offices of the two departments only. The other district level offices were vertically related to their parent departments and ministries for programme formulation and implementation. They had no horizontal relationship with any other offices in the district.

The Office Inspection Regulation (1969) established the semi-formal relationship between the Chief District Officer and the other district level offices of the government. According to the regulation, the Chief District Officer had to inspect the government offices twice a year either himself or get it inspected by an official authorised by him. During the inspection, if some irregularities were to be noticed, the Chief District Officer was to refer the matter to the concerned department. He could take action, except in the case of Non-gazetted officers. But in practice such inspections were hardly conducted by the Chief District Officers.

The Chief District Officer lacked adequate provisions to co-ordinate the activities of district level offices. As a member of

the various Coordination Committees,²⁸ the Chief District Officer was in touch with the programmes of district level offices. But the meetings of such Coordination Committees were held to give information about a particular programme and secure cooperation for that from all quarters. The pros and cons of the programmes were not discussed. Moreover, the meetings of the Coordination Committee were not held regularly.

Location of Responsibility and Lack of Funds

The most challenging problem was the need for a unified organisation—which is responsible for the overall development activities in the district. The District Panchayat, District Level Offices of ministries and departments, and the Chief District Officer were involved in the development activities with no clear-cut demarcation of functions and specific responsibilities.

The District Panchayat, as mentioned in the Decentralisation Scheme, was the centre for development and administration. It was, therefore, to be charged with the responsibility for development of education, health, agriculture, land management and administration. Neither the government nor the ministries and departments delegated the necessary authority to the District Panchayat. The departmental programmes were prepared at the central level and handed over to the district offices for implementation. Every district office was independent in the implementation of such programmes under the guidance of its parent department. The specific objectives, rather than the coordinated approach, formed the basis of district development activities. Villagers were approached by each agency without taking into consideration the programmes of other agencies. Nowhere did the District Panchayat come into the picture. This polysided approach also gave rise to confusion in the minds of the rural people who could not make the maximum use of facilities provided to them by the various agencies of the government.

The District Panchayat had to perform a number of civil and developmental functions. Accordingly, it could undertake development projects in agriculture, transport, education, cottage industry, irrigation, etc.,²⁹ provided that the financial implications of such projects could be met with. But except a few in

the Terai area, most District Panchayats were not financially sound to undertake the projects out of their own funds. They merely distributed the grants provided by the Local Development Department to Village Panchayats. The District Panchayats, often adopted resolutions, to be forwarded to the government, for the development works to be taken up in their respective districts. Even if a District Panchayat undertook some development projects out of its own funds, there was a problem of the maintenance of the completed projects.

Prospects : Unified Structure for District Administration

The problem of a unified district administrative structure posed a basic challenge to the development administration at the district level. The other problems were related to it. So the creation of a unified administrative structure seemed indispensable for the successful working of the district development administration.

As stated above, the District Panchayats, district offices of the government, and the Chief District Officer were involved in development activities without any linkage with each other. A unified district administrative structure, therefore, was created to tie all these organisations. In the new organization the separate existence of district level offices of ministries and departments could be abolished. The district level offices of Agriculture (including Animal Husbandary) Health, Education, Land Reform, Cottage Industry, Cooperatives, and Public Works (Roads and Housing) could be associated with the office of the Chief District Officer under the proposed administrative structure in the district. The Chief District Officer could head the district administration. He could be responsible for the maintenance of law and order and the development activities. The specialists could be made responsible for the technical work alone and not for general administration. Thus the Chief District Officer could effectively coordinate the development activities.

Phasewise Realisation of Administrative Decentralisation Programme

The Decentralisation Scheme introduced by the government.

suffered from "conceptual tyranny".³⁰ Regarding the conceptual meaning of the term 'decentralisation', there was no unanimity among the stalwarts of the Panchayat system. Nothing was known about the context in which this concept was included in the Constitution. The Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee felt that the term "decentralisation" was included in the Constitution at the behest of the late King Mahendra.

The lack of conceptual clarity was one of the principle reasons behind the non-utilisation of the vast man-power resources lying idle for so many years.³¹ Nepal cannot develop without the active cooperation of the people. Such cooperation is possible only when the panchayats are involved in the decision-making processes. Some time back, in an informal interview with the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, His Majesty King Birendra declared :

You have to have the cooperation of the people. And this is exactly what the Panchayat system is trying to do. We are trying to give powers to the lowest level, We are trying to give power to the villager so that he will be able to hold his own ground in his own village, and decide on his problems at his own level.³²

This statement needs further elaboration and explanation.

The decision on the actual role of the panchayats in the development process should be taken on the basis of the nature of leadership in the Panchayats. According to a study conducted by the Government of Nepal in 1967, the leadership in panchayats was in the hands of the feudal lords, land-owners, money lenders and business community.³³ By the very nature, such leaders were interested in the status-quo. In such a situation, if the panchayats are allowed to function as the local self-government, the leaders would exploit the situation to their advantage at the cost of the poor people. Until there is a clear sign of change in the nature and quality of leadership in the panchayats, it is desirable to associate the district panchayats in the decision-making process of the concerned agencies of development. So the Decentralisation Scheme should be implemented gradually in phases.

During the first phase of the Decentralisation Scheme, the

District Panchayat should be integrated into a unified structure for the district administration as proposed above, and then the district administration should be re-named as the "District Panchayat and Administration Office" (*Zila Panchayat Tatha Prashasan Karyalaya*). In the proposed set up, the District Panchayat will continue to elect members of the National Panchayat and to perform development activities. In the field of development the District Panchayat would be primarily concerned with coordination of development activities of village panchayats, and distribution of grants provided by the Local Development Department. The departmental programmes of the district offices which are unified in the district administration should be prepared at the district level under the supervision and control of the Chief District Officer. He should prepare and present the district budget to the District Panchayat for its comments and suggestions. To facilitate the preparation of the district budget, the concerned ministries and departments should be duly taken into confidence.

In the implementation of the district budget, the District Panchayat should have the authority to review and supervise the activities of the various sections of the district administration through the Chief District Officer. His Majesty's Government was believed to be giving a serious thought to the formation of the Development Councils for each of the four Regional Centres. The Chairmn of District Panchayats should be appointed as members of the proposed Councils. This arrangement will provide an opportunity to the members of the local panchayats to have a say in the development of the regions.

As stated earlier, there should be a change in the structure of district administration to avoid the problem of strained relationship between Officials and Non-officials. Since the Chief District Officer, is proposed to be the head of administration and a liaison between the local leaders and the administrators in the changed structure, a system of checks and balances should be devised to prevent the growing dominance of the Chief District Officer. The Chairman of the District Panchayat may be authorised to initiate a confidential report on the work of the Chief District Officer to be completed by the Zonal Commissioner. But ultimately the District Panchayat Chairman and the Chief District Officer must change their atti-

tude towards each other. "Officials have to develop a democratic spirit and frame of mind. Non-officials have to realise that without the proper cooperation of officials, development works cannot be accomplished. This can only be a gradual process."³⁴

After five to seven years, when the present leadership in the Panchayat would be replaced by a new one, the second phase of the Decentralisation Scheme would be implemented. The District Panchayat, in the second phase, should be empowered to work as the local-self-government. Accordingly, the development responsibilities in the fields of health, education, cooperative, some sectors of agriculture, including animal husbandry, and irrigation, should be delegated to the District Panchayat.³⁵ To avoid duplication, activities should be divided into National and District activities. For the formulation and implementation of the latter the District Panchayat should be made responsible. In order to make District Panchayats financially secure, the Panchayat Development and Land Taxes should be gradually introduced throughout the country. Care should be taken that this does not have an adverse effect on the revenue system. Accordingly, the provisions related to the share of the Panchayat Development and Land Taxes for the Village and District Panchayats and the Central Government should be revised and 50 per cent, 25 per cent and 25 per cent of the total tax amount may be allotted to the Village and District Panchayats and the Central Government respectively. In case District Panchayats still feel financially handicapped, His Majesty's Government should provide the "matching" and other types of grants. A separate credit agency³⁶ or the Agricultural Development Bank may also provide additional medium and long-term loans to the District Panchayat.

The required technical and administrative staff should be deputed by the government. The Chief District Officer, in the second phase of the Decentralisation Programme, will remain as liaison between the District Panchayat and the government. As a representative of the government he will attend the meetings of the District Panchayat in the capacity of a non-voting member. Besides, he will continue to look after law and order in the district.

According to this scheme, District Panchayats would be

associated with the decision making process in the first phase, and only in the second phase, they would work as the units of local-self-government. The first phase will cover five to seven years. Meanwhile, His Majesty's Government, under the pilot project programme, should delegate the developmental responsibilities to a few, say three, District Panchayats, i.e. Jhapa, Kavre and Surkhet Districts (Eastern Plan area, near the Kathmandu Valley, and Western Hill). After three years of working, these panchayats should be evaluated by a team of experts from the Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Planning Commission and Panchayat Training Centre. The beginning of the second phase should be guided by the findings of this committee.

District Administration Manual

The problems related to the location of responsibility and the administrative supervision, and the control over the district level officers by the Chief District Officer, will not be solved unless a District Administration Manual is prepared. Once the structure of the district administration is finalised, the ministries and departments (whose district offices are a part of the district administration in the new set up) should prepare the job descriptions for their district officers under the guidance of the Management Administrative Department.

The next question is the delegation of departmental authority to the Chief District Officer. To avoid the present confusion, the Chief District Officer should be equipped with sufficient responsibility for coordination. The Chief District Officer should, accordingly, have the authority over the district level officers of the ministries and departments especially in matters of programme formulation and implementation, personnel administration, and finance. A detailed list of his powers in this respect should be prepared by a committee headed by the Joint Secretary, O & M Division, Administrative Management Department and constituted by the representatives of the Ministries of Home Panchayat, Finance, Agriculture, Education, and of the Auditor-General, Planning Commission, Health Department, Cottage Industry Department, Local Development Department, Centre for Economic Development and Admini-

stration, and others concerned with the decentralisation programme. The report of the Committee should be approved by the government and published as the District Administration Manual along with the job descriptions of the district level officers. The right to amend and change the Manual should be vested in the government and not in the departments. In the absence of a Manual and a special effort for it, no department would delegate powers to the Chief District Officer.

The problem of coordination is not only confined to the execution level, it is equally important "at the top level of policy making." Unless coordination is effective in policy making and planning, it becomes difficult and often impossible in execution. For this purpose, there is no necessity of any new organisation. The Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission is responsible for the coordination at the central level, and he can be assisted by a committee of Secretaries.

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The Dynamics Foreign Policy

S D MUNI

Being a small and developing country, Nepal has been motivated in the formulation and execution of its foreign policy, by three strong urges. They, as described by Liska—are: the urges for : “security, stability and status”,¹ The urge for “security” has found expression in the objectives of (i) preservation of autonomy and independence in taking and implementing foreign policy decisions ; and (ii) preservation of territorial integrity. The first objective has a politico-diplomatic connotation and its task may be described as one of counteracting undesirable external pressures and influences. The second objective has a politico-military-strategic connotation and its task is defence against external aggression for the preservation of territorial integrity. The urge for “stability” also has two dimensions, namely, (i) stability of the domestic power structure in which every ruling group has the highest stakes ; and (ii) stability through economic development. These dimensions have been accordingly expressed as objectives of foreign policy. The urge for “status” is psychological in nature and it has been one of the forceful drives behind Nepal’s foreign policy behaviour.

The evolution and persual, respectively of these urges and objectives have been conditioned by Nepal’s uncomfortable geographical location between Asia’s two great land masses ; India and China (the Tibet Region), its small size and landlocked character and its highly underdeveloped economy. The kingdom’s historical background, its socio-cultural structures and ethoes, the character of its leadership and the nature of political system operating in the kingdom have also played significant role in the evolution and functioning of its foreign policy. Above all, the milieu of international politics, particularly the one obtaining in the South Asian region, impinges upon Nepal’s foreign policy behaviour.

Here, the contributions, made by King Mahendra and B P

Koirala to the formulation and execution of Nepal's foreign policy deserve special mention. King Mahendra, being in control of the Executive, for a long period of 17 years (March 1955 to January 1972) had been responsible for the skillful execution of the policy. Through his endeavours, Nepal secured its due respect and place in the community of nations, and in turn developed a personality of its own. His contribution had been all the more important with respect to the use of foreign policy in domestic politics. From 1960 until his death in 1972, he successfully employed foreign policy to stabilise his regime and strengthen the Panchayat system established by him. He worked-up foreign policy to resolve the crises of legitimacy, identification and stability of his government, with considerable success, at least during the years immediately following the establishment of the Panchayat system.

B P Koirala's contribution was more at the level of evolving the general framework of foreign policy. It was during his Prime Ministership (1959-60) that Nepal successfully faced the first serious challenge in its foreign policy—the pressure from China as we shall see below. Koirala was equally keen and enthusiastic in identifying Nepal with other small nations and thus taking unified actions to reform the international system.² His efforts were, however, cut short owing to the dismissal of his popularly elected government by King Mahendra through his 'takeover' on 15 December, 1960.

Foreign Policy Strategy

The limitations and constraints arising out of Nepal's uncomfortable geographical location, small size and under-developed economy constitute its weaknesses in the field of foreign policy. Such weaknesses of small states are often exploited by the more powerful nations by pressures and intimidation in the furtherance of their respective interests.³ The basic tasks of the foreign policy of small states have, therefore, been to (i) reduce the weaknesses through the expansion and strengthening of the respective "safe bases" (material and substantial content) of their national power; and also to (ii) weaken the potentialities of those bigger powers that exercise pressures and intimidation against them.⁴ In principle and as ultimate goals, these two

tasks are true for Nepal also. However, in practical terms they do not seem to be viable options. Mainly so because Nepal's resource base and potentialities offer only limited prospects of expansion and mobilisation. In any case, the power-gap between the kingdom and the sources of pressures on it ; its neighbours on the one hand and the super powers on the other—is so wide and deep that Nepal's relative weakness i.e. "vulnerability" is bound to remain intact. For the same reason, Nepal by itself can do very little by way of employing the tactics of "subversion" as suggested by Vital, to weaken or reduce the "coercive" potential of the bigger powers capable of exercising pressures and intimidation.

Three Aspects of the Strategy

In practical terms, the foreign policy strategy worked out by Nepal is based on one premise : the skillful manipulation of international—regional as well as global—forces and power equations to counteract pressures and strengthen the "safe-base" of its national power. This premise has three aspects to be put into action simultaneously :

- (1) The maximisation of the scope of manoeuvrability in relation to the pressure-exerting powers through the exploitation of mutual differences, clash of interests and rivalry amongst the latter.
- (2) The splitting and diffusing of the potentialities of pressures and intimidation through the diversification and expansion of the sources of economic, political and military support and dependence.
- (3) The mobilisation of international contacts and "public" opinion for building counter-pressures and creating alternative sources of support against the pressure-exerting powers.

The successful application of the first aspect obviously envisages, in the first place, the existence of differences, clash of interests and rivalry among the pressure-exerting powers. Secondly, for exploiting the situation of conflict and competition, it is essential for the small state to convincingly impress upon

each of the contenders that it holds a strategic position and is open to be cultivated by either of the sides, provided proper incentives are offered. Towards that end, the stand of political "neutrality" is inevitable: a stand that is meant to convey that the small state has no preconceived sympathies or prejudices for either of the sides and is willing, as well as capable, of taking and implementing independent decisions. Lastly, for the successful manoeuvring aimed at in the situation, it is also essential for the small state to have an arrangement of dependent but not too loudly pronounced, military protection, particularly, in the event of the break-out of military conflicts between the contenders, leading to the failure of political neutrality and a threat to the small state's bare survival.

What facilitates the pressurisation and intimidation of the small state by the bigger powers is the former's dependence upon the latter in economic, political and military matters. The more the dependence, the greater are the possibilities and probabilities of 'coercion'. Therefore, the diffusion of its dependence through the creation of more and alternate sources in this context by the small state is bound to result in more flexibility and discretion for itself and thus in the extension of its scope of manoeuvrability *vis-a-vis* the pressure-exerting powers.

The mobilisation of international contacts and "public" opinion by the small state against the pressures and acts of intimidation by a big power can also be employed fruitfully to discipline the 'coercive' power. It may prove to be inadequate in itself, but if used along with other factors, this method also works in the desired direction. However, the degree to which the methods of building moral counter-pressures and of the diffusion of dependence would yield results, depends upon the dynamism and mobility of the small state to display sociability and its deftness to conduct "public relations" in the international society. Here the number and nature of the small state's "friends" in the community of Nations and its style of participation in the UN and other international forums would prove to be vital and decisive factors.

The theoretical framework for and legitimacy to the above mentioned aspects of foreign policy strategy of the small state are provided by the concepts of Non-alignment and Peaceful Co-existence.⁵ This was perhaps the reason behind the adoption of

Non-alignment and Peaceful Coexistence as the major foreign policy postures by a large majority of newly emergent, less powerful and underdeveloped nations of Asia and Africa since the early fifties. These foreign policy postures and the strategy inherent in them eminently suited Nepal's requirements. However, the actual application by Nepal, of these aspects of foreign policy strategy has to be viewed at two levels corresponding to the possible directions and sources of pressures and intimidation, namely the immediate neighbours and the two Super Powers.

Application of the First Aspect

In relation to its immediate neighbours, Nepal's geographical location between India and China was both a *liability* and an *asset*. It was a liability owing to the vast power gap between Nepal on the one hand and each of its neighbours on the other. This made the Kingdom an easy prey to the pressures exerted by India and China in order to further their respective 'national interests'. Nepal's location as its *Liability* was all the more pronounced in relation to India owing to its excessive dependence in economic, political and military matters upon India as also due to very close socio-cultural affinities and easy accessibility between the two countries.

The implications of *liability vis-a-vis* India dominated Nepal's foreign policy during 1951-55. The legacies of the pattern of relations obtaining for about a century between the Ranas of Nepal and the British rulers in India had prepared a ground for that. This ground of Nepal's very intimate and "special relations" with India was further strengthened and given a new vigour by the role played by the Government of India in bringing about the fall of the Ranas during 1950-51. Then the external environment, particularly the developments in China and Tibet and the Chinese attitude of acquiescence towards the Indo-Nepalese ties also contributed a great deal in the evolution and perpetuation of "special relations" between the two countries. Accordingly, during 1951-55, India helped Nepal to maintain domestic peace and political stability, initiate programmes for economic development and administrative reforms and move towards the goal of overall socio-cultural

and political modernisation. In the fields of foreign policy, defence and security, Nepal accepted India's guidance and dominance. In sum, an unspecified alliance existed between the two countries.

The phase of Nepal's "special relations" with India underwent significant changes after 1955. The changes had been made imperative owing to realignment of forces in Nepal's domestic politics and external milieu. In the domestic political scene, the new monarch, King Mahendra symbolised the demands for a change in Nepal's foreign policy. He was in no way obliged, like his father, King Tribhuvan, to perpetuate India's guidance and leadership over Nepal. To facilitate King Mahendra's innovations in the field of foreign policy, a highly pronounced anti-Indian feeling had also come to exist in a large majority of the kingdom's political parties and elites. The external milieu had become congenial to bring about the changes in foreign policy following the conclusion of the *Panchsheel Agreement* in April 1954, between India and China under which the former accepted the latter's suzerainty over Tibet. This Agreement paved the way for the regularisation of diplomatic relations between Nepal and China, which was completed by 1956—with the conclusion of a Trade and Intercourse Agreement between the two countries in September of that year.

These developments led to the gradual emergence and dominance of the *asset* dimension of Nepal's geographical location in the kingdom's foreign policy. As an *asset*, the geographical location has placed Nepal in a strategic position between India and China where it has become an object to be wooed by each of its neighbours against the other. Thus the *asset* dimension underlined the basic pre-requisites for the operationalisation of the first aspect of the kingdom's foreign policy strategy. It became gradually active during 1956-59 and thereafter, with the coming to fore of conflict, competition and rivalry between India and China.

The sharpening of differences between its two giant neighbours led Nepal to employ one of them to ward off the pressures exerted on it by the other. In order to bring this about, the kingdom subtly encouraged the competition between them *vis-a-vis* itself and, thus extracted political concessions and economic benefits from each of them. During 1959-60, Nepal

ensured India's readiness to act as a counter-balance to the actual and apprehended Chinese pressures pertaining to the boundary dispute between Nepal and China. Similarly, during 1961-62, Nepal successfully mobilised its friendly ties with China and Pakistan to counteract India's 'coercion' in the field of domestic politics. Basically the same approaches were re-activated on subsequent occasions.

Nepal experienced pressures from the Chinese side during 1967-68 as was the case during 1959-60, though the pressures and strains were of different nature. Nepal adopted a two-pronged approach to meet those pressures. One, the issues involved were localised and settled bilaterally with China. They were not allowed to affect other aspects of the Sino-Nepalese relations. Two, Nepal maintained close contacts and understanding with India and explored the possibilities of meeting the situation if the Chinese pressures were to acquire a dangerous proportion.

During 1969-71, India was viewed as the source of pressures on Nepal as was the case during 1961-62. India had become assertive, the Nepali Congress leaders living in self-imposed exile in India, particularly B P Koirala, were becoming active against the Panchayat system and a number of economic and political problems had come up between the two countries. To deal with these problems, Nepal had direct negotiations with India. These negotiations were marked by ups and downs and whenever Nepal found India unyielding, it resorted to the tactics of creating counter-pressures. Within Nepal, the issues involved were inflated and an anti-Indian opinion was allowed to gain strength. Externally, Nepal activated its relations with China and Pakistan within the region and at times tried to play one side against the other.

Functionally, however, the activation of the first aspect of the foreign policy strategy, during the two sets of situations in 1967-68 and 1969-71, was mild as compared to the one in 1959-60 and 1961-62. This was so because the intensity of the pressures was also mild and no immediate and violent threat was involved. Another factor that explains the functional mildness of Nepal's policy towards its neighbours was that both India and China had gained in stature and strength during this period. It, therefore, could neither go too close to the

one, particularly China, nor sustain a strong posture against the other as in the past. Most important constraint on Nepal in this context was the absence of open and intense hostility between China and India. In fact, the two countries had quietly started probing each other for normalisation of their relations. This had considerably reduced Nepal's scope for manoeuvrability in the region.

Functional Prerequisites of the First Aspect

In conformity with the functional prerequisites for the application of the first aspect of the foreign policy strategy—the exploitation of the differences, and clash of interests and rivalry between the 'coercive' powers, Nepal underlined its strategic significance in the region and asserted its capacity to take independent decisions. It proclaimed a neutral stand on the disputes between India and China as well as between India and Pakistan. To a certain extent, the tensions in the region, emanating out of the disputes between the neighbours suited Nepal's interests best and were, therefore, welcome.⁶

However, the aggravation of such tensions into the armed conflicts, created an embarrassing situation for Nepal. Its proclaimed stand of neutrality was subtly, but definitely compromised. During the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 and the Indo-Pak conflicts of 1965 and 1971, underplayed its neutrality in favour of India. This was primarily in response to the mutual understanding in defence matters between India and Nepal under the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950 and other arrangements evolved following that.⁷

These seemingly contradictory postures of political neutrality and defence commitments adopted by Nepal in the regional context, did not prove functionally incompatible. In fact India's military protection, assured under the arrangements constituting the mutual understanding in defence matters between the two countries, was one of the prerequisites for Nepal to take a stand of political neutrality in the region. Nepal took every care in demonstrating that while being politically neutral in the disputes between its neighbours, it did not violate its defence commitments with India and also, that while honouring defence commitments at a point of time, it did not take sides on the

political issues. Nor did it abandon its right to remain politically neutral, once the conflict-situation, necessitating for activating defence commitments was over.

The kingdom's neighbours also appear to have understood the logic and compulsions behind Nepal's delicate handling of its policy in this context. Notwithstanding China's numerous protests against the employment of Gorkhas in the Indian Army and the manning of Nepal's northern border posts by Indian technicians the Chinese leaders had shown acquiescence towards this relationship. India, on its part, never disputed the fact that Nepal should have friendly and peaceful relations with China despite the fact that on several occasions India expressed displeasure for growing intimacy between these two countries and the use of their relations against India. Even in the midst of Sino-Indian border dispute, the government of India encouraged the Nepali leadership in 1960 to settle their country's boundary problem with China, and were not unusually perturbed when the Nepali Prime Minister BP Koirala declared to be neutral on the question of the McMahon line.

The Second and the Third Aspects in Action

The second aspect of Nepal's foreign policy strategy in the neighbouring region of diversification and expansion of the source of support and dependence—was pursued as vigorously as the first, though, with comparatively less success. Nepal secured economic assistance from varied and diverse sources, but the assistance from neighbours, particularly India, always remained substantial and was found relatively far more effective and convenient in technical terms. Nepal made serious attempts to expand its trade contacts and, therefore, sought additional port and transit facilities through India. It also concluded trade agreements with Pakistan, China, the Socialist countries, the USA, the UK and others. However, the economic and geographical limitations inherent in this policy proved formidable. Nepal's bulk of trade (about 90%) is still with India. The kingdom also received some military assistance from the US and the UK in 1964, albeit with Indian concurrence.

The application of the third aspect—of building counterpressures and alternative sources of support—in the regional

context, was considerably mild and ineffective. Nepal kept the UN and the Non-Aligned Nations Summit Conferences informed about its concern with the situations created by the regional conflicts. An appeal was made in these forums for the peaceful and amicable settlement of disputes between the warring neighbours. King Mahendra also tried to secure international recognition in favour of his controversial domestic actions, like the dismissal of parliamentary system in December 1960 and the establishment of the Panchayat system thereafter, through his personal participation in these international bodies and organisations.

The Global Context

What was true regarding Nepal's policy in the neighbouring region was basically also true in the wider global context, particularly in relation to the global sources of 'coercion'. However, the intensity of pressures and intimidation on Nepal, from the Super Powers, was less as compared to those from the regional powers. More so because Nepal's strategic value in relation to the rivalry between the Super Powers was almost insignificant as against between India and China. Hence, the application of the first aspect of foreign policy strategy was much less vigorous and pronounced. Nepal, accordingly, maintained friendly relations with both the US and the USSR and their respective allies ; received aid and assistance from them and remained non-aligned. Following the Sino-American reproachment in 1969 and the growing Indo-Soviet collaboration since the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between them in August 1971, Nepal's significance for the Super Powers has further declined. These developments are bound to reduce direct economic and political involvement of the Super Powers in the kingdom's affairs.

A closer view of Nepal's approach towards the Super Powers and their allies would, however, reveal that it had a leaning toward the West. Two factors explain this leaning. First, in Nepal's perception, the Western powers, particularly the USA were more powerful, resourceful and keen to fulfil its needs. Their keen interest in Nepal was evident from the fact that whereas Nepal figured in the US global strategy since 1945, the

Soviet Union moved to cultivate the kingdom only towards the late fifties. The second factor was largely ideological. For various reasons, Nepal had a very strong bias against the Communist political system and creed.

The operationalisation of the second and the third aspects of Nepal's foreign policy strategy were more extensive and spirited in the global context. Nepal identified itself with the small uncommitted and newly emergent nations. It expanded mutually beneficial political and economic relations with them, and joined them in raising its voice against the undesirable acts and postures of the big powers. Its participation in the UN and the Non-aligned Nations' Conferences made this further evident.

Identification with the Emerging World Order

An integrated view of the simultaneous pursual of the above described three aspects of policy in the global context by Nepal leads to the assumption that the kingdom had identified itself with the emerging world-order realising full well that it should not be alienated from the existing one. In an international system dominated by bipolarity, Nepal opted for the emerging alternative of Non-alignment and Peaceful Coexistence.⁸ In fact, it started practising this alternative at a time when the politics of cold-war and bloc-formation was particularly brisk in South Asia. Against the long-standing traditions of colonial and imperial regimes, Nepal sided with the forces of freedom and equality. While doing all this, however, Nepal maintained and expanded its friendly bilateral relations with the protagonists of the cold-war and former colonial and imperial powers. This kept the kingdom abreast with the existing reality and helped in pursuing its economic and political objectives. Thus, whereas Nepal criticised the Super Powers for their "arrogance of power" it sought and secured, moral support and material benefits from them.

A very significant recent development in the international system has been the transformation in the bipolar situation. There has been a drop in the cold-war tensions, and the *detente* between the two Super Powers and the ideological blocs has come to be recognised as a definite fact of international poli-

tics. The military pacts and alliances have been loosening and there are clear signs of the emergence of more centres of power ; five : the US, the USSR, China, Japan and the Western Europe, are commonly accepted as the new centres of power in the world. Such a development by creating more alternatives and options, would enhance the prospects of manoeuvrability for the small states. King Mahendra's visit to France in October 1966, after it had taken an assertive posture *vis-a-vis* the United States and his appreciation of the new French posture of *Gaullism* in foreign policy matters—may be recalled as evidences. Nepal's consistent efforts since 1966-67 to invite Japanese economic and political interests in its affairs and thus involve Japan as one of the important participants in its foreign policy system may be cited as another instance to the point.

With the same logic the emergence of China should have been welcomed by Nepal.⁹ The probability of increase in the Chinese 'coercive' potential following 1962 resulted in the coming to gether of the USA and the USSR to join India in offering a powerful counter-balance to Nepal against China. This naturally resulted in more economic and other benefits to the kingdom. However, China is too close to Nepal and its emergence, apart from its consequences on the international system, tends to upset the regional balance and thus damage the *asset* aspect of the kingdom's geographical location. Further, as a result of the increasing Sino-American rapport, the USA is likely to dissuade itself from acting as a counter-weight to China in Nepal. All this has created a scare in Nepal's behaviour, pertaining to those international issues in which China is involved.

Linkage Between the Regional and the Global Dimensions of Policy

This takes us to the correlations between the regional and the global facets of Nepal's foreign policy. As already noted, the regional pressure-extending powers had been effective on Nepal, as compared to the Super Powers. As a result, Nepal's policy in the global context had been subservient to and extension of the policy in the neighbouring region. This was

evident in Nepal's mobilisation of its relations with the Super Powers to meet the pressures from its neighbours. The following instances may be recalled in support of the contention :

1. King Mahendra's visit to the USA and the UK and Prime Minister BP Koirala's meetings with American President Eisenhower and Soviet Premier NS Khrushchev during 1959-60 when the pressures were felt from the Chinese side.

2. King Mahendra's quick efforts to secure recognition from the USA, the USSR, the UK and others, for his take-over of December 1960 which had brought-in pressures from the Indian side. Nepal had also utilised the UN and the Non-aligned Nations Conference at Belgrade, mostly informally, for the same purpose.

3. After the Sino-Indian conflict, which made Nepal's position all the more precarious, the Chairman of Nepal's Council of Ministers Dr Tulsī Giri had a series of visits during 1963-64 to the USA, the USSR, the UK and France and had important discussions with the respective leaders of these countries, about the regional developments. One significant outcome of these visits was Western Arms aid to Nepal.

4. While facing difficulties with China and India during 1967-68 and 1969-71 respectively, Nepal activated the global dimensions of its foreign policy. Contacts with the Super Powers were maintained at the highest level. King Mahendra visited the United States in November 1967 and the Soviet Union in June 1971. Nepal's Foreign Minister, GB Rajbhandari was in Moscow in September 1969 and Kathmandu welcomed the US Vice-President, Spiro Agnew in January 1970. During these visits, Nepali leaders discussed the developments in their neighbouring region with American and Soviet leaders. Soon after King Mahendra's visit to the United States, an American Army General, TZ Conway visited Nepal in November 1967 where he inspected the Kathmandu-Kodari highway and the Mustang region. This visit was significant in view of the then prevailing apprehensions regarding the strategic significance of the Highway constructed with Chinese assistance, ostensibly for commercial purposes. The Soviet diplomats also undertook frequent visits to the interior parts of the kingdom like Dharan where the Maoists had been reported to be active.

Recent Trends

The emergence of Bangladesh as an independent sovereign republic in Nepal's neighbourhood was a development of far-reaching consequences.¹⁰ This development radically restructured the hitherto obtaining power equations and patterns of political forces in the region. Immediately after this development it appeared that Nepal was inclined to throw its weight with the "Indo-Soviet equation." But the subsequent developments did not sustain this impression. Nepal's caution towards the Indo-Soviet equation is prompted by two closely related factors. First, in the Nepalese perception, the Soviet interests in the kingdom had declined as a natural consequence of the Soviet efforts to "expand and deepen" its relations with India. Secondly, there is an uncanny suspicion in the kingdom that the Soviet Union might ignore Nepal's basic national interests in the process of strengthening its position in the subcontinent. Expressing the suspicion, Nepal's former Foreign Secretary YN Khanal told an official seminar in Kathmandu :

Nepal-Soviet relations call for a vigorous effort based on a realistic appraisal of mutual interests. In the course of such renewed effort, it is essential for our diplomacy to impress upon the Soviet Union that it should continue to refuse to be a party to any attempt from any quarter to decide or compromise Nepal's future behind its back, as an independent sovereign member of the international community. This vigilance is necessary because, historically speaking, trade offs of third countries have taken place at the time of either extreme friendship or of extreme hostility between major powers.¹¹

It is, therefore, clear that while Nepal wishes to maintain its close and fruitful relations with India, it is not likely to close or even weaken its other policy options.

A diffused balance in the region between India on the one hand and India's neighbours on the other under the patronage of China and the United States, has always been a possibility. Nepal is likely to be an active participant in such a balance. A pointer in this direction was the fact that President Nixon's

1973 policy statement on South Asia in which the US efforts to maintain direct and independent (of India) relations with countries of the region, including Nepal, was loudly greeted in Kathmandu. This direction of Nepal's foreign policy is further underlined in King Birendra's lately increasing emphasis on keeping "equidistance" between India and China, including his proposal for Nepal to be declared as a 'Zone of peace'. It is true that the normalisation of relations between India and China now hopefully initiated will adversely affect Nepal's capacity to manoeuvre and manipulate power equations in the region, but in no case can the position of the early fifties be forced upon the kingdom.

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Great Powers and Nepal

VINOD KUMAR

Britain (UK), the United States (US), and the Soviet Union (USSR) are intrusive powers in Nepal, India and China are adjacent local Powers. They constitute the vital elements in the politico-strategic environment in Nepal in which these intrusive Powers have had to operate. It is clearly important to analyse how far the policies and actions of these Great Powers are conditioned by this environment—and changes therein—and how far these in turn affect the nature of this environment. This means, in effect, a study of the impact of the Great Powers' role on the India-China equation in Nepal and vice-versa.

This study can be conveniently divided into five main periods, corresponding to the five distinct phases in the Great Powers' activity in Nepal. These are :

- I. The end of British dominance (1945-51) ;
- II. Low-Key Western Posture (1951-55) ;
- III. Scramble for 'Spheres of Influence' (1955-60) ;
- IV. Soviet-American Parallelism (1960-70) ;
- V. Recent Trends and Future Prospects.

The End of the British Dominance : Erosion of British Powers : Defence of (Residual) Imperial Interests

By the end of the Second World War it became quite clear that the century-old British dominance in Nepal, as in Asia, was coming to an end, and that a new basis would soon have to be found for relation between the two countries in the light of the new realities of international political situation in general, and those of Asia in particular. Therefore, Britain was to move quickly to safeguard its residual interests in Nepal, as in India,

before its withdrawal from the area was complete.

Hitherto, British policy towards Nepal was governed by basically two sets of considerations :

- i) Defence of British Empire in India against both internal and external threats to its security ;
- ii) Protection of other imperial possessions and interests of Britain.

With the impending British withdrawal from the sub-continent, responsibility for the first would shift to the new government of independent India.

As for the second, Nepal had for long played an important role by providing Gorkhas to the British. They had already proved their mettle in the two World Wars when they fought in large numbers alongside the British, as part of the British Indian Army. They only cost between one-third to one-half of what their British counterparts did.¹ Moreover, they were available in relative abundance. Gains for Nepal were not inconsiderable either. One was the additional source of employment for a rising population which a stagnant Nepalese economy could not support ; the second was the income from salaries and pensions, etc., for individual soldiers ; the third, and even more important, was the foreign exchange that Nepal could earn from the remission home of some of the above income. However, because of the landlocked character of Nepal, India's cooperation was indispensable for transit and transport facilities and for the continued use of recruitment centres, at least until alternative arrangements could be made in Nepal. It was not yet clear whether the nationalist government of independent India would allow these facilities, for the troops might be used to suppress nationalist movements ; if it did, it might seek to impose restrictions on their deployment.

Therefore, in sharp contrast to the policy traditionally followed by the British government of India, the British would hereafter tend to emphasise Nepalese independence, especially from India,² to have it re-inforced with recognition by other countries, e.g., by the US and France, and generally to facilitate Nepal's contacts abroad towards this end.³ The Ranas, who shared with the British their distrust of the Congress politicians,

did not require any encouragement, as they were already keen to diversify Nepal's foreign relations.

The implementation of this policy was skilfully timed. In July 1947, the British government reaffirmed Nepalese independence when their respective legations in Kathmandu and London were raised to the embassy level. Three months earlier, when the tripartite negotiations between Britain, Nepal and India for the recruitment of Gorkha in the British and Indian armies were still in progress, US sent a special diplomatic mission to Kathmandu and recognised Nepal's independence.⁴ These tripartite negotiations were conducted, and nearly completed, by the time of the transfer of power to India in mid-August 1947, that is, at a time when India's bargaining position was very weak. The formal agreement⁵, signed in November, showed that the Indians had fully cooperated in meeting the British requirements.

Anglo-US Diplomacy : Significance of Early US Interest

What was the significance of the early US interest in Nepal, involving as it did a flurry of diplomatic activity between Washington and Kathmandu (via New Delhi and London) in the years 1945-48 ?⁶ Commercial considerations can be safely ruled out since "American business had no interest, then or later, in Nepal".⁷ To seek an explanation, one should look at certain "other matters of mutual interest", which figured in the discussions, the US Special Mission to Nepal had with the Nepali authorities.⁸ The nature of these behind-the-scenes discussions and their underlying motives can only be inferred from the politico-strategic context of the two-year long negotiations. That these "other matters" involved important political and military considerations was indicated not only by the composition of the US Delegation to Nepal—it was not high-powered and included an Assistant Military Attache—but also from the active personal interest taken by the US President, Truman, throughout the negotiations.⁹ The point was not missed by Radio Moscow when it voiced suspicions that the US mission masked military moves.¹⁰

There were common Anglo-US interests in preventing the emergence of a power vacuum in the area following the British

withdrawal from India. In fact, the whole context and timing of these negotiations and, in particular, the presence in New Delhi and Kathmandu during this period (March-April 1947) of a British Military Mission to negotiate on the question of Gorkha recruitment—it was too much of a coincidence to be ignored—make one wonder whether the US initiatives in Nepal were not designed to reinforce the ‘carrot and stick’ policy, which the British were employing vis-a-vis India in order to obtain its cooperation in the defence of their strategic and other interests in South and South East Asia in general and in Nepal in particular. The sudden loss of US interest in Nepal in the years 1948-50, i.e. after Indian cooperation had been obtained in the matter of Gorkha recruitment further confirms this view.

Changes in the Strategic Environment

The period 1947-50 saw basic changes in the strategic environment of the area, which had considerable impact on the relative positions of the Great Powers in Nepal. The emergence of independent India meant a considerable increase in its influence on Nepal and a progressive decline in that of Britain. The communist victory in China and reassertion by the latter of its authority in Tibet transformed the balance of power in Asia against the West as well as against India. It emphasised Nepal’s strategic importance for the US policy of containing communism in South Asia, and even more, for Indian security, located as it was on the edge of Sino-Soviet ‘Bloc’ and sandwiched between India and China. Nepal could, therefore, serve as a valuable listening post for the West. The internal threat to the Rana regime, at a time when the cold war between the blocs was at its height, lent a new sense of urgency to increase the US interest and involvement in Nepal.¹¹

Anglo-US Role in the Anti-Rana Revolution of 1950-51

A stable and friendly regime in Nepal was obviously a common Anglo-US interest. Hitherto the Ranas had fulfilled this role admirably, but lately they were facing mounting unrest and opposition to their autocratic rule. That they might

ride and survive the coming storm was a fond Western hope. Instinctively as well as ideologically, both London and Washington were averse to an abrupt change, as indeed was New Delhi. But the former were not even prepared to support the latter's demand for partial accommodation on the part of the Ranas. It was clear, any new government in Nepal, which included elements of democratic opposition—with widespread support in India—would not be as pro-West as the Ranas. In fact what the West feared was a further curtailment of their influence in Nepal. Britain in particular wondered what effect a change of regime in Nepal might have on the recruitment of Gorkhas for the British army.¹²

In October 1950 when the crisis was deepening, the British tried to restore the sagging morale and legitimacy of the Ranas by signing a new "Treaty of Amity" with Nepal, which incidentally also provided for improved recruitment facilities for the British Gorkha regiments.¹³ When this proved unavailing, and an armed rebellion broke out against the regime, following the flight to India of King Tribhuvan, the British (and the Americans) adopted a 'wait and watch' attitude on the recognition of the Rana-appointed infant King, Gyanendra.¹⁴ Soon afterwards, they were preparing to accord the recognition,¹⁵ but held back their move when they learned that Kathmandu was willing to negotiate a compromise with New Delhi.

That the US was one with Britain in this, was clear not only from the embarrassed refusal of its Ambassador in New Delhi to answer a pointed question on the subject,¹⁶ but even more from the fact that he was at the same time negotiating, a Point-Four agreement with the Rana regime, which the two countries signed on 23 January 1951, barely two weeks before the Ranas finally capitulated and accepted the "Delhi Compromise."¹⁷

Low-Key Western Posture (1951-55) : US Objectives in Nepal

The US now began a limited programme of economic aid to the Kingdom, to be followed closely by India.¹⁸ Its objectives were two-fold. First, which it shared with India, was to help provide economic and political stability for various post-Rana regimes, thus enabling them to meet any communist threat from within and without. The second was to secure a firm foot-

hold in Nepal and thereby regain some of the influence which the West had lost to India. The Western acquiescence to India's 'special relationship' with Nepal was reluctant and essentially governed by short-term tactical considerations. It was clear from 'secret' British moves, both before and after the Nepalese revolution, to thwart Indian attempts in getting Nepal to co-ordinate its foreign policy with India's on a regular basis.¹⁹ Coming on top of the British moves, the alleged anti-Indian activities of US officials in Nepal appeared in the Indian, and at least some Nepali eyes to be a part of the wider Western policy in South Asia, viz. to balance Indian military, diplomatic and political weight in the subcontinent by exploiting the differences prevalent among its constituent units. However, for the present, the US too would adopt a low-key posture in Nepal till time and circumstance create better opportunities for its diplomacy.

USSR and Nepal (1945-55) : Indifference and Antipathy

Soviet attitude towards Nepal during this period was essentially an extension of her general orientation towards South Asia, an amalgam of indifference and antipathy. There were several reasons for this. Soviet interest in, and knowledge of, South Asia in general, and Nepal in particular, was perhaps even more limited at the end of the Second World War than was the case with the US. Further unlike the US, the USSR had no one to look up to for help and advice in this area which was traditionally a jealously guarded preserve of British Imperialism. Moreover, in Soviet eyes British withdrawal from the sub continent was only formal, because for long afterwards, Britain continued to have close cooperation with the countries involved in various fields : economic, political, cultural, diplomatic and even military. To confuse things further, the US, as the leader of the so-called 'Free World', had, because of ideological and power-political reasons, decided to underwrite the waning empires of Britain and France in Asia and elsewhere—all in the name of containing the menace of international communism, of which the USSR was the acknowledged leader. No wonder Stalin, pre-occupied with acute problems of economic reconstruction at home and intense cold war in Europe, continued to look at

countries like India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Nepal as stooges of Western Imperialism. Consequently Nepal's aspirations for admission to the UN were frustrated by repeated Soviet vetoes until December 1955, when she got in under a compromise settlement between the two blocs.

Scrambles for Spheres of Influence (1955-60)

The second half of the 'fifties saw big changes in the international landscape in Nepal. What started as a Nepalese quest for diversification of foreign relations, aid and status, would later develop into a scramble among the US, the USSR, India and China for 'spheres of influence' in this tiny but sensitive sub-Himalayan Kingdom. As a result, there was a steep increase in both the amount of aid which Nepal received as well as in the number of donors.²⁰

New Soviet Interest in Nepal

As observed earlier, in December 1955, the USSR had lifted its veto to allow Nepal's admission to the UN. The next step was the Soviet initiative to open diplomatic relations with Nepal, which came to fruition in July 1956. This was followed in March 1957 by some vague offers of aid when the first Soviet Ambassador presented his credentials to King Mahendra.²¹ Nothing significant happened in their relations until King Mahendra's visit to USSR in June 1958—which was returned by President Voroshilov in February 1960—when Nepal accepted a Soviet offer of aid. In April 1959 an agreement was signed between the two countries whereby Nepal received \$ 7.5 million worth of economic and technical assistance from the Soviet Union.²²

The new Soviet interest in Nepal was part of a general shift in Soviet policy towards Asia and Africa. This was the result of a basic change in the world outlook of new Soviet leaders (after Stalin's death) and a reappraisal of the role of newly independent countries in the cold war. Bandung had clearly demonstrated the potentialities for new Soviet diplomacy in weaning these countries away from Western dominance.

To say that the Soviet interest in Nepal was an extension of

their interest in India may be true but is not enough. In Nepal, as in India, Soviet policy at this time was primarily directed against the West. It could not however fail to affect India's position adversely as it was the principal foreign power in Nepal. This was especially true of the character of Soviet aid programme to Nepal, even though it was quite limited both in scale and scope as compared to that of India and the US. Russia's willingness to undertake a survey of the East-West Highway, after its refusal by India and the US, illustrates the point. Was the USSR trying to reinforce the Chinese position in Nepal, as it then seemed to India and the US? The Chinese could not be so sure. It was more likely that the Soviets sought an additional pocket of influence in Nepal, independent of both New Delhi and Peking, while retaining the option to lean this way or that, as may be expedient. This could best be done by appealing to the Nepalese nationalism. The Highway, it was argued, would promote economic and political integration in Nepal, strengthen Kathmandu's control over remote parts of the country and (this was implicit) thereby reduce dependence on India.²³

Moscow, however, recognised India's close relations with Nepal and underplayed the importance of Russian presence there.²⁴ Accordingly, the Soviets directed their fire at Washington. US assistance, they argued, was inspired by ulterior motives, while Chinese assistance, and naturally their own, was "disinterested."²⁵ Significantly their first approaches to Kathmandu were routed via Peking.²⁶ All this was likely to touch responsive chords in Kathmandu, Delhi and Peking, for they all shared suspicions of American motives. But for all this, Russian relations with Nepal during this period were friendly, yet distant.²⁷

Competitive Wooing of Nepal

US involvement in Nepal in general, and "in the inner workings of the government" in particular, had grown steadily throughout the 'fifties until by 1958, a situation had arisen when before long the US "would have to bear the awesome responsibility of being the main prop of the government."²⁸ It was in this context that the Chinese aid (the portion given in cash, the remainder having remained unutilised) was used to finance the

local costs of US aided projects in Nepal. Now with the Soviet offer of aid in hand, the Nepalese government began to balance America with Russia—much as it had been putting America against India and vice-versa—and obtained vastly increased amounts of aid from the US in 1959 in exchange of a ‘concession’, i. e. to keep the USSR out of education and aviation.²⁹ India, not to be outdone, soon joined in this competitive wooing of Nepal, and substantially increased its own aid commitments.³⁰

For a time it appeared that the Indo-US rivalry in Nepal might be mitigated by the common need to meet the new communist, especially Chinese, challenge in this sensitive area. Both joined Nepal in an ambitious road-building project (RTO). They are also alleged to have cooperated in meeting the communist threat from within Nepal—by supporting the Nepali Congress in the 1959 elections.³¹ Indo-US support for the Nepali Congress was based on the hope that the Koirala government would remain friendly to India and would be sympathetic to Western and Indian fears of Chinese intentions.³²

Yet when this government fell in December 1960, their reactions were diverse. The fact is that “basic disagreement between the Americans and the Indians on how to achieve the commonly agreed goal of keeping Nepal out of Chinese hands produced tensions because of the divergent policies their mutual differences led them to follow. ‘Leading American and Indian officials who attempted to head off clashes in the policy field had but limited success.’”³³ No wonder the RTO project ended in a disastrous failure and mutual recrimination. Earlier their mutual bickerings and rivalry had been reflected in the village development project.

US-Nepal Get Closer

Disquieting as the Indo-US rivalry was, it did not prevent the establishment of a satisfactory equation between the US and Nepal. For the first time in October 1958, they exchanged residential ambassadors to be based in each other’s capitals. Deterioration in Sino-Indian relations together with the revolt in Tibet had their inevitable repercussions on Nepal’s relations with China.³⁴ In the middle of 1959, the US Ambassador-

designate, Stebbins, declared Nepal as being within the US defence perimeter, requiring protection against communist imperialism.³⁴

It was in this context that King Mahendra's first visit to the US took place in April 1960, while the Chinese Premier Chou En-lai was visiting Kathmandu after the failure of his talks with Nehru in New Delhi. Two months earlier, Soviet President Voroshilov was in Kathmandu. In the face of such intense great power activity, Nepal was clearly beginning to feel the heat. Having encouraged several suiters at the same time, its problem was how to retain their interest and yet keep them at a safe distance. This Kingdom clearly wanted to avoid too close an embroilment with any power. Yet it could not leave itself altogether unexposed, for the Chinese intensions and Indian ability to stand up to China, should the worst come to the worst were not clear. This was Nepal's dilemma.

King Mahendra's response was to take a calculated risk in pretending to perceive no immediate threat to Nepal's security, and to play down the differences with China. At the same time he did not rule out "all extraneous help in times of real need."³⁶ While maintaining Nepal's "neutrality", the two sides (Nepal and the US) kept close touch with each other, often reviewing the developing situation on Nepal's border with China, at times at the highest level. It remains to be seen whether the understanding thus arrived at between the two countries would be strong enough to stand the stresses and strains of the 'sixties.

Soviet-American Parallelism (1960's)

The 'sixties saw several major changes in the international political environment, the net effect of which was to greatly alter the role of the Super Powers in Nepal, as in Asia and the world at large. Their rivalry of the late fifties was now largely mitigated. There now appeared a certain parallelism in their policies and objectives in Nepal. This was the result of three separate, but closely related, events occurring more or less simultaneously. First, the widening Sino-Soviet rift, embracing all aspects of their relations ; secondly, the mounting tension in Sino-Indian relations, culminating in the border war of

October-November 1962 ; and thirdly, a partial *detente* in Soviet-American relations.

The implications of the Sino-Soviet feud for South Asia were several. It greatly increased the nature and scope of Soviet interest and involvement in the region. The USSR now sought to extend its influence in countries like Nepal and Pakistan, where it had so far been minimal, while trying to minimise, and if possible, exclude, that of China. With India, the recent Sino-Indian war had created just the right opportunities for even closer and deeper relations. In particular this meant bolstering India's position against China while maintaining a stable balance between India and Pakistan. Its corollary was to keep Chinese influence in Nepal to the minimum. Meanwhile, the beginning of *detente* between the Super Powers, especially after the Cuban Missile Crisis, had already helped to mitigate some of their rivalry in the area and more so in Nepal.³⁷

In order to appreciate the nature and scope of this Soviet-American parallelism in Nepal, let us look at some of its concrete manifestations in the attitudes and policies of these Powers. This will be done in relation, firstly, to their reactions to King Mahendra's takeover in December 1960 ; secondly, to Nepal's position vis-a-vis India and China in the 'sixties ; and thirdly, the motivations underlying their economic and military aid programmes in Nepal.

King Mahendra's Takeover

Soviet and Western reactions to the assumption of absolute power by King Mahendra albeit different in emphasis, were not very dissimilar. In contrast with India's unfavourable reaction to the move, all the three Great Powers : the UK, the US, and the USSR appeared quite prepared to work with the new regime so long as it kept a power distance from the Chinese. The British were 'neutral' at first and sought to mediate between the King and his political opponents. After the failure of their mediation bid, they were quite willing to lend at least implicit support to the new regime by refusing to cancel, or even postpone, the Queen's visit scheduled for February 1961, despite vociferous demands by the Labour Opposition at home and the

Nepali Congress leaders, to do so. The Soviets discouraged overt opposition to the King by the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN), as did the Chinese.³⁸ Another indication of Soviet support of the King was an article by Redko, a leading Soviet specialist on Nepal, which is virtually an apology for the King's action.³⁹ The US on the other hand went much further. It developed a positive enthusiasm for the regime, and offered determined support to the system throughout the 'sixties. This involved not only an army of Peace Corps workers explaining the virtues of Mahendra's "Panchayat Democracy" to the illiterate rural masses of Nepal, but also US diplomats (including the Ambassador) in Nepal who would not easily miss an opportunity to shower praise on the system—they were especially active among the Nepali intelligentsia.⁴⁰

Chinese Position in Nepal

The US and the USSR were disappointed in their efforts to keep Nepal at a distance from China. The difficulty was that the Chinese were playing the same game. They were no less vociferous in their support for the new regime in Nepal and were also prepared to back it up with economic assistance. However, the price, China demanded, and extorted, from Nepal was high—the construction of a road linking Lhasa with Kathmandu. This could greatly increase Nepalese, and therefore, Indian vulnerability to China. The Nepalis knew this but faced on the south by a sullen India, King Mahendra probably felt he had no choice but to pay this price in order to remain in power. The Super Powers, especially the US, were very concerned with this development, as indeed was India. For some time after this, their relations with Nepal were cool with consequent slowing down of aid. It was at this time that the Soviets refused to carry out the survey for the second half of the East-West Highway.⁴¹

Then came the Sino-Indian border clash, after which the Nepalis became much more circumspect in their contacts with China and adopted a restrained attitude in their comments on issues involving the two Super Powers and China.⁴² The Great Powers, together with India, concerned with the power-imbalance in the Himalayas, decided to outbid the Chinese for influence in

Nepal by increasing the cost of competition for the latter. Nepal naturally benefited from the aid-giving spree which followed. Against China were ranged the USSR, the US, and India.

Aid-giving Spree

The Soviet aid programme in Nepal in the 'sixties was almost exclusively directed against China. They made no attempt to compete against India or the US. Soviet success during the first half of the decade was probably due to Chinese unwillingness, and inability, to enter the race seriously. For in the second half, the Chinese virtually priced the Soviets out of the aid market in Nepal by a five-fold increase in their own contribution.⁴³ Since Soviet interests in Nepal were relatively limited, they considered it futile to play with such high stakes against China. The Soviets may also not have liked to complicate their cordial relations with India by increasing their role in Nepal beyond a certain point.

The US does not seem to have been troubled by any such considerations. Its aid programme in Nepal was more ambitious and complex, designed as it was to boost the existing regime "until Panchayat system produced results". It was aimed not only against China but also against the USSR and India. During the first half of the sixties it appears as if it was directed more against India, than against Russia or China, incredible as it may sound, During 1960-65, the Chinese and the Soviet aid amounts, put together were only half of India's and much less than the US figure, which was nearly thrice as much. During the ten years ending in 1965-66, the US had given Nepal over one and a half times as much as India, while in 1956 India was leading the US by three to one.⁴⁴

It appears that during 1961-65, a sustained bid was being made by the US to increase its influence in Nepal at India's expense. After all, at this time Indian stock in Nepal was at an all-time low. India's own vulnerability against the Chinese and its consequent dependence upon the West and the USSR had increased. It was under these circumstances that in February 1964, the US (and the UK) agreed for the first time to a Nepalese request for military assistance to be given

directly.⁴⁵ Though the matter had been cleared by New Delhi, the significance of this move lay in the direction of dissociating Nepal from too close a dependence on India.

In the latter half of the sixties, the position was reversed. In a determined counterbid, India tripled its aid to Nepal, while the US amount declined in absolute terms. As a result even China could take lead over the US in the aid table. The US posture was a deliberate political decision and could be attributed to the following factors : It was paralleled by corresponding decline in Soviet share vis-a-vis China and reflected the post-Tashkent Soviet-US parallelism in South Asia ; a downward reappraisal of a Chinese threat ; and a decline in the US interest in South Asia in the wake of intense US military involvement in Vietnam.

East-West Highway Project

The story of the East-West Highway is a classical example of Soviet-American (and Indo-British) cooperation in Nepal in the 'sixties'.⁴⁶ It vividly illustrates the relations of the two Super Powers with other principal donors, the changes in perceptions of interests and objectives vis-a-vis Nepal and each other, and the cynical jockeying for positions which followed. Finally, it explodes the myth that there is such a thing as aid "without strings."

We have seen how in 1959 the Russians offered to survey this project after the Indo-US refusal. In 1961 the USSR refused to complete it because meanwhile, it had developed a certain community of interests with India and the US, and also Nepal was getting too close to the principal Soviet adversary, China. Nobody else was ready to take it up. It was costly, unrelated to the donors' objectives and in the case of India, incompatible with its national interests in Nepal. When the Chinese agreed to do a part of the project, everyone was alarmed at the prospect. The Indians were particularly disturbed since the project would bring the Chinese presence close to India's borders and might complicate the problem of its internal security. In a sudden *volte-face*, the Super powers together with India and Britain now offered to complete the whole project, provided the Chinese were entirely excluded. In

the event Nepal persuaded the Chinese to withdraw, which they did.

This illustrates both the potentialities for Nepalese diplomacy in a multi-pronged rivalry as well as its limitations. It also revealed a substantial community of interest among the participants in this giant project. We have also seen earlier how for this cooperation extends to other spheres, and noted the divergencies in their outlooks and policies as well.

Recent Trends and Future Prospects

The sixties saw a substantial degree of parallelism developing in Soviet-American policies in Nepal. There were differences of approach, particularly in relation to India's position in Nepal. Yet these differences were narrow enough to be composed in the face of a common Chinese 'threat', as was clear from the story of the East-West Highway project. But lately this parallelism is experiencing heavy strain under the impact of radical changes in recent years in the international and regional alignments, especially in Asia.

It is as a part of this process of change that Britain, now avowedly a European Power, has all but liquidated its last remaining interest in Nepal, thereby assuming a position there, not very different from that of, say, West Germany. As for the Soviet Union, a sharp deterioration in its relations with China has greatly increased Soviet interest and involvement in South Asia—especially in India. It has, however, not led to an intensification of Sino-Soviet rivalry in Nepal. For reasons already indicated, Russia seems quite content with only a limited role in Nepal which tends to reinforce the Indian position there. The reasons behind this Soviet posture have been strengthened by the recent developments in the Indian sub-continent. A significant change in Soviet position in Nepal is, therefore, unlikely to occur in the near future.

The future US role in Nepal will be conditioned by the developments in Sino-American relations and the reappraisal of US policies in South and South East Asia. The prospects of a Sino-American reproachment tend to weaken the one great inhibition against Indo-US rivalry in Nepal—the common perception of Chinese 'threat' policy of neutrality as between

India and China is significant in this connection.⁴⁷ Against this stands the distinct possibility of a considerable reduction in US interest and involvement in Nepal as a result of the re-appraisal of its policies in South Asia. This statistics of US aid to Nepal during the second half of the sixties and also the reported shift in US policy in favour of loans, as opposed to grants, points towards this trend.⁴⁸ The US involvement is in fact reduced in Nepal : it would tend to reduce Indo-US rivalry there. However, it remains to be seen whether or not, and how far, the US is prepared to reconcile itself to the recent geopolitical changes in this region. The emergence of Bangladesh after the 14-day Indo-Pak War of December 1971, and the resultant shift in the balance of power in favour of India, have exposed the bankruptcy of US policy of maintaining a balance between India and Pakistan. Frustration and the loss of face involved are simply too great.

In the short-run, this is bound to colour the US attitude towards India in Nepal, as elsewhere. Moreover, an uncertain political situation in the Kingdom, in the wake of King Mahendra's death, created new opportunities for foreign involvement. Here the attitude of the Nepalese government is very important. For over a decade it has been heavily dependent on the US support for whatever success it has enjoyed. In the face of recent strains in the system, if it now decides to accommodate itself to the demands for liberalisation, the Nepalese government could considerably decrease its dependence on the US. On the other hand, the government's decision to resist even reasonable demands for change could generate a sustained political pressure at home and possibly lead to an even deeper US involvement in Nepal. This may in turn complicate things vis-a-vis New Delhi and exacerbate Indo-US rivalry in Nepal to new proportions, if the situation is not carefully handled.

Despite these temporary difficulties, things look more hopeful. For one thing, the US policy in Nepal is greatly conditioned by its policies in South Asia. For another, the US stakes in India—strategic, political as well as economic—are too great, as compared to those in Nepal, for it to write off India altogether. Thirdly, the capacity of the US as well as of the USSR to influence the course of events in Nepal is necessarily limited on the one hand, by the latter's landlocked character and conse-

quently heavy dependence on India, and on the other, by the nature of the equation obtaining between India and China in Nepal. It is quite likely, therefore, that, after the lapse of a decent interval, a *modus vivendi*, if not also a *modus operandi*, is arrived at between the US and India which, among other things, recognises, much as Moscow does, New Delhi's legitimate position in Kathmandu. In this connection, Nepal's reported willingness to make appropriate adjustments in its foreign policy, in the light of the recent 'cataclysmic' changes in the sub-continent, was highly significant.⁴⁹ If this analysis is correct, the chances of restoring a certain minimum degree of parallelism in US-Soviet and Indian policies in Nepal can be rated as good.

References

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2. Between 1945-47 the British Press carried numerous articles and letters written by retired Generals, senior officials and journalists pleading for British protection for their age-old ally, Nepal, which was facing a difficult situation vis-a-vis India in the wake of British withdrawal. A typical instance is an extract from a letter to *The Times* (London) by a former British Minister to Nepal, Sir Clendon Daukes, "This event recognises the opening of a new era and the coming of age of a nation (Nepal) which may well play a great part on the stage of the new Asia now arising", 1 September 1947 ; see also *Daily Mail*, 24 April 1947 for an article by Ralph Izzard, "Britain, India and Johnny Gorkha."
3. See especially notes 59 and 68, in S D Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal 1951-66* Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, 1971, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, 25-27.
4. *The New York Times*, 30 April 1947.
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7. E B Mihaly, *Foreign Aid and Politics in Nepal: A Case Study*, Oxford. London, 1965, 29.
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9. *Ibid.* See also *New York Times*, 30 April 1947.
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13. Leo E Rose, *Nepal : Strategy for Survival* Bombay. OUP, 1971), 191 ; For text of the Treaty see *British and Foreign State Papers*, Vol. 156 (1950, Part I), 673-77.
 14. Muni, n., 33-34.
 15. "The Foreign Office, even under the Labour Party Government, was still strongly predisposed in favour of the Ranas". Rose, n. 13, 191.
 16. *Ibid.*, and Loy Henderson's Press Conference in Calcutta on 11 November 1947, as reported in *Hindu* (Madras), 13 November 1947.
 17. An American scholar also found its timing odd—"an inopportune moment", see Mihaly, n. 7, 28.
 18. *Ibid.*; 28-42.
 19. Muni, n. 3., 171-72, especially notes 45 and 46.
 20. Mihaly, n.7., 104.
 21. Werner Levi, "Nepal in World Politics", *Pacific Affairs*, 30, no. 3, September 1957.
 22. Mihaly, n, 7, 98.
 23. N Zvonkov, "The Road Across", *New Times*, 8 Feb., 1960.
 24. *International Affairs*, vol. 6, Moscow, June 1958, 78-79.
 25. *Ibid.* The Soviets also accused the US of anti-Nepalese and anti-Indian activities in Nepal. See a short review of I B Red ko's "Nepal After the Second World War", Moscow, 1960, in *Central Asian Review*, vol. 9, 1961, 396.
 26. Levi, n. 21, 247.
 27. In fact a few incidents occurred during 1959-60 which tended to distract from the otherwise friendly relations between them. These reflected a surprising lack of sensitivity on the part of the Soviets for Nepali susceptibilities ; for details, Muni, n. 3., 282-284.
 28. Mihaly, n. 7, 75-76.
 29. *Ibid.*, 81-82. The US aid was trippled from (N) Rs. 28 m. in 1958-59 to (N) Rs. 56 m. in 1959-60 and increased to (N) Rs. 87 m. 1960-61.
 30. Indian aid was nearly doubled from (N) Rs 9 m. in 1957-58 to (N) Rs 17 m. in 1958-59.
 31. Mihaly, n. 7, 63.
 32. *Ibid.*, 103.
 33. *Ibid.*, 82.
 34. See Mira Sinha, "Nepal's Role in Sino-Indian Relations : 1949-69", *Journal of Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses*, vol. 2, no. 4 April 1970, 475-6.
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 36. See King Mahendra's *Proclamations, Speeches and Messages*, vol. I, HMG Deptt. of Publicity, Kathmandu, 1967, 184.

37. Wayne Wilcox, "South Asia and World Powers", in *Foreign Policies in South Asia*, S P Varma and K P Misra, (ed.) Orient Longman, Bombay, 1969, 297-98.
38. The moderate faction, led by Rayamajhi, and being loyal to Moscow, in fact exceeded the latter's expectations in cooperating actively behind-the-scenes with the Mahendra regime, for which it was suitably rewarded; see L E Rose, "Communism under High Atmospheric Conditions" in *The Communist Revolution in Asia*, Scalapina, Robert A (ed.) Prentice Hall. Englewood Cliffs, 1969, 374 and 380-82.
39. "Nepal's Difficult Roads", *AZIYA I AFRIKA SECODNYA*, 1962, No., as summarised in *Central Asian Review*, vol. 10 (1962), 294-86.
40. For more details see, Muni. n, 3, 265-267.
41. They had earlier undertaken the survey and completed the first half with great fan-fare of publicity: see *New Times* (Moscow), 8, 1960, 25-26:
42. Vietnam is a case in point; West Asia is another. See the interview given by Gen Khatri, Nepal's Foreign Secretary, to *Rising Nepal*, 11 August 1972. He confirmed that Nepal's cordial relations with China had aroused misgivings in Washington.
43. During 1960-65, the USSR gave Nepal (N) Rs 57 million as against the Chinese (N) Rs 46 million, In the years 1966-71, the Soviet share was a paltry (N) Rs 17 million as against (N) Rs 226 m. given by the Chinese.
44. Year 1960-61 to 1965-66
- | | |
|-----------|----------------|
| Chin+USSR | =(N) Rs 103 m. |
| India | =(N) Rs 208 m. |
| USA | =(N) Rs 298 m. |
- 1956-57 to
- | |
|---------------------|
| US (N) Rs 520 m. |
| India (N) Rs 292 m. |
- Up to
- | | |
|---------|------------------------------------|
| 1955-56 | US (N) Rs 25 m. India (N) Rs 70 m. |
|---------|------------------------------------|
45. Muni, n. 3, 262-65,
46. For details see, *Ibid.*, 352-354; and Mihaly, n. 7. 98, 158, 160-1.
47. See the US Vice-President's remarks at a Press Conference during a visit to Kathmandu in January 1970, to explain President Nixon's new Asia Policy, as reported in *Indian Express* (Delhi), 6 January 1970; *Hindu* (Madras), 6 January 1970.
48. *Hindustan Times*, 2 August 1972.
49. This remark was made by General Khatri, Nepal's Foreign Secretary, in an exclusive interview to *Rising Nepal* (Kathmandu) 11 August 1972.

Nepal in the United Nations

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Nepal was little known to the outside world until recently. However, within the last two decades it has not only emerged out of its isolation but transformed itself into an active member of the comity of nations. Having secured UN membership in December 1955, Nepal has displayed its deep and sustained faith in the Charter by actively participating in the working of the Organisation. Such active and fervent interest on the part of Nepal was not merely out of a desire to contribute to the ideals it cherishes, i.e. the right to self-determination, international security, world peace, and a rapid economic development of the backward regions of the world. The interest was primarily guided by Nepal's own foreign policy objectives. In other words, through the UN forum Nepal has projected and pursued its world view which resulted from the interaction between its self-interest and the issues of international politics. In the pages that follow, an attempt is made to assess how far Nepal could utilise the UN forum to further its foreign policy objectives.

Foreign Policy Objectives

Three major objectives of Nepal's foreign policy can be easily identified : to ensure that there is no threat to its national security ; to seek independent status in the world dominated by big powers and to promote its economic development. The last one, in the case of Nepal means not only the development of an undeveloped economy but is beset with all the difficulties that landlocked countries have to face. As regards the question of national security, Nepal was interested in evolving a sub-system of regional balance—a balance between the two major powers that sandwich it.

There is an evident correlation between national security

and international security. In this context Nepal advocated the cause of disarmament in the UN. Other instruments of international security that are enshrined in the UN Charter, viz., Collective Security and Peace-keeping activities, etc., equally interested the Nepali decision makers. It also condemned aggression whenever and wherever it took place and thus supported the cause of small powers.

Quest of identify has been one of the major planks in the foreign policies of small powers. Nepal also tried to project its image as an independent sovereign nation by taking up such cause as the right of self-determination and making concerted attack on evils like colonialism, and racialism. Even a cursory examination of its voting behaviour in the United Nations would show that Nepal took independent stand on various issues and was not influenced by the stand taken by India, the Western bloc or the Soviet bloc.

Under-developed countries have looked at the United Nations as an important forum for international economic co-operation. Through its various agencies they seek aid and assistance for their economic development. Besides seeking economic assistance from international bodies, Nepal advocated in the United Nations the need for developed countries to divert the resources spent on armaments to the betterment of the economic lot of the countries in the backward region of the world. In its peculiar position of being a landlocked country, Nepal tried in the United Nations to secure for the landlocked countries an easy access to sea.

National Security

China's participation in the mainstream of international politics through membership of the UN was of concern to Nepal for reasons of its national security. It had, therefore, been a strong advocate of the representation of People's Republic of China in the United Nations. Year after year, it supported the move for the inclusion of the question of representation of the People's Republic of China in the agenda of the General Assembly and its delegation repeatedly stated that there was only one China—the People's Republic of China. Thus, in the 11th session of the General Assembly, referring to Nepal's

500-miles border with India, the Nepali delegate stated that the course of events in his country had "always been influenced by happenings in China and India", and declared that "its security depends on the existence of cordiality between her great neighbours, India and China."¹ In the 14th session of the Assembly, Nepal moved an amendment to the General Committee's recommendation that the request to include the item entitled "Question of the representation of China in the United Nations" be rejected. The Nepalese amendment asked for the replacement of the word "reject" by the words "acceded to".² Even the Chinese action in Tibet had no effect on Nepal's stand in the UN in this respect. Nepal rejected the Western criticism that the regime in China had not been established by the method of free election, and asked, "if we were to establish free election as a criterion for the representation of a government, how many of us that are Members of this body would be able to fulfil that criterion?" Expressing his country's anxiety over deterioration of relations between India and China, he praised India for separating the issue of its difficulties with China on the border problem from the question of China's representation in the United Nations.³

Nepal consistently lent its support for the cause of replacement of Nationalist China by the People's Republic of China. Its stand was ultimately vindicated by the world body in October 1971. While Nepal's stand on the issue was influenced by its desire to consolidate world peace by making the United Nations a truly universal organisation it may be viewed also as being partly motivated by an unexpressed concern for its own security and thus its objective of forging a sub-system of regional balance between India and China. The question of representation of People's Republic of China was an issue on which Nepal could adopt extremely friendly posture towards China without antagonising India, for the latter also adopted an identical stand on this issue.

Motivated by her interest in international peace and security and economic development through reduction of expenditure on armaments, Nepal actively participated in the discussions on disarmament in the General Assembly and made several suggestions from time to time. In January 1957, at the First Committee Meeting, she suggested that the Disarmament

Commission should give immediate consideration to the problems of nuclear and conventional disarmament and called for delinking of disarmament from the solution of other political problems.⁴

Aware of the limitations on the role that it could play in the solution of the problem of disarmament, Nepal hoped that the Great Powers would come to some sort of permanent agreement on the various aspects of the problem in the interest of peace and humanity. It favoured a gradual and realistic approach to the complex problem of disarmament. Supporting temporary suspension of nuclear tests on a trial basis Nepal favoured enlargement of the membership of the Disarmament Commission, and its sub-committee.⁵ In November 1959 she supported the proposal for a big power meeting in order to accelerate the progress in this field.⁶

In her approach to disarmament, Nepal stressed the need for a ban on the use of all nuclear weapons. It was one of the sponsors of the 21-Power resolution of 28 November 1962 on the question of convening a conference for purpose of adopting a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons. It favoured a world disarmament conference of all nations with the participation of the People's Republic of China in it.⁷ In December 1964, the then Nepali Foreign Minister, Kirtinidhi Bista, declared in his speech in the General Assembly that the developing countries like Nepal had a "vested interest" in disarmament. For he hoped that the Great Powers could contribute the money saved as a result of disarmament for the development of under-developed countries.

In the First Committee of 20th Session (October 1965) Nepal shared the general concern regarding the proliferation of nuclear weapons. It supported the joint memorandum on non-proliferation submitted by eight non-aligned members of the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Commission and particularly the proposal that a treaty on non-proliferation should be followed by tangible steps to halt the nuclear arms race.⁸ In his speech in the First Committee on 26 October 1966, the Nepali delegate commended the Italian suggestion that the non-nuclear powers should renounce any intention of acquiring nuclear capability for a certain period of time during which the nuclear powers

would prove their sincerity by taking steps to destroy their existing nuclear stock-piles.

Nepal's approach to the question of disarmament in the United Nations has been one of welcoming the measures that were designed to lead to the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament. This was to be achieved in stages and through limited measures. Nepal has been a forceful advocate of a ban on the use of nuclear weapons. This move also had the full support of the communist powers including China, and many Afro-Asian nations. Yet unlike China, Nepal did not link test-ban-Agreement to an Agreement on prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons and instead welcomed every step that led to disengagement.

Being militarily weak, Nepal attached considerable importance to the peace-keeping role of the United Nations. Accordingly it consistently supported all UN peace-keeping actions and advocated the strengthening of the peace-keeping role of the United Nations. In 1956 Nepal favoured the creation of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF).⁹ Such UN force in Nepal's view was to be used for peaceful and non-combatant purposes such as securing cease-fire already agreed upon by the belligerents.¹⁰ In 1958, the Kingdom contributed five military officers to work under the United Nations Observer Group in Lebanon (UNOGL).¹¹ Similarly, in 1965 Nepal placed at the disposal of the Secretary-General five military officers to work in the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMIGIP).¹²

In fact, Nepal has always maintained "that the peace-keeping" capacities of the United Nations should be strengthened.¹³ Nepal was one of the nine Powers which moved a draft resolution on peace-keeping operations of the United Nations.¹⁴ The Nepali delegate urged the Special Political Committee to devise a reliable system of financing the peace-keeping operations of the United Nations. He felt that financial difficulties could not be solved through voluntary contributions.

While favouring collective financial responsibility for such operations, Nepal pleaded for the adoption of a special scale of assessment based on the ability of member states to pay.¹⁵ Nepal continued to underscore the importance of the UN peace-keeping efforts. At the 23rd session of the General Assembly

Nepal stated :

...we believe that in the absence of total elimination of the possibility of conflict between countries—an objective whose achievement is rather doubtful in the present circumstances—inability on the part of the United Nations to conduct its peace-keeping operations, for any reason whatsoever, will take away the effectiveness of the world body and it will not inspire the same degree of confidence from the smaller nations it has been inspired up till now.

The question of peace-keeping was closely related to the violations of the territorial integrity of small nations by the big powers. Nepal strongly disapproved of such violations as was evident from its condemnation of the Soviet intervention in the affairs of Hungary. Its concern about the fate of Hungary grew out of a small country's concern about its own freedom. When this matter came up before the emergency session of the General Assembly in 1956 the Nepali delegate described Hungary as a "symbol of the struggle of a small country against a big and powerful neighbour."¹⁶ Nepal's stand on this question was somewhat different from the stand taken by most of the non-aligned states. While like the other non-aligned states, it also abstained on most of the resolutions sponsored by the Western Powers, unlike them, it not only condemned Soviet action in Hungary in rather strong terms, but also voted in favour of two resolutions which condemned Soviet intervention in Hungary and demanded immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungarian territory.¹⁷ It may be added here that when Nepal abstained from voting (along with 14 other non-aligned powers) on the first major US resolution on the question, its delegate explained it as due to "difficulty of communication with Kathmandu."¹⁸

Another example of Nepal's deep concern at the violations of the territorial integrity of one nation by another was in relation to Arab-Israeli conflict. Nepal strongly condemned the invasion of Egyptian territory by Israel, United Kingdom and France in 1956 and decried the attempts by big powers to confront the United Nations with *fait accompli* in order to gain the objectives by the use or threat of force.¹⁹ Nepal was one of the

sponsors of the 19-Power resolution of 7 November 1956 which, reaffirming the resolutions of 2, 4 and 5 November, once again called upon Israel, Britain and France to withdraw their forces from Egyptian territory. Again in June 1967, Nepal gave support to the proposal to convene an emergency special session of the General Assembly to consider the situation arising out of the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, by this time Nepal had already established diplomatic relations with Israel. Therefore, while opposing forcible occupation of Egyptian territory by Israel, Nepal also strongly deplored "attempts directed towards the extinction of a state".²⁰ Although Nepal's stand on the Arab-Israel conflict throughout remained critical of Israel's aggressive action, by its vocal support for Israel's right to exist as a nation and for the latter's maritime rights, Nepal was by implication, also critical of Arab bellicosity towards Israel.

Quest for Identity

One of the avowed objectives of Nepal's foreign policy has been to project its image on the world political scene as an independent power. Nepal, therefore, took every opportunity to express its views on the various issues debated in the United Nations. For example, it was actively associated with the drive for decolonisation. Nepal strongly attacked colonialism in all its form. It was one of the 43-powers which moved the historic resolution in the XV session of the UN General Assembly in 1960 on the "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and People."²¹ The following year, along with 37 other Afro-Asian members, Nepal sponsored another resolution on the Implementation of the Declaration against Colonialism, calling for the establishment of a special committee of 17 members to make suggestions and recommendations on the progress made in this direction.²²

Nepal supported the UN efforts for placing South West Africa under Trusteeship System. It was one of the sponsors of the 35-Power resolution of 19 December 1961 calling upon the 17-Member Special Committee for South Africa to visit South West Africa and to arrange for the evacuation of all military forces of South Africa from the territory as well as the release of all political prisoners. The resolution also called for

the general election to be held on the basis of universal suffrage under the UN supervision.²³ The following year, Nepal, along with 44 other Powers, moved a resolution condemning the South African Government for its continued refusal to cooperate in the implementation of the Assembly's resolution.²⁴ Nepal was one of the sponsors of the 38-Power resolution of 5 November 1963, on South West Africa's right of self-determination and independence which urged all states to refrain from supplying oil and arms to South Africa. In May 1967 Nepal favoured the establishment of an 11-Member United Nations Council for South West Africa with powers to administer the territory with maximum participation of the people to enable them to achieve independence by June 1968.²⁵

Nepal was highly critical of Portugal's failure to comply with the General Assembly resolution on transmission of information regarding the non-self-governing territories administered by Portugal. In his speech before the General Assembly on 6 November 1967, King Mahendra described Portuguese rule in Africa as a "classic example" of colonialism. He described the questions of "Portuguese colonialism", Southern Rhodesia, Apartheid and South West Africa "as intertwined" and also criticised the NATO countries for their military aid to Portugal.²⁶ Nepal also pleaded in the UN for the independence of Fiji Island, Nyasaland, Swaziland, Bechuanaland, British Guiana and Gambia. It was one of the movers of the 40-Power resolution adopted by the General Assembly in 1965, condemning the attempt to perpetuate the minority rule in Southern Rhodesia in violation of the principles proclaimed by the UN Charter and the Declaration against Colonialism.²⁷

Nepal adopted an equally strong stand against racialism. Its representative in the UN repeatedly condemned racialism as repugnant to the Charter of the UN and Declaration on Human Rights and called it a potential threat to world peace and security. Nepal rejected the plea of domestic jurisdiction advanced by South Africa to prevent a discussion of the policy of apartheid in the UN²⁸. It was one of the sponsors of the 36-Power resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 17 November 1959 on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee expressing concern over South Africa's non-response to the UN appeals to end racial discrimination. In March 1960,

along with 28 countries Nepal addressed a letter to the President of the Security Council requesting an urgent meeting of the Council to consider the situation arising out of the large-scale killings of the unarmed and peaceful demonstrators against racial discrimination by the South African Government.

Nepal twice served as a rapporteur of the 11-Member Special Committee on the Policies of Apartheid of the Government of the Union of South Africa appointed by the President of the General Assembly on 18 February 1963. The Committee submitted two interim reports to the General Assembly in May and July 1963 and to the Security Council in September 1963. The Security Council noted the interim reports with appreciation and adopted a resolution along the lines recommended by the Special Committee.²⁹ In June 1965, Nepal pleaded in the Special Committee on Apartheid for a total trade boycott against South Africa by all its trading partners and declared that nothing but economic sanctions could compel that country to change its policy.³⁰ In May 1966 in the Special Committee Nepal called for a more vigorous publicity campaign to arouse public opinion throughout the world against apartheid and took exception to the Western Powers' refusal to participate in the work of the Special Committee.³¹ In 1966, it was again associated with a report of the Special Committee on Apartheid which deplored the failure of the main trading partners of South Africa including three permanent members of the Security Council—the UK, and US and France—to abide by the decision of the UN and requested these powers to take urgent steps towards disengagement from South Africa. In addition the report called for effective political, moral and material assistance to the fighters against the policies of apartheid and also urged the Secretary-General to convene an international conference on apartheid in South Africa.³² Nepal saw the economic motivation behind the apartheid policy and referred to it as “a plot to ensure continued control by the Western world over the rich gold and diamond mines in the Southern part of the African continent.”³³

Voting Behaviour

Not only that Nepal took independent stand on such issues

and fearlessly advocated the cause of the oppressed peoples of the Third World, its voting behaviour in the UN General Assembly testified to the fact that the Kingdom was not unduly influenced by the United States, the Soviet Union, China or India. We studied the voting pattern of Nepal, the US, the Soviet Union, China³⁴ and India on the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in the three years, *i.e.*, 1969, 1970 and 1971. As given in Table below, Nepal's voting deviated from

Year	Total No. of resolutions adopted	No. of resolutions where vote was recorded	Nepal's voting deviation in percentage			
			From US	From USSR	From India	From Albania
1969	126	32	65.2	50.0	28.8	60.0
1970	128	36+ 3 (39)	74.1	46.6	19.0	50.0
1971	150	63+ 15 (78)	52.4	37.1	11.6	27.1

that of the United States, in terms of percentages, by 65, 74 and 52 for the years 1969, 1970 and 1971 respectively. Similar figures for the USSR are 50, 46 and 37 ; for India 29, 19 and 12 and for Albania (China) 60, 50 and 27. With respect to the US, the USSR and China, the deviations were quite significant. Although in case of India, deviations were not so significant, yet the lowest figure at 12 (for 1971) proves that Nepal did not just toe the Indian line as sometimes it is made out.

Economic Development

As one of the least developed among the developing nations of the world which stand to gain most by development activities of the world organisation, it was but natural for Nepal to take an active interest in the development programmes of the United Nations. Nepal associated itself with many important

initiatives to enlarge the scope of the UN contribution to socio-economic progress. Its stand was governed by a desire to promote international cooperation for the economic development of under-developed countries and eliminate the serious threat to peace and security which the ever-widening economic gap between the developed and developing nations posed.

While closely cooperating with other developing nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America on such matters as the creation of a UN Capital Development Fund for advancing long-term, low-interest loans to the developing countries, transfer by the economically advanced countries of one per cent of their national income and expansion of the UN Technical Assistance and Development Programme, Nepal was particularly emphatic on the need for special attention to the landlocked countries. It favoured regional co-operation as an effective strategy of development and supported the various moves for strengthening the UN regional economic commission through decentralisation.³⁵

The UNDP has been playing an active part in the development of Nepal's economy. In a short period of four years (1969 to 1973), the UNDP cost of even small-scale development projects in Nepal came to US \$ 2,371, 059.³⁶ This assistance came to Nepal through the regular programmes of the various specialised agencies like the United Nations Technical Co-operation (UNOTC), World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Because of its landlocked position Nepal's economic development largely depends upon adequate transit facilities which are vital for diversification of its foreign trade. It had, therefore, been particularly active in raising the problems faced by landlocked states in the United Nations and its specialised institutions like UNCTAD and ECAFE. Nepal was in the forefront of the struggle carried out in the world organisation by the developing landlocked countries for their right to free and unrestricted transit. Soon after its entry into the UN, Nepal, along with Afghanistan and Laos, took the initiative in acquainting the ECAFE Committee on Industry and Trade with the problems of the landlocked states.³⁷ As a result the General

Assembly in its resolution of 20 February 1957,³⁸ recognised "the need of the landlocked countries for adequate transit facilities in promoting international trade" in terms of international law and practice in this regard.

Nepal tried to mobilise support for landlocked countries' right to free access to the sea. For this Nepal, together with Afghanistan, Austria, Bolivia, Czechoslovakia and Paraguay called for a study of the problem of free access to the sea for landlocked states by a conference of plenipotentiaries.³⁹ It was in pursuance of this demand that the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea was held in Geneva in 1958. On the eve of this Conference 13 landlocked countries, including Nepal, submitted a memorandum of "seven principles" for the Conference to accept.⁴⁰ Nepal along with other Asian landlocked states pressed the urgent need for an international convention on the subject on the ground that the existing bilateral agreements regulating transit trade in the region were not adequate.

Nepal also served on the 40-Member sub-committee appointed by UNCTAD I to consider the proposal for the formulation of an international convention on the transit rights of landlocked states. The sub-committee adopted eight principles relating to the interests of the landlocked countries which were later incorporated into the preamble of the Convention on Transit Trade of Landlocked States.⁴¹ At the request of this sub-committee the Secretary General appointed a committee of 24 expert members representing the landlocked, transit and other interested states. Nepal served as rapporteur of this committee which prepared a new draft convention on the basis of the Teheran draft prepared by Nepal together with Afghanistan and Laos.⁴²

The Draft Convention prepared by the committee of 24 was considered by the UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Transit Trade of Landlocked countries held in Geneva in 1965 which finally adopted the Convention on the Transit Trade of Landlocked States on 8 July 1965. In its espousal of the rights of landlocked states, Nepal received an encouraging response from most of the members including almost all the developing landlocked countries. On many issues the Nepalese viewpoint came into sharp conflict with the views held by two of its closest neighbours—India and Pakistan. In the long discussions

over the Draft Convention in both the committee of 24 and the Conference of Plenipotentiaries—Nepal acted as a spokesman of the landlocked countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Nepal's approach to the whole question of transit rights of land-locked states centred around the notion that such rights were not "favours" from the transit countries but rights affirmed by principles of international law and practice.

Nepal pleaded for the inclusion of the problems of the landlocked states in the agenda of UNCTAD II. It was partly at its initiative that the Algiers Charter adopted at the Ministerial Meeting of the "Group of 77" in October 1967 took into account the special problems of landlocked countries. At the UNCTAD II held in New Delhi in February-March 1968, Nepal, along with eight other landlocked countries sponsored a draft resolution underlining the landlocked position of many developing countries as "a factor seriously inhibiting expansion of trade and economic development of these countries." The 9-Power draft resolution called for a special treatment of the developing landlocked countries as "the least developed among the developing countries". It urged all states to ratify the 1965 Convention. In accordance with the final resolution of UNCTAD II, a group of experts was appointed to carry out a comprehensive examination of, and report upon, the special problems involved in the promotion of the trade and economic development of landlocked developing countries.⁴³ The Algiers Charter and the UNCTAD II marked a big change in Nepal's orientation relating to the problems of the developing landlocked states. Whereas Nepal's approach in 1964-65 had been largely legal, in 1967-68 acquired economic orientation.

Conclusions

Thus the United Nations has provided Nepal an important forum to serve its vital national interests. Its membership of the United Nations and its various organs and agencies had gone a long way in its search for international identity and also imparted to it a sense of security. Through its important role in the search of recognition for the rights of developing landlocked countries, its active participation in various moves against colonialism and racialism, and its deep and sustained interest

in disarmament, UN peace-keeping operations, representation of the People's Republic of China in the UN and the socio-economic development through international cooperation, Nepal enhanced its international prestige. Nepal has also demonstrated its capacity to take a stand on major international issue without fear or favour. Unlike many other small member states such as Malta which was largely interested in only peaceful use of sea-bed and ocean floor, and Iceland that primary concerned itself with convention on Extent of Territorial Sea, Nepal did not confine its role in the UN to a particular field. As a result, Nepal succeeded in projecting its image as a small, non-aligned nation supporting the cause of peace and freedom in the world in general and that of the security of small states and their economic development through the UN in particular.

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Role of Foreign Aid and Trade in Economic Reconstruction

PASHUPATI SHUMSHERE J B RANA

Seldom has history provided neater book-ends to a reign than that of King Mahendra of Nepal. The firm establishment of Chinese rule in Tibet just preceded his accession. He died almost immediately after an equally dramatic series of events—the defeat of Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country. Both these events significantly altered the balance of the geopolitical scales between Nepal's north and south. Nepal at the fulcrum of these scales was bound to shape its policy accordingly. When history passes its judgment on King Mahendra, there is little doubt that it will assess his achievements in foreign policy as by far his best. It will also record that his reign marked the beginning and end of an epoch in Nepal's foreign policy.

For a century and a half a weak China and a strong South had forced on Nepal a policy of accommodation and compliance first towards the British and then towards India. In the fifties the emergence of China as a powerful next-door neighbour re-asserted the balance between south and north and required Nepal to find a policy of non-alignment. At the same time Nepal's situation between communist China and democratic India, drew the interests of the global powers of that cold war epoch. During the sixties the geopolitical scales seemed to lean towards China. In the Sino-Indian war of 1962, China made a formidable demonstration of its military power ; soon after this it flexed its nuclear muscles, asserting its position as the only world-ranking power in Asia. This was a dramatic demonstration of the potential and acumen of a truly modern and cohesive state.

India in the meantime plagued by war and a succession of problems appeared as the classic 'soft-state'. Ironically, the

seventies which marked in a sense the acknowledgement of China's great power status also witnessed the emergence of a new and decisive India. The decisive radicalism of Mrs Gandhi, and her moves in the confrontation with Pakistan (December 1971) showed a political genius reminiscent of Bismark. Seldom since the Austro-Prussian war over Prussia's claim to hegemony over North Germany, had political resources been used with so cutting an edge for such clearly defined and limited aims. Particularly in the context of the Indo-Soviet pact (August 1971), the geopolitical scales between north and south seemed thus to have returned to the equilibrium. It is in the context of these events that we must analyse the trends in foreign aid and trade in Nepal.

Aid

When King Mahendra came to the throne, Nepal was receiving approximately 19 million rupees in aid. When he died, the figure had risen to 352 million. Only two countries, America and India, had initiated aid programmes at his accession ; by his death China, Russia, UK, most of the multilateral agencies and many other countries had entered the field. There is no doubt that the changed geopolitical situation helped Nepal to show a steady trend both in the expansion of aid and the diversification of its sources (see Table 1). The only divergence was during 1967-1969 when India's share in the total rose to nearly 60%. By the end of the period, however, this had smoothed out ; in 1971-72 Indian aid had dropped to 38% of the total. However, mere ability to collect aid is a poor measure of development capacity. A better criteria of the efficiency of aid would be the capital it creates and the technology it transfers. For both aid givers and aid receivers implicitly subscribe to the doctrine that capital and technology are the critical bottlenecks in development. Before questioning this assumption, let us analyse aid to Nepal in these terms.

Foreign Aid and Capital Formation

One indicator of the impact of aid upon development potential would be its share in capital formation. The large share

of aid in new investment can be seen from the fact that 71% of the third plan and 58% of the fourth plan were to be financed by foreign aid.¹ Similarly, the crude estimates of gross domestic capital formation of the Fourth Plan, offer some interesting insights. Between 1964-65 and 1967-68 the National Planning Commission (NPC) estimates Gross Capital Formation (GCF) as Rs 1,250 million at 1964-65 prices. Aid for the same period was Rs 616.6 million. If the deflator (about 0.895) implicit in the NPC's conversion of GCF figures at current prices into the constant price estimates is used, the foreign aid figure comes to Rs 559 million or 44% of GCF. Therefore, domestic savings accounted for only Rs 691 million (1,250—559). During the same period reserves rose by Rs 163.2 million which at constant prices comes to Rs 149 million. Expressed as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), these figures indicate that : (a) the rate of savings was very low (b) that even at these low levels a significant part of the savings was not invested (0.6% : the increase in reserves) but used for what can best be described as public hoarding.² Aid in this sense substituted for domestic savings in capital formation and as a consequence actually reduced the need to mobilise national savings. Thus, while aid certainly made a major contribution to capital formation, it could ironically, have also been a factor in reducing the internal capacity of the nation to create capital out of its own resources.

However, it would be a mistake to imply that the contributions of aid were negative. Substantial changes in the economy did take place. Almost all the changes in infrastructure and health, and a large part of the change in education shown in Table 2 were financed by external aid. In addition, several new industries, such as those of sugar, cigarettes, brick and tile, leather and shoes, and agricultural implements, have been established with varying degrees of success. In agriculture, the introduction of a new variety of wheat by aid nearly doubled wheat production between 1961-62 and 1969-70. Thus significant changes took place in some areas, particularly infrastructure and education during the period through aid.

However, the statistics of the period are truly ironic. The generally accepted figure for average growth of domestic output during the 'sixties is between 1.8% and 2%.³ (Before the sixties

due to the lack of data, no estimates of the growth of GDP are possible, even on a crude basis). But during this decade the population also rose at a rate of 1.81%.⁴ This implies that despite the achievements in infrastructure, there was virtually no growth in per capita output during the decade. Two factors are accountable for this. First, Nepal under King Mahendra started out on the path of development with almost none of the preconditions of development (see Table 2 col. 1). In the eighteen years of his regime substantial achievements were made by means of aid in the creation of these preconditions. Thus all four plans initiated in his reign can be called infrastructure plans with little investment towards raising productivity. Secondly, the low rate of capital formation (5.2% of GDP) could not be expected to have much impact on production capacity.

Apart from these broad and, in some sense, extenuating factors, a close analysis reveals more fundamental causes for the ineffectiveness of aid in raising production. A large part of aid was consumed in 'local costs', which can not really be considered as 'capital' aid. For instance, in a road project the cost of both the wage-labour and of Nepal is in technical and supervisory personnel is borne by aid. This type of aid is either financed with Indian Rupees (Indian aid and American aid PL 480 funds) or by the sale of consumer/consumer-durable goods (Russian and Chinese) provided by the donor. This aid in fact amounted to balance of payments and revenue support. The basic political and organisational strength required to raise revenue and mobilise savings complements the capacity to implement development policies and programmes. By avoiding these onerous responsibilities, the government was merely postponing the need for changing its 'soft-state' character.

Multiplier Benefits

A second factor was the leakage of the 'indirect' benefits of aid projects. In most of the infrastructure projects, where the majority of aid investment has gone, the contractors, skilled labour and even 50-75% of the crude labour tend to be Indian. This is true not only of Indian aid projects, but also of Russian, British or American ones. Even where the income benefits of employment go to the Nepali, the major gain is not to domestic

product but Indian imports. Since workers from the subsistence sector generally use their monetary earnings for manufactured and processed goods almost all of which come from India, a rise in income through development projects means a rise in Indian imports. So the direct and 'multiplier' benefits of such projects—in terms of direct income, demand generation and creation of on-the-job skills—have all 'leaked' out to India. This failure to develop the ancillary enterprises related to the infrastructure projects such as, construction of firms to train and organise skills as those of masonry etc., to create a mobile native labour force or channels for disseminating employment opportunity information within Nepal, has meant that the cream of development has flowed out of the country.

The point is that since projects were 'turnkey' efforts, Nepal did not have to, and had not bothered to, enter into the detailed project-planning. If the government had retained project responsibility or shared it in a meaningful manner, it would have had to provide attention to all these problems. It would also perhaps have realised the implications for other sectors, particularly for industries producing goods for this growing wage-earners' market. Thus foreign aid projects tended to be isolated enclaves where decision making rested with outsiders to whom the single project was more important than the whole development pattern. These projects needed to be integrated into a total pattern of native weaving, in which each part reinforced the other, so that the whole was greater than the sum of the parts.

Technical Aid

There have been two main channels of technical aid : (i) foreign technical advisers (ii) the training and education of Nepalis abroad. In the early phase, the abrupt adoption of development aims in a stagnant framework caused a large incursion of foreign technical advisers. As one analyst mordantly observed, Nepal was 'overadvised and undernourished'.⁵ Foreign advisers taking advantage of their novelty and the 'air of sophistication', dominated the development scene, often stampeding the Nepali bureaucrats into directions of little relevance to the country's needs. With experience and the

return of many foreign trained Nepalis to the bureaucracy, the ability to resist spurious foreign advice as well as to utilise good suggestions effectively had increased. In proportion to the size of the aid programme and of governmental activities, the number of foreign personnel had declined.

The problem of the quality of foreign technical personnel however remained. The lack of a process of screening and selection before accepting technical advisers made their utility a matter of chance. Several still tried to plug in a device produced for a different system without adaptation to the socio-cultural currents of our system. This often resulted in destruction of the device and in short-circuiting the system. Others succeeded in introducing and establishing units successful in themselves which distorted the totality like the wholesale introduction of capital-intensive technologies. So the question of 'relevance' of the technology introduced arises in several cases. Indeed, since the problems of under-development are by definition different from those of the highly developed countries, their answers and solutions must be evolved from other sources than the research going on in developed countries. Thus the critical technical need is not of borrowing advanced technology but of finding intermediate technologies.

Despite this, there is little doubt that the results of foreign training and studies helped to increase the potential of government and non-government agencies. According to one estimate over 4,000 people had received training abroad by 1967, when the total number of graduates was only about 6,000.⁶ Probably about three-fourths of the gazetted officers of HMG have either studied, attended training courses or been on 'study' visits abroad. Now it is certainly true that some such trips may have been 'subsidised tourism'. Yet, in general, the competence of the middle-ranks both in the civil service and public corporation, improved significantly as a result. The problem here is that the system of administration reserves most decision-taking powers at the level of the highest echelon, the vast resources of trained manpower remain either unutilised or under-utilised. In this contradictory situation one found even secretaries asking for technical personnel from foreign agencies when such expertise was locally available. Perhaps the best indicator of this under-utilisation and its resultant frustration was the increasing brain-

drain from Nepal of precisely these people who had been trained by foreign aid.

This paradox of surplus amidst scarcity was due to the fact that the surplus was mostly due to inflows of convertible capital (foreign aid) and export earnings, while the government was unable to mobilise the requisite amount of domestic resources to finance even the 'local costs' of aid projects and had to find various forms of aid for this component. The government's principal bottleneck then was not to obtain foreign forms of capital, such as machines, but to invest native savings both of money and time, gainfully. To use the surplus savings in the hands of financial institutions, a higher priority to agriculture⁷ and industry where these forms of Nepalese savings could play a complementary role, seemed called for. Enough infrastructure has now been created in several areas to justify such a shift in investment patterns. Secondly, since the financing of local materials and labour was a problem, both the raising of revenue and the mobilisation of under-utilised labour needed to be given high priority. There were high possibilities for converting labour directly into capital in both large scale projects (such as flood control in China) and in small-scale-projects (such as terracing or land reclamation in Nepal). Foreign aid may have actually inhibited such mobilisation by artificially lowering the factor price of capital and so making capital cheaper than labour.

What was probably required instead was a two-sector strategy (Mao-tse-Tung's "Walking on two legs"). In some fields modern capital-intensive technology was the only economic basis for production. All the rest would fall into the second sector in which the larger part of the economy would probably fall. Here, intermediate technologies to make maximum use of labour would be used. Development in this sector would be financed mainly through domestic resources and the project-running would be a national responsibility. Aid, if at all, would be taken for just capital goods. In the capital intensive sector, however, aid both for capital and technology could obviously play a greater role, so that this could be the chief sector for foreign aid.

In the period then, due to failures of policy and a lack of understanding of the resource opportunities, while foreign aid

created considerable potential for growth, government failed to actualise this. Both the opportunities and the problems of the Nepalese economy require a much greater emphasis on internal features.

Trade

Upto the point where steamship made sea-transport cheap and safe, the trans-Himalayan trade between China and India was a vital factor in the development of Nepalese civilization and economy. However both technological and political developments gradually closed off this avenue and the establishment of Indian railways oriented the whole pattern of economy to an exchange with Nepal's southern neighbour.⁸ As a result of this, about the mid-sixties Nepal's trade was essentially its trade with India. This dependence on trade reinforced India's monopoly *vis-a-vis* Nepal's trade. Unfortunately, while Nepal's very small size makes trade essential, the land locked position of the country curtails its ability to trade. And upto now, India has exercised monopoly control over Nepal's access to the sea.

Dependence upon India

It is perhaps this peculiar feature of Nepal's geopolitical location that accounts for the apparently minor role that trade presently plays in an economy with such a small internal market. In 1961-62, when the gross domestic product was Rs 3,682 million, exports to India (visible) and other countries came to only Rs 296,975,000 or about 9% of the gross domestic product. Even if a value were to be imputed to 'invisible' earnings from India, total export earnings would still not be more than 11% of the gross domestic product (Table 3). Assuming constant terms of trade, a 5% increase in the GDP through trade would require nearly a 50% increase in exports.

However, these statistics need to be taken with a pinch of salt. If we take into account the existence of an open border between Nepal and India, the recorded trade must be only a part of the total trade. One international team estimated that unrecorded exports may be twice as high as recorded exports and total imports 2/3 higher than recorded 1963-64 imports.⁹

If this estimate was correct then exports may be approximately 25% of gross domestic product. Thus the potential contribution of trade to economic growth may well be much larger than our statistics indicate and this is a question which policy-makers certainly need to bear in mind.

It is in this context that we must assess the role of trade in economic reconstruction during King Mahendra's reign. Theoretically the arguments in regard to trade being 'an engine of growth' are classic ones. These arguments can be briefly summed up in this way. Trade permits efficient resource allocation by permitting nations to specialise in those goods where their comparative advantage lies. This specialisation and the larger size of market produce economies of scale. In addition, there are the benefits to be gained from the demonstration effect, the import of technology, the exchange of goods with low growth potential for goods with high growth potential (e.g. machinery), and foreign investment.¹⁰ Equally well-known are the counter arguments provided by such eminent economists as Myrdal or Prebisch, criticising the static nature of neoclassical theory on trade and pointing to the historical fact that trade has failed to induce growth in the under-developed countries during our own time. The purpose of this section will be to analyse Nepal's trade during the fifties and the sixties in the light of some of these arguments and to examine how far trade has contributed to development.

The principal question would then be : has Nepal's trade evolve in such a fashion as to allow it to specialise in the areas where its comparative advantage lies ? If we can talk of specialisation in any area in terms of Nepal's exports, it is in primary products. The second question then arises, have we profited from this specialisation ? Let us analyse the trend in our trade statistics with India.

The components represented in the foreign trade statistics supplied by the *Rastra Bank Quarterly Economic Bulletin*, No. 4 can be classified for this purpose into two groups. Food, crude materials, animal and vegetable oils and fats can all be grouped under primary products. The rest, all manufactured and more sophisticated goods, can be grouped together under another heading. It is held by some scholars that a rise in per capita income in the process of development creates greater demands

for manufactured and sophisticated goods.¹¹ Nepal's experience confirms this proposition which also explains the slower growth of its exports as compared to the imports.

This trend has been worked out on the basis of a three years' moving average. Accordingly, primary products formed 94.3% of Nepalese exports in 1956-67. The low-income elasticity of demand for primary products which formed such a large proportion of total exports accounts for their slow rate of growth. So, despite the fact that the role of primary products in total exports had declined to 85.6% in 1964-65, this was still sufficient to dampen the rate of growth of exports. On the other hand, manufactured and sophisticated goods formed 67.4% of imports from India in 1956-57. The high income-elasticity of demand for these goods accounts for the swift growth in imports. Despite their large size at the start, manufactured imports continued to grow at a rate faster than that of total imports and by 1965-66 accounted for 76.2% of total imports. Thus both in exports and imports, whereas, primary products grow at a rate slower than the growth of total trade, the manufactured goods grow at a rate higher than that of total trade. The high proportion of manufactured goods in imports and of primary products in exports leads one to expect a progressive rise in the trade deficit.

During most of this period there was a movement in the terms of trade in favour of primary products *vis-a-vis* manufactured, and this raised the value of the exports of primary product. For instance, the price of foodgrains nearly doubled between 1963-64 and 1967-68, but that of the manufactured, only rose to 25 per cent in the Indian index for wholesale prices. So, in terms of quantity, the share of primary products in the total volume of trade must be declining even faster. Nepal was specialising in a type of goods whose future potential for exchange is shrinking. Specially with India's green revolution, there is every ground to fear that a sustained increase in its domestic supply of foodgrains will cause the terms of trade to move against Nepal. Many Nepali economists also expect a rise in the domestic demand for foodgrains to cut into the supply of exportable foodgrains. So both the volume and the price of Nepal's principal export are liable to drop in the future.

The argument is clear. The comparative advantage to Nepal in foodgrains, oilseeds etc., was only a static one. With changes in the production structure in India, there is no comparative advantage in dynamic terms. The specialisation in traditional primary products that trade caused, has led Nepal into an economic blind-alley.

Nor did trade introduce technological change into the patterns of primary products in the agricultural sector. Despite the sharp rise in foodgrain prices during the sixties, the production of foodgrains rose by only 1.8% and one estimate apportioned 61.23% of that increase to the extension of area.¹² The fact was that the emergence of railways on the southern border and the trading opportunities resulting therefrom, superimposed a comparatively advanced commercialised layer of millowners, middlemen and traders over an agricultural system of production, that remained adamantly feudal. Since this superficial commercial layer dealt through the feudal structure in agriculture, the profits that percolated to the agricultural sector went almost exclusively to the landlord and the middlemen. However, the responsibility for managing production lay with the tenant and the small peasant. Since the incentives of increased production did not go to the small producer he had no interest in technical change to raise production. Thus there were none of the benefits of introducing new technology from trade, since trade could not penetrate through the feudal structure which determined the backward modes of production in agriculture.

It would be argued, however, that trade motivated the growth of a whole range of processing industries like rice and jute mills. This would probably be true for the period of the later thirties and the forties. But the output of these industries accounts for a tiny percentage of national output (1.6% of GDP). In Mahendra's period, the new industries developed were either for import substitution such as the sugar and cigarette industries, or those catering for an enlarged domestic market such as the Brick and Tile factory. The one brief mushroom growth of stainless steel and nylon yarn industries for export to India added so little value within Nepal and were so quickly nipped in the bud that their emergence can best be regarded as an aberration. So the gains from trade in terms of

introduction of technology in the period under review were also low.

Finally, we need to look at foreign investment. During the period, Indian investment had largely gone in transport, construction, trade, tourism and the stainless steel and nylon yarn industries. In each of these activities, there was a strong tendency to employ Indians rather than Nepalis not only at the managerial and skilled levels, where there were admittedly shortages in Nepal, but even as crude labour. The transfer of skills and managerial know-how had been remarkably low. The slow growth of Nepalese construction firms and the fact that the majority of truck-drivers employed by transport companies were non-Nepalis, typify this. Even in the hotel industry, a vast range of the foodstuffs and provisions came from India. Nepalese industries ancillary to the hotels, such as bakeries and dairies were either unable to meet the quantity or the quality of demand or in some cases, the vertical links could not be properly organised. In trade of stainless steel and nylon yarn—some of the worst elements of Indian business class managed to enter the field and made huge surpluses out of smuggling. In all these activities, the retained-benefits in Nepal were low. Most of the profits flew out of the country. So the pattern of foreign investment in the period proved not merely neutral but negative.

Diversification

The picture on trade was, however, not totally bleak. After the 1960 Trade Treaty with India ; diversification of trade to other countries became possible for the first time.¹³ This resulted into vital gains. Despite its many shortcomings,¹⁴ the Export Bonus Voucher Scheme did succeed in raising the export to hard currency countries significantly. This rise, from 6% before 1962 to 25.7% (Table 4) was mainly dependent on the possibility of what is called 're-exports to India of the items imported by virtue of these hard currency earnings.'¹⁵ However, even with the decline of this unsavoury avenue, a hard core of exports maintained their quantum at Rs 81.5 million. Of course, India's share in Nepal's export must have risen again to around 85% (leaving only 15% or so for other countries) of the

total. This still meant a significant rise on the pre-1960 figure of exports to non-Indian markets. The result was a small but significant diminution of Nepal's dependence on India.

Here again the problem was that the foreign exchange earned by those exports either merely amassed reserves (and presumably undisclosed savings with the traders) or it was used to import luxury consumption and durable consumption items. While the lessening of dependence on India was by itself welcome, the further growth of exports was possible only when domestically marketable or investible items could be imported by such earnings. For now when the scope of 're-exporting' to India had reached its limit and the Indian rupee savings came to be accepted as the critical requirement for development in Nepal, it was pointless to encourage hard-currency exports for their own sake.

One worthwhile exercise could be to list such capital and semi-capital goods which were much more expensive in India than in the world markets, and were in high demand in Nepal. Trucks, buses, construction equipment, etc. represented such goods. These goods also raised productivity or lowered the cost of production. The process involved was no doubt a complicated one. Enough trucks and buses had to be imported to put up servicing and spare parts facilities at several points for them. The substitution of hard currency capital goods for those from India required planning. The other way could be to import (not from India) those articles of cheap mass consumption that Nepal did not produce. Thus, for real diversification, the imports from hard-currency countries must be used in Nepal and not leaked-out to India. And if private enterprise is only interested in the high profits of importing goods to be re-exported to India, state enterprise should enter into this sector.

The large exports of jute and jute goods to hard-currency markets was another disturbing feature. Lately, however, there were some hopeful trends in this context. In 1964-65 jute accounted for over 97% of exports to overseas markets but by 1970-71 it was reduced to some 69% (Table 5). At the same time, the cost of jute production was likely to be reduced through the introduction of modern techniques. In essence, however, since most goods were exported at well below their

production cost (particularly jute), the rise in exports depended on the profitability of imports.

Barter Trade

An important aspect of trade in the period under review was the emergence of bilateral barter trade arrangements with several countries such as Pakistan, China, USSR, Poland and the two Koreas. Under such arrangements Nepal was importing some Rs 18 million worth of goods from China (excluding Tibet) in 1970-71 and 1,370 thousand roubles worth from Russia in 1970. Since most of these goods were donated to raise the 'local-cost' of Chinese and Russian aided projects, imports were much lower : only 581 thousand roubles worth from Russia and Rs 25,000 worth from China.¹⁶ However, the barter trade failed to expand trade, stabilise export earnings, improve the terms of trade or provide diversification not merely market-wise but also commodity-wise.¹⁷ So, here again market diversification did not lead to significant improvements.

Prospects

A strategy for harnessing trade to development is yet to be formulated. Such a strategy will be of the utmost importance, since the size of Nepal requires trade to become an engine of growth. For this, we have to look towards our dynamic comparative advantage. An authority on regional development has argued that Nepal's comparative advantage *vis-a-vis* India lies in hill agriculture.¹⁸ He points out that the rich markets of the towns of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are much nearer to the Nepalese hills than the hilly regions of India. So orchard, livestock and herbal produce from Nepal could compete effectively in these areas with Indian products. A major shift of investment to the accessible areas in the hills to encourage such production may then prove highly profitable. The development of horticulture, herbal farming and processing industries would also shift the focus of economic activity back to its historic origins in the middle hill regions. At any rate, a strategy aimed at the Indian market must work on the basis of dynamic comparative costs.

Other possibilities for neighbouring markets are the use of 'forest-based' resources for producing sports or leisure goods such as tennis and badminton rackets, cricket equipment, etc. There is a burgeoning market for such goods all over Asia. Since water is a major potential resource of Nepal, we must plan for energy based industries in the long run. Electric power from the Karnali will be the cheapest in the region. Apart from the comparative advantage, electricity has a high income elasticity of demand. These possibilities clearly deserve priority investigation. Therefore, we must try and view our proximity to India not merely as an asphyxiating degree of landlockedness but also as an access to a vast and growing market.

The emergence of a new state with friendly relations to India was a golden economic opportunity to Nepal. If and when the railway lines over the narrow strip of Indian territory connecting Bangladesh with Nepal can be joined, it will be possible to send sealed wagons straight to Chittagong harbour. Accordingly, such goods will not have to pass through Indian customs. This will end India's historic monopoly over Nepal's access to the world through sea. Thus there may be higher returns for Nepal on investing in this rail-route than on most transport projects inside the country. In the meantime, sealed container trucks to Bangladesh may well provide a viable temporary means of getting a new access to the sea. Besides, the potentialities of Bangladesh as a new trading partner should also be explored and studies to find out possible bases of commercial exchange should be undertaken immediately.

The economy of the northern districts of Nepal had been closely interlinked in past with Tibet. Even the cattle and horses on both sides used to graze in Tibet in summer and in Nepal in winter. The gradual decline of intercourse with Tibet has had an adverse effect on Nepal's northern areas. Nevertheless, the new network of transport that the Chinese government has developed all along the Nepal-Tibet border and the new road links between Tibet and the Terai through Kathmandu and Kodari have created a new opportunity for trade. It is probably easier for China than for Nepal to supply most of northern Nepal with goods, like salt, wool, etc. near the border points to supplement its subsistence economy. Similarly it is likely to be cheaper for Tibet to buy such Terai products as

sugar, rice and vegetable oil from Nepal than from the distant production centres in inner China. Both studies and efforts to develop an exchange on these lines should have large payoffs.

Another way in which exports to Tibet could be paying would be on a barter basis of exchanging these goods for imports from other parts of China. After all, since Indian currency is not convertible and Nepal's export earning from India can only purchase Indian goods, all trade with India is also tantamount to barter trade. If barter trade with China gives Nepal the same price for its exports but a lower price for imports than India, then such trade is obviously more profitable. Since in recent years many Chinese articles have come to Nepal at considerably lower prices than Indian goods, the possibility of large-scale barter trade with China is worth exploring.

Export through air is another possibility. For this, goods of very high value per unit weight, such as transistors, complex electrical equipment, watches, jewellery or industrial diamonds, are useful. Nepal's great potential in the field of skilled handiwork has been amply demonstrated by its curio industry and the craft goods. There should be a fair degree of substitutability of these skills to newer lines of handiwork. The cost of such handiwork is so high in the more developed countries and so cheap in Nepal that even with transport costs added, this could probably be sold at 30 to 40% cheaper prices. A programme of training in the skills needed for precision goods and modern jewellery could also absorb the plethora of low-level high school graduates that is becoming a major problem of manpower policy. Such skills could provide a white-collar job with adequate remuneration and prestige if the social ranking of such craft jobs were equated with the economic reward from them. A determined effort towards establishing new industries in precision goods and jewellery should form a part of the government policy for overseas exports.

Conclusion

In essence both the failures and the successes in trade during the Mahendra period resulted from merely altering commercial arrangements, without altering the basic structure of production. Thus diversification of market occurred without diversi-

fication of products. It was equally inevitable to reach a ceiling on exports, since without structural changes supply bottlenecks were bound to emerge. Even where new lines had emerged as in tourism, the superficiality of policies was evident from the fact that no ancillary industries were put up. Most of tourist expenditure flows out to India since hotels import most of the package consumed by tourists from India.

The most culpable failure leading to the growing deficit with India was perhaps, the failure to set up processing industries for import substitution. As long as Nepal exports its raw materials such as wheat, ghee, oilseeds etc., to India and buys them back in processed form (as flour, refined oil, etc.) from India ; as long as it is dependent on India for basic consumer items such as cloth, basic development goods such as cement and even for service industries crucial to development activity such as the construction industry, the mere legal texts of treaties will not help. In the middle sixties political circumstances favoured Nepal, but then the government could not lay a firm industrial infrastructure for a significant degree of economic self-reliance and export diversification. This failure has, perhaps, proved expensive in the seventies, when political circumstances do not seem quite so opportune.

TABLE 1
FOREIGN AID

(Rs in, 000)

Country F. Year	India	America	China	Russia	U K	Others	Total
1951/52 to 1955/56 ¹	7,00,18	2,49,51	—	—	—	—	9,49,69
1956/57	1,45,70	1,27,23	—	—	—	—	2,72,93
1957/58	96,05	4,84,73	—	—	—	—	5,80,78
1958/59	1,71,02	1,79,51	—	—	—	—	3,50,53
1959/60	1,84,50	5,62,25	3,21,35	—	—	1,85,30	12,53,40
1960/61	2,23,55	8,69,97	—	84,56	—	1,92,91	13,70,99
1961/62	Not available						6,95,68 ²
1962/63	1,36,00	4,68,00	32,00	1,50,00	—	51,00	8,37,00
1963/64	3,40,00	7,44,00	1,47,00	3,34,00	—	94,00	16,59,00
1964/65 ³	6,27,36	6,55,30	1,21,44	4,63	—	1,74	14,10,47

1965/66	9,30,00	5,79,00	1,62,00	50,00	—	32,00	17,53,00
1966/67	7,76,33	3,49,26	2,45,83	48,75	—	2,19	14,22,36
1967/68	9,58,67	3,22,26	2,61,65	30,69	2,50	5,37	15,81,14
1968/69	10,64,82	3,85,32	3,75,56	12,50	13,00	7,78	18,58,98
1969/70	13,95,61	4,37,00	4,84,70	45,00	51,10	24,00	24,37,41
1970/71	12,53,62	5,97,34	4,71,71	27,50	1,73,50	1,83,18	27,06,85
1971-72 R. est.	10,92,70	4,52,02	5,31,08	50,00	2,75,00	2,00,46	26,01,26
1972/73 est.	11,05,19	5,68,12	5,00,57	25,00	1,71,18	5,40,54	29,10,60

1. A year-wise break-downs are not available.

2. Data for non-budgetary expenditure for the year 1961-62 are not available.

3. Actuals of foreign aid included in the Budget as published in the Budget Speech 1966-67.

Source : 1. Y P Pant, *Problems in Fiscal and Monetary Policy: A Case Study of Nepal*, Sahyogi Prakashan, Tripureshwar, Kathmandu, 1970.

2. His Majesty's Government, Ministry of Finance, *Budget Speeches 1966-67 to 1972-73*.

TABLE 2
INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT
Pre-1954 and 1971

	Pre-1954 ¹	1971 ⁴
Infrastructure :		
Mileage of Roads :		
All weather)	429 km.	1,256 km.
Fair weather)		
Installed power	6,280 km.	32,000 km.
Irrigated area (by modern facilities)	14,700 ha	1,81,000 ha
Quality of Manpower :		
Education—Literacy Rate	4.4%	11%
No. of Graduates	300 ²	10,877 ³
Health No. of Hospital beds	649	1,875
No. of Doctors	50	318

Sources :

1. *Nepal : A Profile* (NCAER Kathmandu 1970), 176-184.
2. Wood & Knall—*Report on Educational Planning in Nepal and its Economic Implications 1962*. (Documentation Centre, CEDA), 25, this is the figure for 1951.
3. Harka Gurung, *Graduates in Nepal*, NPC (Memiograph), 1972, 2.
4. From a recent report by an international study group.

TABLE 3
EXPORT EARNINGS FROM INDIA

		<i>in .000 Rs</i>
1962-63	Visible exports to India	268,893
	Visible imports from India	439,661
	Deficit on Balance of Trade	175,768
	Increase in Indian Currency (I.C.) Holdings	5,702
<hr/>		
	Invisible earnings from India	
	Deficit + Increase in reserves	181,470
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	Aid receipts = Rupees component of American Aid + Indian Aid = Rs 44,849 + Rs 40,900	85,749
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	Other invisible earnings from India Rs 181,470 — 85,749	95,721
<hr/>		
	Total Exports = (Visible exports + Invisible exports net of aid) to India + exports to rest of world + net of aid = Rs 263,893 + 95,721 + 33,082	392,696
<hr/>		
	Exports as % of GDP = $392,696/3,682, \times 100 = 10.7\%$	

Source : All statistics, unless otherwise stated, are from the Rastra Bank. The writer is much indebted to the ready help of its research section and particularly to that of Mr Harihar Dev Pant.

TABLE 4

COMPARATIVE FOREIGN TRADE OF NEPAL WITH INDIA AND OVERSEAS COUNTRIES

(In '000 of Rs)

Year	Imports				Exports			
	Total Imports ¹	Import from overseas countries	% of overseas imports to total imports	% of imports from India to total imports	Total export	Export to overseas countries	% of overseas export to total export	% of export to India to total export
Before								
1962	—	—	1	99	—	—	6	94
1964/65	818,867	25,486	3.1	96.9	440	10,853	2.4	97.6
1965/66 ²	781,989	18,523	2.4	97.6	375,106	28,232	7.4	92.6
1966/67	481,268	51,092	10.6	89.4	426,321	57,309	13.4	86.6
1967/68	477,330	78,191	16.4	83.6	398,963	94,848	23.8	76.2
1968/69	744,300	76,177	10.2	89.8	567,847	146,007	25.7	74.3
1969/70	—	122,049	—	—	—	121,136	—	—
1970/71	—	85,577	—	—	—	81,464	—	—

1. Includes goods imported by Foreign Embassies and missions.

2. Source : 2nd Three Year Plan, page 16.

Source : *Nepal Rastra Bank*

TABLE 5
JUTE EXPORT TO OVERSEAS
1964-65 and 1970-71

Years	Commodities				Miscellaneous (oil-seeds, goat's skin, medicinal herbs, timber, musks, feathers, mica, carpet, etc.)	
	Raw Jute	Jute goods	Bris-tle	Curio-goods	Total export	
	Thousand Rs					
'64/65	4979	3934	28	36	185	9162
	% from total export					
	54.3	43	0.3	0.4	2.0	100%
	Thousand Rs					
'70/71	30939	25038	7967	1665	15855	81464
	% from total export					
	38	30.8	9.8	2.0	19.4	100%

Source : Analysis by LB Shrestha in the CEDA Development Planning Seminar, 25 June—28 July, 1972.

References

1. Fourth Plan (1970-1975) NPC, HMG, Singh Durbar, Kathmandu Nepal, February 1972, 8 and 19-20

<i>in million of Rs</i>	<i>3rd Plan</i>	<i>4th Plan</i>
According to the new budgetary classification	$\frac{1038.5}{1420.0} = 71\%$	$\frac{1490}{2570} = 58\%$

2. In fact even the institutional savings lying with the financial institutions have not been included. If these were included the unutilised domestic savings would probably be significantly higher.

Gross capital formation	Foreign aid	Utilised domestic savings	Addition to exchange reserves	Total domestic savings
5.2	2.3	2.9	0.6	3.5

Sources : Anisur Rehman *An Appraisal of Economic Development in Nepal*—(Documentation Centre, Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Tribhuvan University Campus, Kathmandu, Nepal) 13 (Figures provided by Rehman have been corrected by CEDA Statistician Y S Thapa).

3. *The Fourth Plan*, (p. 276) assesses the growth rate in GDP as 2.2% for 1964-65 to 1967-68 and for the early sixties the figure is thought to be about 1.6%
4. *Ibid.*
5. M R Goodall, "Administrative Changes in Nepal" in *Asian Bureaucratic System Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition*, North Carolina, 1966.
6. H B Gurung, *Economic Implications of Foreign Aid* : Summary of address for the Truman International Conference on Technical Assistance and Development, 23-31 May 1970, Jerusalem, Israel.
7. In practice and in actual investment—slogans to this effect have been frequently put forward even though they appear contradictory (See Pashupati Shumshere J B Rana, *Nepal's Fourth Plan : A Critique*, published by Yeti Pocket Books Pvt Ltd, Kathmandu, Nepal 1st Edition—1971) Chapter I.
8. See the author's *Trade* (Mimeographed) Documentation Centre, Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Kathmandu, Nepal, 1-6.

9. *Plan Implementation and Project Analysis* (Mimeographed) Documentation Centre, Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Kathmandu, Nepal, Chapter 1, "The State of the Economy", 8.
10. G M Meier, *International Trade and Development*, Harper & Row, New York and John Weatherhill Inc. Tokyo, 153-9.
11. Harry C Johnson, *Money, Trade and Economic Growth*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1962, 81
12. See Ratna S Rana, "Agriculture in Nepal: Some Viewpoints" in *Nepal in Perspective* (ed.) by K P Malla & Pashupati S J B Rana. Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Kathmandu, 1973, 196.
13. See Author's "India and Nepal: The Political Economy of a Relationship", *Asian Survey*, July 1971, vol. XI, no. 7, 645-660
14. See Author's *Indo-Nepalese Trade today and its policy implications for Nepal*, (Occasional Paper No. 1) Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Kathmandu, Nepal, 4-6.
15. *Ibid.*
16. See Madhukar Rana and V Kelkar *The Impact of barter like arrangements in the Economic Development of Nepal*, Documentation Centre, Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Kathmandu, Nepal.
17. *Ibid.*
18. H B Gurung, *Rationale for Hill Areas Development* (Mimeographed), Development Planning Seminar of the Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Kathmandu, Nepal, 21 January 1971 to 5 March 1972.

Policy Towards India : Quest for Independence

S K JHA

The management of relations with its southern neighbour, India, has been the dominant theme of Nepal's foreign policy. This has been mainly due to the fact that geography has so precariously tagged this Himalayan Kingdom with the Indian peninsula that its social, economic, cultural and political life is greatly influenced by the changes that take place in India.

The two most significant political considerations which conditioned Nepal's relations with the British right from the day of its unification by Prithvi Narayan Shah in the late 1760s to the end of the British rule in India in 1947 were the preservation of its territorial integrity and the maintenance of internal political *status quo*. Accordingly, the Nepalis rulers from time to time devised and pursued the policy of either isolationism or the balance of power, or the friendship with the British or even an admixture of these three. The British were themselves favourably disposed towards respecting the formal independent status of Nepal and keeping aloof from its domestic politics, not because of any ethical consideration but of their own political calculations. Nepal had hardly anything more to aspire for in foreign affairs. In that age of imperial domination its limited foreign policy goals as a small power were fully accomplished. Nevertheless, the Nepali rulers lived under the constant fear that should it suit the political interest of the British imperialists, they would not abstain from making a bid to subjugate Nepal.

Dawn of New Era and Nepal's Predicament

The end of the Second World War marked the beginning of an era of freedom and equality among nations. Not sur-

prisingly, many of the small powers which had so far had limited foreign policy goals, now embarked on an ambitious and adventurous course in international relations. However, Nepal, almost during a decade following the Second World War, was so much engrossed in internal problems that for its rulers foreign relations remained of very little concern.

The withdrawal of the British from India in 1947 created a situation to which this Himalayan Kingdom had to readjust itself. The British departure left the autocratic Rana regime in Nepal unprotected from, and exposed to, oppositional and "rebellious" elements. The friendship of the Rana rulers had proved to be of immense value to the British in the hour of need and it served their purpose in curbing the political activities of the Nepalis in India against Ranacracy. But, unlike the British, the democratic government in independent India had a natural dislike for this anachronistic system in Nepal and a soft core for the movement of the Nepalis in India that sought to establish democracy in their country. This attitude of the Government of India constituted a serious challenge to the continuance of the Rana regime.

Subsequently, the rise of communism in China in 1949 and the assertion of Chinese authority on Tibet in 1950 posed a threat to the territorial integrity of Nepal. Thus both the domestic political stability and the territorial integrity of the country which the Ranas had so successfully maintained during the British days in India were confronted with serious challenges. However, the Ranas were more exercised on their maintenance in power than with the security of their country. since the Treaty of 1923, that still held good, provided that Nepal's security was a matter of Indian care and concern also. This was brought into specific relief by a statement of the Indian Prime Minister in Parliament on 17 March 1950 that it was not possible for any Indian government to tolerate any invasion of Nepal from anywhere.¹

Ranas' Bid to Appease the Government of India

Under the circumstances, Nepal's India policy from 1947 to 1950 was exclusively aimed at winning over the Indian government's sympathy for the Rana rule. In order to achieve

this end. the Ranas repeatedly pleaded with New Delhi that they would always remain friendly and loyal to the new government in India as they had been to the British.² To demonstrate their credibility in this respect they accepted the Indian advice on some modest political reforms in Nepal, promptly despatched a contingent of Nepalis troops to help the Indian government in dealing with the Hyderabad question in 1948 and readily agreed to the Indian proposal for a new treaty instead the old one of 1923.

Obviously, the Ranas were doing all this to appease India, though, in fact, they hardly had any alternative choice. The position of the Ranas was quite vulnerable not merely due to Nepal's geographical location but largely on account of the fact that the fabulous wealth amassed by the Rana rulers was deposited mostly in the banks in India. Therefore, they were afraid that should they pursue a policy not palatable to New Delhi, the Indian government might freeze their accounts.³ The result was that whether it was the question of democratic reforms or the release of detenus who were agitating for political reform or the proposal for a fresh treaty between India and Nepal, whenever the Indian government pressed the issue the Ranas had to yield. Another factor which had also contributed to this helplessness of the Rana government in relation to India was Nepal's severely limited diplomatic contacts with foreign countries. Consequently, Nepal's scope of manoeuvrability and bargaining in its relations with India continued to be limited.

Against such a background of its position and in the midst of pressing problems from within and without, Nepal signed two treaties with India in 1960—the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, and the Treaty of Trade and Commerce. The terms of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship which redefined Nepal's political relationship with India were almost similar to those of the 1923 treaty except that the Nepalese government secured an explicit recognition of its sovereign independent status by the Indian government. However, as per the terms of the letters exchanged with this Treaty, the Nepalese government agreed to collaborate with India in defence measures in case of an attack on either country by a third power and also subject its freedom of importing arms and ammunition from any country to the permission from, and the scrutiny by, New

Delhi.⁴ These provisions virtually made Nepal an informal ally of India in matters of defence. During the British rule in India also such an arrangement existed between the two countries and the provisions were only a continuation from the previous Treaty. The Nepali Congress leaders also came out with a demand when the Treaty was being negotiated that the Indian government should look after the defence and foreign relations of Nepal.

Change-over from Ranacracy to Democracy

The year 1951 was a watershed in Nepal's history. In the wake of an armed insurrection during 1950-51, the Rana regime was shaded off into a government the formula for which was finalised in New Delhi on February 18, 1951. King Tribhuvan who had taken refuge in India was subsequently reinstalled on the throne and restored to an effective sovereign status through Indian good-offices and consequent compromise with the Ranas. But the new Nepalese government found itself completely absorbed in internal troubles. Law and order had not been restored yet. That was because a faction of the Nepali Congress led by Dr K I Singh had refused to accept the Delhi formula and continued its violent agitation. Simultaneously, a section of the Nepalis having organised themselves into Kirati Dal launched a secessionist movement. Moreover, the conflicting approaches of the two mutually antagonistic elements in the coalition cabinet, the Ranas and the representatives of the Nepali Congress, and the oppositional activities of numerous political factions consisting overwhelmingly of persons intent on power and without any scruples, and the subsequent infights within the Nepali Congress itself, led to frequent changes of ministries. Under the circumstances, the maintenance of law and order, the formation of a stable ministry and the building up of administrative and economic infrastructures so integral to a genuinely democratic system, turned out for the Nepalese government its most pressing preoccupations.

Since the Indian government had helped Nepal's new ruling elite to come into power and assured them of support for the establishment of a democratic system, the Nepalese govern-

ment found in India a friend to be trusted, a philosopher to be consulted and a guide to be relied upon. Whether it touched either the sensitive question of law and order, or the perplexing problem of forming of new ministry or the stupendous tasks of administrative and economic reforms in the country, Kathmandu, throughout the early fifties, counted on the aid and advice of New Delhi. Not surprisingly, between 1951 and 1953, the Nepalese government thrice called in the Indian army to help it maintain law and order. It took on loan the services of some Indian civil servants to run the administration and called a team of Indian advisers for suggesting measures to streamline the administration. It invited a team of Indian army officers to train and reorganise its armed forces and a team of economic experts from the Indian Planning Commission to survey Nepal's economic condition and recommend suitable steps for its economic development. Furthermore, it also sought and received financial assistance from New Delhi to launch various schemes for its economic betterment.

The dependence of Kathmandu on New Delhi was all the more manifest in the domain of foreign relations and defence. Due to its heavy preoccupation with domestic issues the Nepalese government could scarcely afford to give serious thought to them. It only echoed the foreign policy pronouncements of Jawaharlal Nehru and literally followed the friendly guidance offered by New Delhi. Its stance towards the People's Republic of China was a case in point. The Nepalese government did not pay heed to the mounting demand from many political pockets in the country for cultivating relations with China until it received a green signal from New Delhi. The two countries even initiated moves for the formal coordination in their foreign policies.⁵ Similarly, in defence too, it followed the Indian suggestions. All this close cooperation in which India and Nepal were locked, was upheld and explained by both of them as a case of "special relationship".

Tremors of Anti-Indianism in Nepal

Nevertheless, Nepal's heavy dependence on India and the resultant Indian presence in its affairs invited criticism of Nepal's India policy and also engendered suspicion about New

Delhi's intentions in some quarters in the Kingdom. The overbearing attitude of the Indian diplomats, particularly the Indian ambassador, C P N Singh, was sharply resented by many of the prominent Nepali leaders.⁶ Moreover, Singh's meddling with the Nepalese politics strengthened the widespread notion in that country that India was playing the role of a king-maker there. Not unnaturally, many of the Nepalis who could not find a place in the cabinet or who had to quit it for one reason or the other, held India responsible for their fate. They often retaliated by resorting to anti-Indian propoganda and activities. However, on no occasion, the official attitude of the Nepalese government was in any way expressive of an anti-Indian stance. On the contrary, throughout the early fifties Kathmandu consistently tried to remove the misgivings about India's objective towards Nepal and the anti-Indian activities in Nepal.

King Mahendra Introduces Innovations in Foreign Policy

The death of King Tribhuvan in 1955 removed from the Nepalese political scene the most powerful champion of the policy of "special relationship" with India. His successor, Mahendra, was altogether of a different psychological make-up. A man of high political ambitions he wanted to have a free hand in shaping the political destiny of his resurgent nation. Therefore, the continuing pattern of relationship with India was not in keeping with his political framework. However, in view of the domestic political instability, not till a year had passed since his accession to the throne did King Mahendra introduce any innovation in Nepal's foreign policy. Instead, his month-long tour of various places in India and talks and consultations with the Indian leaders in the very first year of his rule were apparently in consonance with his predecessor's policy to keep New Delhi on friendly terms. Nevertheless, unlike his predecessor, he did not take the Indian government into full confidence on the details of the final negotiations with China in August 1955 to establish diplomatic relations with it.

King Mahendra's attitude towards India became quite clear when to the general surprise of all, and more so to the Indian leaders, he announced in January 1956 the formation of a cabinet headed by Tanka Prasad Acharya. Acharya had all

along been opposed to India's special position in Nepal and been advocating Nepal's equally good relations with China. Hence, his appointment as the Prime Minister was a direct challenge to New Delhi's special position in Nepal.

The policies and programmes of the Acharya government announced just after its formation spelt a striking departure from the past. It was maintained that Nepal would pursue a policy of equal friendship with all countries, accept economic and other assistance from all foreign countries, including China and the Soviet Union, if it was unconditional and without strings, and develop direct trade relations with them.⁷ New Delhi's reactions notwithstanding, the enunciation of an independent foreign policy was both appealing and convincing to politically articulate sections in Nepal. This emboldened the King to carve out an independent status for his country. He pursued this objective through a bipronged strategy of developing relations with foreign countries on the one hand, and curtailing the almost unlimited traffic of communications with New Delhi on the other. The speed with which he cultivated relations with China in political and economic fields revealed both his anxiety and determination to balance the Indian position by the Chinese presence in Nepal. He also used his country's membership of the United Nations to demonstrate that Nepal no longer was a non-autonomous participant in world affairs.⁸

From 1955 to 1959—irrespective of the change of ministries, the Nepalese government under the stewardship of Mahendra took a number of steps to lessen its dependence on India in various fields.⁹ In October 1957, the Nepalese government issued an order on the medium of instructions in Nepali schools which *inter alia* stated that teachers of all schools in Nepal must possess certificate of Nepalis citizenship or in its absence, the special permission of the Nepalese Ministry of Education to continue as a teacher. True, this order applied not only to Indians but to all non-Nepalis. However, as most of the non-Nepali teachers were Indians, it was in essence aimed at restricting the entry of Indian citizens into Nepal's educational institutions. By another order, the Nepalese government put restrictions on all foreigners, including Indians, in Nepal on their purchase of immovable property. These orders were in contra-

vation of the provisions of the 1950 Treaty whereby the two countries had agreed to grant, on a reciprocal basis, to the citizens of either country indential privileges of residence, proprietorship etc. in each other's territory.

Moreover, King Mahendra also took certain steps to undo, or at least modify, the legacies of the past which he deemed, impaired his country's independent personality. In 1958, he requested the Indian government to withdraw the Indian Military Mission. As a result, the mission was replaced with effect from 16 July 1958 by the Indian Military Training Advisory Group with considerable reduction in strength. The Nepalese government also sought the revision of the 1950 Treaty of Trade and Commerce since it was felt that its provisions stood in Nepal's endeavour to diversify its trade.

These measures of the Nepalese government naturally marred the element of cordiality in Indo-Nepalese relations. New Delhi was apprehensive of Kathmandu's alliance with Peking and the consequent growth of Chinese influence in the strategic belt of India especially in view of its developing trouble with China

Koirala Restores Friendship with India and Preserves Freedom of Action

The landslide victory of the Nepali Congress in the General Election in 1959 and the appointment of BP Koirala as the Prime Minister of Nepal, generated a feeling in India for close relationship with Kathmandu. But if some travelled far afield and looked forward to a revival of the pattern of relationship in the early fifties, they were wholly mistaken. The Prime Minister of Nepal under the existing constitutional framework was not the sole political master like his counterparts in India and Great Britain. Under the 1959 Constitution, the King still had the final say in any matter pertaining to national or international affairs. Moreover, King Mahendra's foreign policy had by now won wide applause in all sections of Nepal. Even the Nepali Congress did not ever doubt its rationale.

Under the circumstances, Koirala's foreign policy was no different from a reinstatement of the principles laid down by the King. During his tenure as a Prime Minister, he consistently

followed the policy of equal friendship with all countries, especially with Nepal's two neighbours—India and China—maintained strict neutrality on Sino-Indian border dispute, and rebuffed any attempt by any power to undermine Nepal's independence. He sharply reacted and objected to the statement of Nehru in 1959 in the Indian Parliament that any aggression on Nepal would be considered as an aggression on India. It is to be noted that Nehru had made a similar, rather more forceful, statement in 1950 upholding India's right to defend Nepal and no objection had then been made in any quarter in that country. Similarly, when in 1960 the Chinese soldiers intruded into Mustang area in Nepal and fired at, and killed some Nepali soldiers, the Koirala government strongly condemned the incident and protested against the Chinese action.

Nevertheless, Koirala always stood for extreme friendliness and extensive cooperation in Nepal's relations with India provided they did not infringe on its independent functioning. In response to this feeling of friendship with India, New Delhi began appreciating Kathmandu's independent line in foreign policy. With Koirala at the helm of affairs in Nepal, New Delhi had the psychic satisfaction that he would not at least allow the Chinese to act to the detriment of India's interests in the Kingdom. This restored cordiality to the relations between the two countries despite the change in their pattern. With full understanding and cooperation, the two countries signed the new Treaty of Trade and Transit in 1960 whereby Nepal secured the desired facilities for its trade with third countries through Indian ports and territories. Nepal, on the other hand, cooperated with India by signing the agreement on the Gandak Project and agreed to give the necessary facilities within its territory for its execution. Thus Koirala was successful in maintaining friendship with India while at the same time preserving his freedom of action.

Nepal Confronts India and Wins the Political Battle

Nepal's relations with India entered a phase of confrontation when on 15 December 1960, King Mahendra tookover the

government by a royal proclamation, dissolved Parliament, deposed all ministers including B P Koirala, imprisoned the latter along with several other leaders, and banned all political parties. The abrupt dismissal of a popularly elected government by a hereditary Monarch was viewed with disapproval by almost all shades of public opinion in India. The Indian government which had been actively associated with the inauguration of the democratic experiment in Nepal openly criticised the King's action which, as Nehru stated, was "a complete reversal of democracy, the democratic process".¹⁰ The royal regime deemed it as nothing short of interference in Nepal's internal affairs. Its sharp retaliation was registered in furore, public or otherwise, all over the country.

But what actually enraged King Mahendra more than Nehru's open criticism of his action was the shelter given by India to a number of Nepali Congress leaders who had escaped from Nepal. Rightly or wrongly, the King had a feeling that India would help these exiles to overthrow his rule. Kathmandu, therefore, wanted to prevent New Delhi from such a possibility and persuade the Indian government to recognise and respect the altered situation in Nepal.

Thus began a spate of anti-Indian campaigns and India-baiting activities. The royal government that stood no politics other than that which stemmed from the Palace suddenly turned into a champion of the freedom of the press and the people in so far as it aided and abetted the fury of anti-Indianism all over Nepal. Side by side with this anti-Indian drive, it did also make occasional friendly overtures to persuade New Delhi to come to its terms. However, when this "blow hot blow cold" diplomacy of King Mahendra did not bring the desired result, he used his deadliest political weapon against New Delhi, of hobnobbing with the latter's enemies—China and Pakistan. He accepted the Chinese proposal to allow Peking to construct strategic Kathmandu-Kodari road in the Himalayan rampart—thus making India's northern frontier vulnerable. And finally, when all this did not make New Delhi succumb to the King's wishes—instead, the Nepali exiles in India were able to organise an armed movement against his rule just after the road agreement—the King's government launched a direct virulent campaign against India. It straightway alleged that the Indian

government was a party to the movement, that Indian citizens were also taking part in it, and that Indian arms and ammunition were being supplied to the insurgents.

However, New Delhi's repeated denial of these charges coupled with the growing intensity of the Nepali Congress movement, unnerved the King. Frantically, the royal machinery deliberately created a situation at Raxaul by disrupting the movement of goods and described it as an "Indian blockade on Nepal". Its obvious intent was to malign India in the world and solicit sympathy and support from foreign powers. Almost instantly came the Chinese assurance of assistance. The situation could have taken a drastic turn but for the outbreak of an armed conflict between India and China in October 1962 and the consequent cessation of the movement by the Nepali revolutionaries. King Mahendra thus secured an effortless victory and found himself in a position to make adjustment with India on favourable terms.

King Mahendra Extracts Concessions from India

During the few years following the 1962 debacle India was so much concerned with its northern security that it could scarcely afford to displease Kathmandu. Mahendra sensed New Delhi's delicate position and exploited the situation to his advantage. He secured the Indian assurance that the Nepali exiles would not be allowed to organise themselves and operate against his political system. He also secured India's acquiescence in his Panchayat democracy and his agreement with China on the construction of the Kathmandu-Kodari road. In the economic field, he extracted all possible assistance in the form of aid and numerous schemes financed and executed by India for Nepal's economic development. Furthermore, he also made New Delhi agree to grant Nepal transit facilities to the extent required, for its trade with third countries through Indian land and sea routes.

In return, Mahendra agreed not to allow the Chinese to act against India's vital interests in Nepal. This was evident from his subsequent decisions. He acceded to New Delhi's request not to allow the Chinese to undertake any project in the Nepal

Terai contiguous to Indian territory. He cancelled the agreement with China whereby the latter had undertaken to construct a portion of Nepal's East-West highway and handed it over to India. He also, after great persuasion, expressed an indirect support to India's claim over Kashmir after the Indo-Pak War (1965) contrary to the Nepalese government's declaration of a neutral stand on the issue during President Ayub Khan's visit to Kathmandu in 1963. And above all, he showed the gesture to hold in check the India-baiting activities in Nepal, at least for some time, and help create the proper atmosphere for Indo-Nepalese amity.

Notwithstanding these visible gestures of friendliness, the Nepalese government continued unabated with the policy to reduce its dependence on India. Despite the increased Indian economic assistance for Nepal's development, it also made determined efforts to maximise its economic contacts with other countries, particularly China and Pakistan. It consolidated its friendship with China and widened its relations with Pakistan with an obvious intent to use them as a political lever in its relations with New Delhi. Moreover King Mahendra inculcated among the Nepalis a feeling of chauvinistic nationalism directed against India.

Finally, in the sixties itself, Nepal also made an attempt to lessen its sole dependence on India in defence matters. Not long after the *rapprochement* between Kathmandu and New Delhi, Tulsi Giri, Chairman of Nepal's Council of Ministers, approached both the USA and the UK for arms assistance during his visit to these countries in 1963. As a result, Nepal signed secret agreements on limited arms assistance with these countries in March 1964 and also received such assistance in early 1965. Although these agreements contravened the provisions of the letters accompanied with the 1950 Treaty (already mentioned), New Delhi did not object to them due to Nepal's sensitiveness to its sovereign status. However, in 1965, the Indian government persuaded Nepal to enter into a secret agreement with India on arms purchase whereby Kathmandu undertook to obtain all its military equipment from India and to import additional one from third countries with India's consent and through Indian military channels.

Despite this ambivalence in Nepal's India policy, New Delhi

made every effort to keep Kathmandu on friendly terms during the early sixties. Nevertheless, when later on, signs of improvements in its relations with China were visible, it no longer felt the urgency to appease Kathmandu. Hence the Nepalese government now found it not that easy to wrest concessions from the Indian government. This gradually led to stresses and strains in their relations.

Nepal Tries to Assert

Towards the close of the sixties, Nepal had certain issues with India on which it wanted to have a favourable deal. Firstly, a powerful group of Nepalese economic elite alleged to have intimate links with the Palace, had been indulging in fraudulent trade with some foreign countries by misusing the transit facilities through Indian territory. They used to smuggle Indian jute to Nepal and export it to overseas countries for importing in Nepal luxury goods which were subsequently smuggled into India. They had also set up in Nepal a number of industries which produced synthetic clothes and stainless steel utensils out of the imported materials. They wanted unrestricted entry of such goods into the Indian market. All this was injurious to the growth of indigenous industries in India and against the economic policy of New Delhi. The Indian government, therefore, imposed restrictions on Nepal's trade in such goods, and also kept vigil on its abuse of the transit facilities.

Secondly, Nepal had some minor border disputes with India which it wanted to settle to its advantage. Thirdly, its Trade and Transit Treaty of 1960 with India was to expire in October 1970. Kathmandu was campaigning to have provisions of unrestricted transit facilities from India and many other favourable terms in the new Treaty. Finally, a more serious issue than all these was of a psychological and political nature. Soon after his release in November 1968, B P Koirala backed out of his commitment to support the King's system. In early 1969 he came over to India from where he started criticising the Panchayat democracy in Nepal. The Palace now suspected that B P Koirala with the connivance of New Delhi might organise a movement against King Mahendra. Any movement of the Nepali Congress exiles from India at the time when criticisms

of the Panchayat system's performance had started coming openly from many sections in Nepal was fraught with danger for the King's position.

Thus King Mahendra's posture towards India at that stage was the projection of his concern to preserve his political system. It did suit the King to magnify Nepal's aforesaid issues with India and adopt a defiant attitude towards New Delhi for domestic consumption. Mahendra knew the sensitivity of the Nepalis on the question of their independence and sovereignty and accordingly, he might have calculated that raising a storm with India would help him relieve the growing oppositional strains on his Panchayat system, by diverting the people's attention, at least for the time being, to national unity and solidarity.

Hence the Nepali Prime Minister, K N Bista, came out with a diplomatic bombshell against India. In a press-interview to the on 24 June 1969 he called upon India to withdraw the Indian Military Group from its territory. He challenged the mutual obligations of the two countries in each other's defence under the 1950 Treaty and termed the "theory of special relationship" with India as "out of step with modern developments" in Nepal's external relations.¹¹ Simultaneously, the royal machinery launched a pre-planned campaign for immediate compliance of India on the issues raised by Bista. All this took New Delhi by surprise and its immediate response was to persuade the Nepalese government not to press the matter. But, when this could not deter Kathmandu, the Indian government had to withdraw all its armed personnel in 1970. Nepal, however, agreed to an alternative for stationing senior military personnel at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu to look after India's security interests.

The withdrawal of the Indian armed personnel not only deprived Kathmandu of a political leverage in its relations with India but also annoyed New Delhi to stiffen its attitude towards the Kingdom. The result was that soon after this incident, the two Governments were at loggerheads on the terms and conditions of a new trade and transit treaty to be signed after the expiry of the old one in October 1970. To press its points, Kathmandu campaigned against India in international forum by propagating that New Delhi did not provide the due transit

facilities for Nepal's overseas trade. It also encouraged anti-Indian demonstrations and protests all over the country to pressurize New Delhi to accede to its terms and conditions in the treaty. All this, however, failed to deter the Indian government from its stand. Ultimately the 1960 treaty lapsed on 31 December 1970 after an extension of its term for two months. The lapse of the treaty and the unilateral restrictions imposed by the Indian government on its trade with Nepal had a traumatic impact on its economy during the period that followed. Moreover, the simultaneous outburst of opposition to the Panchayat system, especially at the time of the Graduates' Constituency Election in mid-1971, compelled Nepal to come to terms with India. The new Treaty was thus signed in August 1971.

The Turn of the Tide

Not long after the signing of the Indo-Nepalese Trade Treaty, the South Asian region underwent a cataclysmic change. Pakistan disintegrated and, out of it, emerged a new nation of Bangladesh. The disappearance of old and unified Pakistan as a balancing power against India reduced to some extent the bargaining position of Nepal *vis-a-vis* New Delhi. Kathmandu's politics of trade with Pakistan which had generated so much of heat in Indo-Nepalese relations in the past, automatically came to an abrupt end.

Moreover, India's role—both military and diplomatic—in the process of the emergence of Bangladesh demonstrated its credibility and capability as a dominant power in the region. Therefore, the Nepalese government could not continue to ignore the reality for long and it recognised the new state shortly after the end of the Indo-Pak War (1971). This was despite its unsympathetic stand on the freedom struggle in Bangladesh and the Pakistani threat to break off diplomatic relations with any country that recognised Bangladesh.

No less important than this external change were the subsequent developments inside Nepal which impelled Kathmandu to review further its India policy. King Mahendra who had given Nepal a new political system and asserted its independent personality in foreign relations, died in January 1972. It was

uncertain if his successor, young King Birendra, would prove to be equally strong and would have the political acumen like his father to maintain his country's internal and external position. Moreover, an impression was also created that Birendra stood for liberal values and that he would make substantial changes in the existing political system. For some time, therefore, the Nepalis including the Nepali Congress exiles in India, who sought to bring changes in the Panchayat system, waited eagerly for the new Monarch to pronounce his policies and programme. But soon they were disillusioned to find that the fundamentals of Birendra's policy were no different from those of his father. Not unnaturally, this let out the long suppressed desires of the Nepalis for freedom in their political system. The students' agitation all over the country in mid-1972 followed by raids at Haripur in the Terai, and later on, the hijacking of the Nepalese plane to take away a substantial amount of the government money and the mystery fire in Singh Durbar, the government secretariat, were interpreted by both the Nepalese government and the close observers of the Nepalese political scene as manifestations of oppositional strategy to exert pressure on the Palace,

Under the circumstances, the Nepalese government realised that any encouragement by New Delhi to the Nepali Congress exiles in India would spell disaster for its domestic stability. Not surprisingly for some time after Birendra's accession, Kathmandu's leanings over towards New Delhi were discernible. It is interesting to note that the Nepali Prime Minister, Bista, who in 1969 had termed the Indo-Nepalese Treaty (1950) as outdated, during his visit to India in April 1972 desired to re-activate the process of political consultations implied in the exchange of letters accompanying that treaty. This trend was accelerated during the subsequent visits of the dignitaries of the two countries to each other's territory. All this looked something like the return of the prodigal, though in view of the past record of Nepal's behaviour, it was doubtful if this trend was to remain steady.

References

1. India, *Parliamentary Debates*, pt. 2, vol. 3, no. 3, 17 March 1950, col. 1697.

2. N M Dikshit, The Foreign Secretary of the Nepalese government during the last days of the Rana rule, had explained this to the author in a personal interview.
3. This line of argument had been advanced by N M Dikshit in course of a personal interview to this author,
4. The said letters contained to this effect the following provisions : "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 each other and devise effective counter measures." For the full text see, SD Muni, *Foreign Policy of Nepal*. National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1973, pp. 286-87.
5. It has now come to light that in May 1954 in New Delhi the then Nepali Foreign Minister, D R Regmi, had consultations with Nehru and worked out the details on the coordination of the foreign policies of the two countries. Regmi had agreed to the points made by the Indian Prime Minister. Subsequently, these points were incorporated in an *Aide Memoir* and sent to the Nepalese government for final approval. The Nepalese government kept it pending and later, for reasons not yet clearly known, it was withdrawn by India. For text of the *Aide Memoir* and other details see S D Muni. n. 4; also see S K Jha, *Uneasy Partners Nepal and India in the Post-colonial Era*, New Delhi, 1975.
6. See Jha, n. 5.
7. Press statement of the Nepali Prime Minister on 29 January 1968, *Workhapatra* (Kathmandu), 30 January 1968.
8. On the various resolutions on Hungarian question in the UN General Assembly in 1956 Nepal voted differently from India.
9. The only exception to this trend was to be found during the brief tenure of Dr K I Singh's Prime Ministership. Dr Singh once again talked about pursuing a policy of special relationship with India. However, he could not make any impact on the emerging trend in Indo-Nepalese relations.
10. India, *Rajya Sabha Debates*, vol. 31, no. 17, 20 December 1960, Col. 2708.
11. See Text of Bista's Interview, *Rising Nepal* (Kathmandu), 25 June 1969.

King Mahendra's China Policy

LEO E ROSE

The impression obtained from a random survey of official statements emanating from both Peking and Kathmandu over the past two decades is one of an intimate relationship extending back at least fifteen centuries and involving "exchanges" of various kinds that were of some importance to both societies. While these have little relation to historical reality—for most of this period, in fact, the two countries could well have been located on different planets as far as interaction is concerned—the contemporary political factors underlying this joint enterprise in mythology creation as these evolved in the Mahendra regnum, are significant, and will be the primary subject of this chapter.

While it is obvious that Nepal-China relations had on rare occasions assumed some importance to either or both powers prior to 1950, if only for relatively brief periods, this does not mean that the historical context in which this relationship emerged is irrelevant. On the contrary, the contemporary Nepalese attitude toward China (and in some respects the reverse as well) has been substantially affected by this historical perspective which has been strengthened by two decades of intensive interaction between the two societies since 1956.

Briefly stated, the classical Nepalese view of China is that of a great and powerful, but *distant* neighbour. This latter fact, that China was distant, was more important than that, at some points in time, China was an expansionist empire that intruded into strategic neighbouring areas—i.e., Tibet—in ways that were potentially threatening to Nepal. To a surprising extent, in view of technological developments, this same psychological spatial factor continued to be an important aspect of the Nepalese response to China after 1956 when Chinese capacities

in the Himalayan region became vastly greater than at any previous period of their history.

China, thus, has always "been there," but only rarely in ways that imposed itself upon Nepal either politically or culturally. In political terms, the Chinese have posed a serious challenge to Nepal only for a few short years in the late eighteenth century, and less obtrusively but more persistently, since 1951. Kathmandu has had to devise defence strategies designed to thwart what appeared to be dangerous Chinese ambitions only on a few occasions. The more normal frame of reference for Nepali decision makers have been situations in which China could be used to support and sustain Kathmandu's foreign policy objectives directed toward other states in the immediate neighbourhood. Thus, China has generally been viewed as more of a positive than a negative factor in the difficult international environment in which Nepal has had to exist for several centuries.

Most of the contemporary discussion on this subject in Nepal has focused on China as a counterforce to India in the Himalayan region ; but in the historical context, Nepal-Tibet relations have also been seen as affected. Some Nepali historians, for instance, have argued that Nepal (i.e., Kathmandu valley and the surrounding area) managed to avoid a total absorption into the powerful Tibetan Buddhist empire of the seventh to tenth centuries only because Lhasa had to concentrate on its intermittent hostilities with China. Without this critical intervening factor, Kathmandu's political and cultural history might well have been quite different, resembling more that of Bhutan and Sikkim than the hill areas in the western Himalayas that are part of the great Hindu cultural region. China's efforts to extend an effective, dominant influence in Tibet since the eighteenth century also redounded to Nepal's advantage, in some respects at least. Indeed, on occasions there was tacit collaboration between the Nepalese and Chinese in handling the Lhasa government that both Kathmandu and Peking found useful.

Given objective conditions, the Nepalese attitude towards the Chinese role in Tibet was usually marked by ambiguity. China was an obstacle to Nepalese policy directed at bringing the strategic northern frontier areas under Kathmandu's control

(e.g., during the 1788-1792 and the 1854-1856 wars with Tibet). But at the same time the Chinese Amban (representative) at the Dalai Lama's court in Lhasa was often a useful instrument in achieving certain Nepali goals. On several occasions the Amban served as a mediator between Nepal and Tibet on trade disputes and almost always decided in favour of the Nepalese merchant community in Tibet. There was also the fact that both Peking and Kathmandu shared an interest in a Tibet that was too weak to be capable of withstanding external pressure and maintaining its autonomy without their support. This is one reason why the Nepalese did not react very strongly to the Chinese conquest of their Himalayan neighbour in 1951, in striking contrast to the widespread indignation expressed in 1975 over the Sikkim developments.

This diverse reaction to broadly similar (in the Nepalese perspective) developments in the Himalayan region can be largely explained by the fact that the role defined for China by Kathmandu's policymakers from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries and again since 1956 has been that of a counterbalance to India. Even more important, perhaps, China could fulfill this role without seeming to emerge as a threat in its own right or, indeed, without having to take the kind of initiatives that Nepalis would view as potentially dangerous.

Nepalese attitudes toward India and China have also been shaped to some extent by basic cultural factors. In broad cultural terms, Nepal is part of India, and this is a fact of life that much of the Nepalese elite has difficulty in accepting. To be sure there are some distinctive Nepalese cultural phenomena, but these are no more significant in the broader Hindu cultural context than the differences between various regions of India—e.g., Punjab and Bengal. A separate and distinct Nepali national identity thus, cannot be defined in specific cultural or linguistic terms. This was not too important to the Nepalis as long as alien Englishmen ruled India: but once India had achieved independence, the national identity problem assumed prime importance in Nepalese politics and one in which China has a role to play, if only by proxy. While China was never an influence in the evolution of Nepalese society and culture, and there is even today no evidence of a Sinification process at work, some Nepalis felt it necessary to base the argument for an

“equal friendship” policy toward Nepal’s two giant neighbours on their allegedly equal importance as sources of external influence. This has led to some rather ludicrous myth-making by a wide variety of Nepalis with diverse interests and views, usually accomplished by identifying as “Chinese”, any cultural or social phenomenon in Nepal that is not clearly derived from the Sanskritic “great tradition.” But the lack of persuasive historical evidence to support their arguments has only seemed to make it even more essential to encourage broader and closer cultural relations with contemporary China as an alternative to the omnipresent and overwhelmingly persuasive cultural influences stemming from India. Since these latter cannot be effectively countered at the cultural level, it is only through political policies that attempts can be made to neutralise the Indianisation process by presenting an alternative social and value system—the Chinese—to a rather sceptical Nepalese public. And curiously enough, this is done at times by Nepalis who are basically unsympathetic with the communist factor in contemporary Chinese society.

The mixed response with which Nepal reacted to the Chinese conquest of Tibet after 1951 is, thus, comprehensible in the Nepalese context then emerging. There is no doubt that many Nepalis, including some who supported the “normalisation” of relations with China—viewed the Chinese movement into Tibet as potentially threatening to Nepal. There was, for instance, some concern over the uncertainty demonstrated by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on the exact historical limits of China’s imperial boundaries which the new government seemed determined to incorporate into its empire. Some Chinese communists, including Mao-Tse-tung, had made statements that included Nepal as Chinese territory lost through the “unequal treaties” imposed upon China by European imperial powers. The question was raised in Kathmandu: would Peking eventually seek to apply the same policy toward Nepal as it has toward Tibet? While China has sought to reassure Nepal on this point in various ways, including international treaties, this suspicion of Peking’s ultimate intentions lingers on, which may help explain why Nepal officials seem to feel compelled to reiterate statements expressing their confidence in China as a friendly neighbour.

The ideological factor—i.e., the PRC as a communist society committed, vocally at least, to the support of “liberation” movements everywhere—also continues to be a significant factor in the Nepalese perspective on China. Neither the Rana regime that first had to adjust to a communist-controlled China nor the Nepali Congress that dominated Nepalese party politics in the 1951-1960 period were very responsive to the communist appeal. The Nepali Congress, with its democratic-socialist ideology and its close working connections with the bitterly anti-communist Indian Socialist Party, was if anything more sophisticated and effective in critiquing the communists, foreign and domestic, than the more conservative Nepalese political forces. The Palace-dominated regime that has controlled Nepal since 1961 has been extremely cautious in expressing themselves on systemic formulae adopted by its neighbour to the north, but there is no question that both King Mahendra and King Birendra understood that the kind of polity they are seeking to create in Nepal is totally incompatible with communism. And indeed, part of the motivation behind the “opening to China” which both Monarchs made a basic part of their foreign policies has been contrived to complicate Peking’s interest in and capacity to intervene in Nepal, even indirectly, in support of anti-regime forces nominally spouting a Maoist ideology.

There were, thus, dangers for Nepal in having China as an immediate neighbour, but there have also been potential advantages as well. In the immediate post-1951 period, for instance, Kathmandu was encouraged by the terms of the 1951 Sino-Tibetan Treaty that guaranteed a broad degree of autonomy for the Lhasa government. This could have meant dealing with an enfeebled Tibetan regime that was vigorously searching for non-Chinese external sources of support, such as Nepal, while not having to contend directly with the Chinese in seeking to protect Nepal’s interest in Tibet. This excessively optimistic appraisal of the probable source of developments in Tibet had disappeared by the late 1950s, but it was a factor in the evolution of Nepal’s China policy in the critical 1954-1956 period. It was by no means strictly coincidental that the 1956 Sino-Nepal Treaty was signed in the context of Mao Tse-tung’s statement that Chinese cadres were being withdrawn temporarily from Tibet and that the Lhasa government would exercise the de-

facto autonomy granted to it in 1951, but which had been severely eroded subsequently. Mao was lying, of course, and in fact setting the stage for the 1959 military campaign in Tibet, but quite a few Nepalis accepted his statement at its face value and supported adjustments in Nepal's foreign policy that this seemed to make reasonable and safe.

But Nepal's interests in Tibet played only a relatively minor role in the evolution of Kathmandu's China policy. Far more important were the potential advantages flowing from China's presence directly to the north. A small but rapidly expanding group of politicised Nepalis in the early 1950s were intrigued by the possible effects this could have on Nepal's vastly more important relations with independent India. The extension of Chinese authority to the central Himalayas was perceived by many Nepalis as an independent variable that could be utilised effectively as a counter to New Delhi's then dominant influence in Kathmandu. In the early 1950s, it was some of the anti-Nepali Congress political leaders such as Tanka Prasad Acharya who were attracted by this proposition but eventually most political leaders in all the parties as well as in the cliques around the Palace accepted this as a basic operating principle in Nepal's foreign policy making. The differences between them was not so much over whether China should be used as a counterforce to India but rather the extent to which such a policy was feasible and would be productive. Much of the debate over Nepal's China policy since 1956 has focussed on this latter issue, and there continues to be broad disagreement within the Nepalese elite on this question. Those who had great expectations of the China connection have had their moments, but for the most part the group that saw disadvantages as well as advantages from this facet of foreign policy strategy have proved to be closer to reality.

After the Revolution

In the immediate aftermath of the 1950-51 Revolution in Nepal, China must have been close to the bottom of the list of policy questions that required in-depth consideration by the new government. That the Revolution had broken out scarcely one month after the first movement of Chinese forces into

Tibetan territory in October 1950 may have influenced New Delhi's attitude toward these developments in Nepal, but for both the Ranas and the Nepali Congress the timing was coincidental as they had far more important matters, both domestic and foreign, that required their attention. The post-revolutionary government in Nepal did have to decide what, if anything, should and could be done about the Chinese presence in Tibet. But, given Kathmandu's acceptance of Indian advice on almost all matters in that period, this mostly involved, trying to decipher New Delhi's often confusing and contradictory initiatives on its own China policy.

The initial Indian response to the Chinese decision to launch a military invasion of Tibet was rather strongly critical, verbally at least. But this quickly gave way to a policy that sought to adjust to the new situation on the best terms possible, primarily by trying to encourage Peking to grant broad autonomy to Lhasa within the context of a nominal acceptance of Chinese sovereignty. At the same time, however, Prime Minister Nehru made it absolutely clear in several public statements that the Himalayas were considered to be India's strategic boundary even in those sections where "independent" states such as Nepal intruded. These constituted an implied direction to Nepal and Bhutan not to move without Indian concurrence on reaching even tacit agreements with the Chinese.

Kathmandu's immediate reaction to the Chinese invasion of Tibet in October 1950 had been to enquire of New Delhi whether the Indians planned to intervene to protect their rights and privileges in Tibet, and to offer support in any such venture. When it became clear that the Indian government intended to do nothing, the Nepalis quickly adopted a hands-off policy that, in effect, pretended nothing had happened to the north of the Himalayas. Contacts with the Chinese were avoided to the extent possible—even in Tibet. Kathmandu continued to act as if the Dalai Lama's government was still the sovereign authority in Tibet, and all communications were still channelled through the traditional diplomatic sources in Lhasa. The objective, presumably, was to maintain the 1856 Nepal-Tibet Treaty as the operating basis for relations with Tibet, which meant in effect ignoring the Chinese presence in that country.

By late 1952, however, there were some signs of a significant

improvement in Sino-Indian relations, and this could not help but affect Nepal. An agreement was reached in late 1952 under which the Indian mission in Lhasa was transformed into a Consulate-General and the Chinese were permitted to establish a similar office in Calcutta. Nevertheless, New Delhi's advice to Kathmandu remained the same—namely, apply considerable caution in establishing any kind of direct relationship with the Chinese. It was around this time that dissatisfaction in Nepalese official circles (opposition politicians were already very vocal) with the effect of Indian advice upon Nepal's economic and strategic interests in Tibet first became evident. "We were used to serve Indian interests with no concern for how this affected Nepali" was the way in which one prominent Nepali official of that period described the situation to the author.

The critical period on the China question was not reached, however, until mid-1954. In May of that year, the Indians and Chinese signed agreement on Tibet that included the famous Panchshila (Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence) clauses that thereafter became a normal feature in most Chinese agreements with other Third World countries, including Nepal.¹ New Delhi then began to encourage Nepal to establish contacts with the Chinese, but not to go too far too quickly. The perplexing question for Kathmandu was : what was too far ? Public statements by Nepal government leaders in this period indicated considerable uncertainty on this point, and New Delhi did nothing to enlighten them. Kathmandu initiated a few tentative moves toward a China connection, but with little evident enthusiasm. In any case, these had been virtually forced upon the Nepal government when the Chinese government made it evident in 1953 that it was no longer prepared to accept the 1856 Treaty as the basis for Nepal-Tibet relations and that a new agreement would have to be negotiated with Peking.

Another important factor in the Nepal government's calculations on this subject was the emergence of a broad consensus within the Nepalese political community on the China question. By 1954, the mood in Kathmandu was generally supportive of a "normalisation" of relations with China, although there was some disagreement over the form this should take and the extent to which Kathmandu should be prepared to make concessions to Peking. An influential minority argued that any-

thing more than formal diplomatic relations with China would have several negative consequences, including complicating Indo-Nepalese relations *even* if this was done with New Delhi's approval. This group felt that Nepal should continue to move slowly on this question and do only the minimum necessary to establish direct contacts with the Chinese.

The majority view within the public, and even among key elements in the government, saw things differently, however, as China was viewed as providing Nepal with some novel and potentially useful foreign policy options. For some, the possibility of using China as a counterforce to the overwhelming Indian influence in Nepal was very attractive. But there were other Nepalis who were staunch nationalists, but did not equate anti-Indianism with nationalism. This group tended to perceive a connection with China as an enhancement of Nepal's status as an independent nation, but were more cautious in seeking to use Peking against New Delhi. The differences between these two groups of China-enthusiasts were rather subtle and rarely explicated in these terms in their public positions, but it is important to note that not all of them were motivated by an interest in undermining India's position south of the Himalayas.

In any case, a combination of internal and external factors made the "normalisation" of relations with China inevitable. The principle question by 1954, thus, concerned the terms upon which this would be accomplished and the role this would play in future foreign policy objectives. There were substantial differences of opinion on this issue within the Nepalese political elite and concerned economic interests, in particular the Newari commercial community with its traditional stake in the trade with Tibet. But the question was finally resolved by an event that had little to do with the ongoing debate over China policy—namely, the death of King Tribhuvan in March 1955 and the ascension of King Mahendra to the throne.

The Mahendra Period, 1955-60

The new ruler introduced several potentially significant innovations in domestic policies shortly after coming to the throne, but moved much more carefully on the foreign policy front for

the first few months of his reign. By 1956, however, it was clear that Mahendra had quite different views from his father on both foreign and domestic policies. The critical factor on foreign policy was his unwillingness to continue the "special relationship" with India which, in effect, had involved the acceptance of subordinate status in New Delhi's regional political, economic and security system. This relationship had provided the Indian government with numerous opportunities to exert a powerful and often determinant influence in Nepal's domestic politics. In King Mahendra's perception Nepal had enjoyed broader independence during the colonial period in India than it did after 1947, and he was in step with broad currents of Nepalese public opinion in seeking to reverse this general trend of developments.

The major emphasis in the policy innovations introduced in 1956 was an effort to diversify, to the extent possible, Nepal's diplomatic and economic relations in order to modify the 'special' relationship with India. The Ranas had sought to introduce a similar policy on a more limited basis in the late 1940s, but the post-revolutionary governments had declared a virtual moratorium on such efforts in the 1951-55 period. Thus, the new direction given to Nepal's foreign policy by Mahendra was critical not only to the country's external relations but to the success of the King's internal political objectives as well. The pattern that emerged after 1961, under which an increasingly authoritarian polity was justified in terms of the King's staunchly "nationalistic" foreign policy, was first experimented within the 1956-59 period.

The United States, the Soviet Union and several Western European and Asian states were of some importance to King Mahendra's foreign policy innovations in the first years of his reign, but there is no doubt that China was correctly perceived as the principal instrument for the attainment of diversification by the King and the small group of advisors around him. The first step taken, thus, was the establishment of diplomatic relations with Peking in 1956. There was, of course, nothing surprising in this, as the decision had been reached in 1954—with New Delhi's concurrence. What was novel was the language used by Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya when he began speaking of Nepal's foreign policy as based upon the

principle of "equal friendship" with India and China. It soon became apparent that the Prime Minister, and presumably the ruler who had appointed him, considered "equal friendship" incompatible with the "special relationship" with India, and that the latter was to be superseded by the former as the fundamental principle of Nepal's foreign policy.

New Delhi was not happy with all of this, but there was nothing particularly ominous about the "equal friendship" formula for Indian security requirements as long as Sino-Indian relations remained friendly. And, indeed, in the 1956-58 period, Peking carefully avoided challenging, even implicitly, India's pre-eminent position south of the Himalayas. But once Sino-Indian relations began turning sour publicly in late 1958, this situation changed rapidly, perhaps reflected most dramatically in China's policy toward Nepal. In 1956, Peking had obtained New Delhi's approval before signing a treaty with Nepal. By 1961, the Chinese were encouraging, both verbally and through tangible monetary contributions, all forms of anti-Indianism in Nepal. Peking was usually careful to avoid any formal or even implicit commitment to Nepal's security in its public statements, but it could usually count upon wide sections of Nepal's political public interpreting Chinese expressions of *moral* support for the "Nepalese people" as involving some form of commitment to material support of the regime as well.

The changes in China's style of involvement in the Himalayan region seemingly opened several options to Nepal, but there was in fact a delayed response in Kathmandu to these new opportunities because of both internal and external developments. The most important of these was the victory of the Nepali Congress party in the February 1959 elections, followed by the establishment of a parliamentary system with a cabinet headed by BP Koirala. This placed a new group in control of the Nepal government that did not share all of King Mahendra's attitudes and objectives on foreign policy. While the Nepali Congress leadership was not interested in re-establishing a "special relationship" with India, they also considered the "equal friendship" formula as unworkable in practical terms, unacceptable in ideological terms, and harmful to Nepal's most important economic interests. The BP Koirala government, thus, sought to define a foreign policy stance that lay

somewhere in between, based on a close but not overly-dependent relationship with India and friendly but rather formal relations with China.

Developments in Tibet in 1959, however, complicated the new government's foreign policy options, as the massive popular revolt against Chinese domination had serious, if temporary, repercussions on Peking's relations with Kathmandu. The combination of widespread maltreatment of the Nepalese trading community in Tibet, an attack on an unarmed Nepalese border patrol by a Chinese military detachment, and an unexpected Chinese claim to all of Mt. Everest, the symbol of Nepal's international identity, led to a limited but serious crisis in Sino-Nepalese relations. For the first time there were large anti-Chinese demonstrations in Nepal, led for the most part by voluntary associations affiliated with the ruling Nepali Congress party. These disagreements were eventually "papered over" in various ways, usually through Chinese concessions, but the strains persisted. There is no doubt, in any case, that Peking welcomed the dismissal of the Nepali Congress government and the resumption of direct rule by King Mahendra in December 1960. In Nepal, as in most Asian states, the Chinese usually find it easier to interrelate with authoritarian than with democratic regimes.

The Mahendra Period, 1961-72

In the first few months following his "royal coup" King Mahendra moved very cautiously on the international front, focussing his attention on the potentially explosive internal situation. But this order of priorities could not be maintained for long as the principle threat to the royal regime came from Nepalis political leaders and organisations that had managed to gain refuge in India, but which still retained a substantial support core in Nepal as well, particularly in the Terai region bordering on India. These could only be contained internally if they were not backed, officially or unofficially, by New Delhi.

Mahendra's primary objective, thus, was to neutralise India as a factor in Nepal's political calculations. He sought to do this initially by reassuring New Delhi on a wide variety of issues even to the extent of indicating his willingness to restore the

“special relations” syndrome on a limited basis. For reasons that are difficult to comprehend, Prime Minister Nehru responded in an unrestrained manner, and failed either to give King Mahendra the reassurances he had requested or the Nepali Congress the support it required to overthrow the royal regime. Nehru did attempt on several occasions to mediate between the two sides as he had in 1950-51, but without success. Neither the King nor the Nepali Congress were attracted by his “middle way” solutions that would only have restored a divided polity at war with itself on terms that were intolerable to both sides.

During this period of extensive interaction with New Delhi, which lasted until the Fall of 1961, Mahendra tended to downplay the Chinese connection in order to avoid arousing anxieties in India. The royal regime maintained friendly, if formal, ties with Peking and continued to negotiate with the Chinese on several issues then in dispute, the most important of which concerned a border settlement treaty. But Mahendra attempted to do this in ways and on terms that the Indians would consider non-threatening.

The King's policy on these issues changed abruptly towards the end of 1961 when it became apparent that New Delhi was unwilling to provide the kind of guarantee that the royal regime considered vital to its survival. Another opening to China was the response. King Mahendra made an official visit to Peking in October 1961 during which a boundary treaty and an economic aid agreement providing for the construction of a road connecting Kathmandu with Tibet were signed. The Indians welcomed the border agreement, which in general accepted the principle of the Himalayas as the boundary, but objected strongly to the road agreement. This potential breaching of the Himalayan barrier undermined the entire Indian security system in the northern border area, in the process changing the basis for interstate interaction throughout the region in several significant ways.

There has been some speculation that King Mahendra submitted to Chinese pressure on the road project (the evidence available indicates that he did not take the initiative) on the assumption that he could use this in bargaining with New Delhi. If true, this is not how things worked out. The Indians proved unwilling to back down in the face of what they viewed as

blackmail by Kathmandu, while the Chinese were unprepared to postpone construction of the road while Mahendra played games with New Delhi. As a result, Nepal eventually ended up with an expensive road that is of marginal utility in terms of its trade diversification policy (trade with Tibet has declined since construction of the road, though for other reasons) and is more of a problem than a promise in terms of Nepal's own security interests. As a symbolic gesture of defiance to India it may have had transitory political uses for the royal regime, but Nepal had paid a high price in economic terms and in its relationship with India for this useless road.

In any case, the road agreement with China was merely a first step in the direction of an emerging crisis with India. In early 1962, a number of semi-official documents were published in Kathmandu that were vehemently critical of India's alleged complicity in Nepali Congress-sponsored terrorist activities in Nepal. Kathmandu also began to expand its relationship with China in overt ways that were bound to rouse suspicion and concern in New Delhi, whose own relations with the Chinese were deteriorating rapidly. This reached a point in the Fall of 1962 where Kathmandu was explicitly soliciting promises of support from the Chinese in the event of direct Indian intervention in Nepal. The Chinese responded with their usual promise to support the "Nepalese people," ambiguous enough not to obligate themselves to anything but worded in such a way as to encourage unrealistic expectations in some Nepalese governmental circles. New Delhi's response to all this was the imposition of an un-official trade blockade of Nepal in September 1962 that would have undermined the entire Nepalese economy if continued for any length of time. There is little doubt that this would have forced King Mahendra to modify both his domestic and foreign policies, if events elsewhere had not intruded. To his good fortune, however, the Chinese launched a limited war against India on the vulnerable extreme ends of the Sino-India border in October 1962, and quickly achieved its local military objectives in both areas. Nepal was not directly involved in the hostilities, but the unfavorable results of the brief border war led to basic changes in India's policy throughout the South Asian region that redounded strongly to the advantage of the royal regime in Nepal.

Nepal's foreign policy in the post-1962 period, as pursued by King Mahendra, had several basic features. The most obvious was the blatant utilisation of a threat to "turn to China"—which enjoyed a marked superiority over India in military capacity on the Himalayan border at that time—to extract a variety of concessions from India. The first and most important was New Delhi's guarantee that it would not support anti-regime Nepalese political forces. As a result, the Nepali Congress exiles in India were pressured by the Indian government into calling off their resistance and terrorist campaign then underway in Nepal. The entire opposition movement, still an important if badly divided force in Nepal politics, was severely weakened by this development, thanks more to the King's China policy than to any enhancement of his internal political capabilities.

There were also a number of economic concessions obtained, the most important of which concerned Nepal's trade relations with India and trade with third countries through India. Between 1963 and 1966, a number of modifications were made in the 1960 Trade Treaty, always in response to proposals from Kathmandu. It was also in 1963-64 that a land reform programme was introduced in Nepal. While the nominal (and to some extent actual) objective of this programme was a more equitable land ownership and tenancy system, the more important goal for some elements in the royal regime was the replacement of landowners and tenants of Indian origin in the important Terai region with Nepalis from the hill areas. New Delhi understood what was going on, of course, but under its "be nice to Nepal" policy refrained from doing anything more than issuing some meekly-worded objections. This was another instance in which the China factor in Nepal's foreign policy indirectly influenced a domestic economic programme that would never have been introduced in the pre-1962 period.

The policy changes introduced by King Mahendra in 1961 and pursued even more assiduously after the 1962 Sino-Indian war made the maintenance of friendly relations with China essential. While Mahendra appreciated this fact, he also realised that the post-1962 regional environment held dangers as well as advantages for his regime. He was not interested in creating a situation in which it would be difficult to avoid a "special relationship" with China in the place of the old "special

relationship" with India. An effect was made accordingly to avoid and form of dependence upon Peking that might force Nepal to modify the "equal friendship" formula upon which the policy of using China as a counterbalance to India was based.

Fortunately for King Mahendra, the Chinese were generally cooperative in this respect, even on those occasions when they were less than happy with some Nepalese foreign policy decisions.² China had only limited objectives in Nepal, primarily directed at complicating India's relationship with neighbouring states in order to limit New Delhi's ability to take effective action outside the South Asian region. The Chinese presence in Nepal expanded considerably after 1962, but not to the point where it might have been reasonably viewed as dominant by New Delhi³ or threatening by Kathmandu. One frightening exception for Nepal was the totally unexpected mid-1967 crisis in Sino-Nepalese relations in the context of the seizure of control of the Chinese Foreign Ministry by Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. Several letters employing abusive language and threatening reprisals against Nepal for alleged offenses were sent to a bewildered royal government, resulting incidentally in the first friendly discussions between Nepal and India on security issues since 1960. But Prime Minister Chou En-lai soon reasserted his authority over the Foreign Ministry, and this short-term aberration in Nepal-China relations came to an end. Kathmandu's relations with both Peking and New Delhi returned to their post-1962 norm shortly thereafter.

All things considered, the 1960s were good years for the royal regime in Nepal, marked by some striking successes in the foreign policy arena and at least a stand-off on the domestic politic scene. A certain smugness became apparent in Nepalese governmental circles, based apparently upon the assumption that New Delhi could be intimidated into a continuing cycle of concessions through use of the China connection. Kathmandu was rather slow, and very reluctant, to admit that basic changes were occurring in the regional political and military environment that made obsolete some of the basic assumptions upon which King Mahendra had formulated his foreign policy in the 1960s.

The most critical and unexpected development as far as

Nepal was concerned was the failure of China to do anything effective to support its "ally" Pakistan in the latter's wars with India in 1965 and 1971. After all, the critical factor underlying Nepal's policy of using China as a counterbalance to India was the possibility (never very real) that China might be prepared to intervene forcefully in support of Kathmandu in the event India moved against the royal regime, either through direct involvement as in Bangladesh in 1971 or indirectly through support of Nepalese dissident forces as in 1950-51. By December 1971, when India had used its military forces to "liberate" Bangladesh from Pakistan with nothing more than verbal abuse from China, it was clear that the China connection had lost much of its utility to Kathmandu as well. If China would do nothing to protect Pakistan, a far more important "friendly" power in South Asia, it was unrealistic to assume it would do more for Nepal under a similar set of circumstances. China was still a useful factor in Nepal's foreign policy after 1971, but not in the same way it had been in the 1960s. It was at this time that the Nepal government began to deny that it had used China as a counterbalance to India in the past or would do so in the future, a position it has maintained in subsequent public statements despite voluminous evidence to the contrary.

This new perspective on the power balance in the Himalayan region was further reinforced by significant changes in Sino-Indian military capacities in this difficult mountainous area in the late 1960s. In 1962, the Chinese had clearly demonstrated their greater military strength, at least in the areas immediately adjacent to the border. By the end of the decade, the balance had swung in the opposite direction, and India was now capable of employing larger forces in key areas of the frontier, supported by a vastly improved communication system.

New Delhi's policy toward Nepal was strongly influenced by the new-found confidence with which the Indians now viewed their relationship with both China and Pakistan. In the 1962-67 period India had been very responsive to Nepali demands for changes in their political and economic relationship. Not everything had been conceded, of course, but the Nepalis did gain the impression that almost everything was open to them. This was evident in the policy objectives they adopted toward the end of the decade, some of which bordered on the arrogant.

This coincided, however, with a perceptible hardening in New Delhi's attitude towards Nepal under which India extracted increasingly higher prices for any concessions made.

New Delhi's poorly concealed dissatisfaction with the general trend of development in its relationship with Kathmandu in the 1960s was reinforced by several serious miscalculations by the Nepal government, which continued to operate on the assumption that 1963 conditions still prevailed. In 1969, for instance, while in the process of negotiating a new Trade Treaty with India, Kathmandu suddenly demanded the withdrawal of the Indian Military Mission in Kathmandu and the Indian personnel to military checkposts on the Nepal-Tibet border. New Delhi reluctantly complied with the demand, but retaliated by adopting a hardline position on the trade treaty negotiations. India not only rejected virtually all of the Nepalese proposals for revision of the 1960 Treaty, but insisted on some changes of its own that Kathmandu found objectionable. No compromise agreement was reached, and the treaty was allowed to lapse. While New Delhi did not cut off economic relations with Nepal as it could have, the possibility that it might do so caused great anxiety in Kathmandu. The royal regime finally had to accept the facts of life—namely, Nepal's dependence upon India for its economic survival—and signed a new trade agreement with India in 1971 on New Delhi's terms.

During this relatively low-key but sustained confrontation between India and Nepal, the China factor proved to be of limited utility to Kathmandu. The royal government approached China during the trade treaty negotiations to see what Peking might be able to offer in the way of assistance, but received little more than comforting words about the value of "self-reliance." The Chinese were sympathetic but were in no position to offer the kinds and quantity of political and economic support the Nepalis required to withstand New Delhi's demands, and made this quite clear to Kathmandu.

The limits of both the economic diversification and the balancing off of China against India policies, thus, were starkly evident by 1971, at least to those in Kathmandu who were directly involved in these complicated and often unpublicised developments.⁴ Appropriate adjustments in the operating principles of Nepal's foreign policy seemed essential, and were in the

process of being introduced when King Mahendra suddenly died in January 1972 and a new young Monarch ascended the throne. One of the immediate consequences was the removal of the core group of advisors that had shared King Mahendra's learning experiences in relations with India and China in recent years, and their replacement by a "PhD Mafia" (as it is sometimes referred to by its critics in Nepal) consisting of a group of well-educated but relatively inexperienced young men upon whom King Birendra has depended for advice and guidance. This group had largely been politicised into the complex world of foreign policy during the halcyon days of the mid-1960s, but had largely been insulated from the more adverse trend of developments in the 1969-72 period. The result was a temporary return to a mid-1960s foreign policy, with increasingly unfavourable consequences for Nepal's vital economic and political relations with India.

By 1976, there was some evidence of a greater sense of reality in Kathmandu's ruling group, but a continuing propensity to look to China for the kinds of support that Peking has made repeatedly clear it cannot offer Nepal. Nepal would seem to be facing much greater difficulty in adjusting to a South Asian world in which India is the dominant power than would have been the case if King Mahendra had continued on the throne. Other alternatives to the Chinese connection are available—e.g., greater cooperation with South Asian states other than India on regional problems—but little progress has been made in this direction as yet. China continues to be the only plausible counterbalance to a dominant Indian influence but unfortunately for the Nepalis inclined to adopt such a policy the limits imposed by economic, regional, and broad global developments no longer make this particularly relevant to Nepal's needs. King Mahendra could have learned to live with this situation, if not too happily; it is still to be seen if King Birendra has inherited his father's capacity for accommodation and adjustment to the world around him.

This survey of Nepal's foreign policy since 1956 demonstrates that the China factor has been a vital ingredient in Kathmandu's calculations on a broad range of issues, both internal and external. There has been occasions when the governing elite has successfully manipulated the relationship with Peking in ways

that served their and/or Nepal's interests while at the same time neutralising the Chinese communists as a source of support for dissident domestic political forces—not an insignificant achievement for a small state surrounded by vastly more powerful neighbours. It is not surprising, therefore, that some Nepalis in decision-making positions have been reluctant to concede that foreign policy strategies that were productive in the 1960s should be increasingly counterproductive in the 1970s. Unfortunately this may prove to be more than an academic question susceptible to prolonged debate, for Nepal's survival as a viable nation-state is by no means assured.

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1. Many Nepali commentators have noted that China was willing to sign a "peaceful coexistence" treaty with Nepal but that India has never done so, and have drawn some obvious, but probably wrong conclusions from this. The fact that China's "peaceful coexistence" treaty with India in no way deterred the Chinese from attacking India in the Fall of 1962 has not seemed to reduce the value which many Nepalis still attach to such treaties.
2. Indeed, the Chinese have been very cooperative in adjusting their various programmes in Nepal to the royal regime's often fluctuating preferences. In the mid-1960s, for instance, the two governments agreed upon a new Chinese road project connecting the Kathmandu-Tibet road with the Terai area bordering India. When the Indian government, with both US and Soviet support, strongly objected to this project and threatened retaliation, Kathmandu suddenly cancelled the project and requested the Chinese to build in its place a road connecting Kathmandu with Pokhara valley in the western hill area. The Chinese readily agreed even though this denied them their primary objective in the original project—direct road communications between Tibet and the rice surplus areas of the eastern Nepal Terai.
3. Some Indian observers have argued that Nepal has followed a blatantly pro-China policy since 1961 and that the Chinese enjoy an overweening influence in Nepal's governmental and intellectual circles. Most of the responsible Government of India officials, however, would seem to have adopted a more balanced view on this subject. While they are hardly complacent over Chinese influences in Nepal, they are less inclined to exaggerate its extent or minimise their own ability to counteract it when India's interests are involved.
4. The royal regime has usually tried to hide or disguise its acceptance of Indian terms in negotiations on a wide range of issues

since 1969, presumably to maintain the illusion of a continuing series of successes in the realm of foreign policy. Most of the officials involved, of course, were quite aware of the increasingly unfavourable trend of developments in the Himalayan region as far as Nepal was concerned. But the general public was much less aware of the changes that have occurred since the late 1960s, or of the high price that Kathmandu has had to pay in recent years for the concessions extracted from India during its period of weakness after the 1962 Sino-Indian war.

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