

The Facets of Political Instability in Nepal: Causes and Effects

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ABSTRACT

This paper on political instability in Nepal has written down its causes and effects and combined two aims. First, the research paper will focus on the internal and external factors behind the collapse of Nepalese democracy. In this study, the researcher examined the role of political parties and the monarchy's demise of democracy in Nepal. Second, the interference and meddling of India, China, and America in the politics of Nepal. Nepal's political instability, partisan factionalism, political and personal selfishness, and leaders not being held accountable were the main factors contributing to Nepal's political instability and making it easy for the monarchy to take control. Although the role of the constitutional monarch is recognized, the monarchy has always sought total power and direct rule. Nepal's democratic path must consider the Maoist insurgency and other non-institutional factors. As a result of factionalisation and other related problems, a Proportional Representation (PR) voting system was introduced. The results of this study, changes in the conditions of the political structure in Nepal are necessary for democracy to remain stable. This study also examines Nepal's position towards international actors such as China, the United States and India's sphere of influence on the geopolitical.

Keywords: Political instability; Democracy; Monarchy; Political influence; Factionalization

INTRODUCTION

Nepal is a small country sandwiched between two critical neighbours, India and China. In 1768, King Prithvi Naryan Shah united Nepal to create the country it is today. However, Jang Bahadur Rana, the most abrasive head of the military at the time, established the Rana system in 1846 through a bloody massacre. As a result, Nepal was ruled autocratically by a Rana prime minister rather than a king from 1846 to 1950. According to section II, the beginning of modern democratic politics occurred in 1951. Nepal's diverse ethnic and caste groups, nearly 100 languages, and numerous regional cultures contribute to the country's cultural diversity. Despite Nepal's multi-ethnic population, a single group known as the High Hindu First Class Status (CHHE) has ruled the country since its victory. This group includes Chettri, Bhaun, Sanyasi, and Thakuri. Nepal has had one of the world's poorest economies, earning just \$447 per person. On the UN human development index, Nepal is ranked 138th out of 169 countries [1].

Since moving from authoritarian rule to democracy, from conflict to peace, Nepal has made much progress. Now, it has a chance to change the country as a whole. Nepal has moved toward democracy and peace due to recent political developments and democratic aspirations. This brand-new transition was made possible by the historic mass movement's success in April 2006. This massive movement marked a turning point in Nepal's political history. Throughout the campaign, individuals stated three main goals:

- Forming a democratic republic and removing the monarchy.
- Putting an end to the "people's war" waged by the Maoists and restoring peace.
- Reorganising the government, redefining the relationship between the people and the state.

The communist party of Nepal (Maoist) won the Constituent Assembly (CA) election in April 2008, becoming the largest political party in the CA. The elections led to the reorganization of the state and the republic as the Maoists brought these issues to the population's attention and gained their support [2].

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LITERATURE REVIEW

This section focuses on the research method used to achieve the goals between 1940 and 2022. The research involved searching for relevant data from various sources to ensure the fully met. Each source required a lengthy process of information gathering and analysis. Use online databases to conduct research in books and journal articles. The researcher conducted bibliographic searches in databases, major journals, and organizational websites using explicit inclusion/exclusion criteria. The researcher identified many scholarly journals covering each relevant field to conduct investigations and ensure the collection of relevant literature within the specified time frame (post-1940). Practical and theoretical concepts and problems, a set of search terms, keywords, and synonyms related to Nepal's political system's failure have been created. Topic search terms were first used in electronic databases searching for titles, abstracts, and subject fields. The researcher used the same search terms for journal and organization websites [3].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The holistic approach taken in this study aimed to bring political stability closer to the forefront of political debate in Nepal. The parties and the monarchy were the researcher examined in this study for their roles in Nepal's democracy's demise. It discovered that the primary factors that contributed to Nepal's political instability and made it simple for the monarchy to take control were party factionalism, personal political egotism, and leaders who were not held accountable. On the other hand, the monarchy has always sought total power and direct rule, even though the constitutional monarch's role is acknowledged. The Maoist insurgency and non-institutional factors like illiteracy, culture, and economic conditions must investigate how they influenced Nepal's democratic trajectory. Another factor cited as a cause of Nepal's political instability is the involvement of outside nations in Nepali politics, such as India, China, and the United States. Nepali democracy has faced numerous challenges and trials over the past two decades. Multi-party democracy, established in 1990, was challenged by a Maoist insurgency that began in 1996. In a regal upset in 2005, the ruler, guaranteeing that he wanted crisis powers to battle the dissidents, brought down the popularity-based government. The monarch was forced to step down in 2006 due to widespread street protests. It paved the way for elections to a constituent assembly in 2008, tasked with drafting a new constitution [4]. The Maoists and other political parties became closer as a result of this. Political disagreements slowed down the constitution-writing process regarding federalism, the rights of Nepal's various ethnic minorities, and so-called "low castes."

The constituent assembly's term ended in 2013. A second assembly was elected. The controversial Nepali new constitution of 2015 included secularism and federalism. Regarding the outside world's influence on Nepali politics, India appeared to be patiently waiting with cautious optimism despite China's setback caused by the political crisis in Nepal. With the rise of the NCP, which held training on "Xi Jinping thought" and had close ties to Beijing, New Delhi's long-standing influence over Kathmandu politics diminished. Due to the disputed Lipulekh,

Kalapani, and Limpiadhura territories along Nepal's western border, India and Nepal were embroiled in a diplomatic dispute last spring. The political crisis in Nepal was also advantageous to the United States of America, which did not voice its disapproval of the prime minister's most recent actions. The United States of America, like India, sought to counter China in Nepal by expanding its influence.

Across the social spectrum, Nepal has unquestionably achieved a few positive outcomes; however, the economy primarily reflects the extent of the past three decades. The majority of Nepalese are still unable to meet even their most basic needs, and over 30% of the country's population is at risk of falling into absolute poverty. As a direct result of the dire political and economic turmoil and interference of outside countries, people are losing faith in their leaders. Desperate young people have fled to countries with abundant economic opportunities hoping for a better future. With the rise of such negative sentiment, Nepal's future is bound to be bleak [5].

Internal factors responsible for Nepal's political instability

The country has undergone significant political, sociocultural, and economic transformations since April 2006. The restructuring, federalization, inclusive democracy, and proper participation and representation of powerless, mute, marginalized, and vulnerable groups have been some of the most pressing and contentious issues in Nepali politics since then. As a result, the most pressing issue in Nepali politics is establishing republican democracy. Before considering the prospects for Nepal's democracy in the future, it is crucial to identify the reasons for the repeated failures of democracy in Nepal. This paper linked two objectives. The researcher examined the breakdown of Nepal's political system in two parts: First, the underlying causes and effects of the research, and second, the prospects for improving democracy in Nepal.

The study points to the monarchy and the fragmentation of the party system as significant contributors to Nepal's decline in democracy. Since 1990, political parties the very foundation of modern democracy have not been able to lead the nation in a manner consistent with democratic ideals and principles. The primary reason for selecting these two aspects is this. However, although the monarch ratified the constitution in 1990, it has always attempted to reinstate the active monarchy. As a result, the consolidation of Nepal's democracy has been restored for the third time and is currently the primary objective of Nepali politics.

Economic developments and power-sharing institutions are crucial to democracy's future. Nepal still has the highest poverty rate in South Asia, making it one of the poorest countries. Agriculture should be Nepal's primary employment and income-generating productive activity. However, the feudalistic land distribution and traditional agricultural policies primarily bring this poverty. After democracy was restored in 1990, political parties could not implement land reform programs [6-9].

In the past, Nepal's rural political economy was ruled by political instability through the structures of clientelist politics. Political

parties elected landed elites to represent peasant families in parliament before the advent of electoral democracy because they relied on peasant families for land, credit, employment, and other necessities. The landlord class, the dominant economic class, lacked independence in the parliamentary system, so the transition to democracy did not result in significant economic reforms. The following classic Lipset argument applies to Nepal today, despite the heated debate among academics regarding the connection between democracy and economic development. A country's middle class could strengthen through socioeconomic development, according to Lipset. Because it "tempers conflict by rewarding moderate and democratic parties and penalising extremist groups," a sizeable middle-class benefits democracy. The society of Nepal is multicultural; State nature continues to discriminate despite this. The high Slope Hindu first class has managed the public authority for 200 forty years. As a result, inclusive institutions are the most obvious solution to the central issue of exclusion in Nepali politics.

The collapse of democracy

Since the establishment of democracy in Nepal in 1950, there has been constant political instability. When studying the political developments of Nepal, rather than towards a sustainable democratic system, democracy has failed due to the emergence of political instability sometime after the establishment of democracy. Although political instability in Nepal has internal political reasons, external reasons also play a role.

The parties and the monarchy's role

Bunce asserts that forming the first elected government must conclude the "transition to democracy" phase. The nation then entered the stage of preserving and enhancing democracy. A measure of democracy's strength is the degree to which the essential components of democratic order are in place and whether or not they contribute to promoting practical, inclusive, and accountable governance. "Continuation of democratic rule" is the simple meaning of "maintenance." Nepal's first transition period was fueled by a spirit of a mass movement with the re-establishment of a multi-party system in April 1990, the adoption of a new constitution in November 1990, the 1991 general elections, and the 1992 local elections. The government demolished the panchayat structures without incident and established democratic institutions. The democratic transition in Nepal was successful, but it was short-lived. The two institutional factors that contributed to the fall of democracy in Nepal are examined in the following section. The party system's factionalisation and the monarchy's.

The party system's factionalisation: Nepal has a polarised and highly partisan political party system. The fragmentation of the party system has worsened Nepal's political instability. In Nepal, he has led political parties for more than 70 years. In contrast to the Rana oligarchs of the Rana regime, he was living in exile in India when the NC and the communist party of Nepal were founded in 1947 and 1949, respectively. After the Rana regime fell, Nepal made its debut on the multi-party stage for the first time in its history. After democracy was restored

in 1990, political parties saw rapid growth. However, although twenty parties participated in the 1991 elections and 44 were registered with the electoral commission, he could only gain representation in parliament with nine parties. Only seven of the sixty-five registered parties earned parliamentary representation, although 24 participated in the 1994 election. Up to 100 registered political parties in 1999, 39 of which took part in the polls, but only seven parties could win seats in parliament. During the second democratic era, all parliamentary parties split. Indeed, intra-party power struggles and unhealthy inter-party competition have dominated the party system since the 1990's, fueled political crises, and impeded the establishment of newly established democracies. The division of political parties during the democratic era contributed to political instability and served as a breeding ground for anti-democratic forces like the palace. Politicians and observers frequently observe that individual differences and self-centred behaviour, not ideologies, are the primary causes of party division.

Fallacy of monarchy: By definition, many believe that monarchies are anti-democratic. This point of view asserts that monarchs always seek to establish authority. Nepal's monarchy has complied with the 1990 constitution, which specifically mentions a constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech, and the right to organize, further complicating matters. There are many other countries with excellent democratic records and parliamentary democracies, and well-functioning monarchies. However, the monarchy remains the main obstacle to democracy in Nepal, despite the monarch's claim to support multi-party democracy.

Even after the King embraced multi-party democracy in 1990, Nepal's politics continued to be influenced by the legacy of the sitting monarch. Directly contrary to the principles and spirit of the constitution, monarchies often claimed independence. Nepal's democratic political leaders have always understood and viewed the monarchy, whether they were members of the NC, UML, or other smaller parties. The King places the highest priority on the political interests of individual leaders, parties, and groups. As a result, monarchies play an essential role in democratic systems, and thus, democratic institutions and leadership remain precarious.

The royal massacre: The royal massacre in June 2001 was the most significant turning point in the history of the monarchy. As Vishnu-like avatars, Nepalese kings have always claimed a divine right to rule. Since ancient times, they have held titles that have placed them among the gods and established them as the guardians of dharma, or the moral order. As a result, the King and the deities were physically or symbolically present at many religious ceremonies.

In addition, little was known about the royal family. While the public indicated a picture of happiness, the royals' private lives were kept confidential. Sufficient people found it difficult to accept that crown prince Dipendra, who had been regarded as a youth icon until then, was a drug-addicted psychopath responsible for King Birendra's deaths, his father, and the rest of his immediate family. The way the incident propelled King Gyanendra to the throne suggested a complicated plot rather

than the work of a rogue royal gunman. The incident fundamentally altered public perceptions of the royal family and undermined King Gyanendra's rule.

Maoist uprising: Many communist groups have occupied the extreme left of Nepal's political spectrum since before 1990. For example, the third-largest party in the first parliament since 1990 was the newly formed communist party of Nepal (unity centre). Some of these even participated in the 1991 general election. However, in the end, one group decided that they would not be able to achieve their ideological goals through parliamentary competition. Consequently, they broke off, adopted the moniker Maoist, and launched an armed rebellion in 1996.

For the first five years of the insurgency, the Maoist rebels remained a small group of ill-equipped guerrillas who raided weakly defended police posts in remote villages. Most of their presence was in six districts in the hills of the Mid-West. However, following the royal massacre, political events led to the fracturing the monarchy's leg, coinciding with the insurgency's rapid expansion insurgency. As a result, they quickly expanded their influence throughout the country.

External factors responsible for Nepal's political instability

The external factors responsible for Nepal's political instability are the intervention and role of India, China, and America in the politics of Nepal. The paper argues that the legitimacy of foreign intervention determines the outcome of ethnic conflicts. When parties to a conflict recognize the legitimacy of foreign influence, their chances of success increase. On the other hand, the likelihood of success decreases if the host state views foreign intervention as illegal aggression.

When foreign actors are neighbours, answering the legitimacy question is even more challenging. The location brings up strategy and social, political, and economic issues. The intervener's national interests can be directly affected by the resolution or continuation of a conflict. Therefore, "making settlements more difficult to reach" results from the neighbour's involvement. Brown, 1996 says that the areas' powers might become worried about their interests and try to change the conflict in a certain way. When interests take precedence, legitimate space in the host state is denied to foreign actors.

The foreign actors' organisational structure also determines the degree of legitimacy. Most people think that a multilateral intervention is better than a unilateral one. However, before initiating such an intervention, multiple actors must reach a consensus, requiring the interveners to take a neutral stance. Therefore, unilateral actions have a lower success rate than unilateral interventions. In addition, the intervention may be biased due to the single interveners' cost-benefit calculations. According to Nalbandov, when foreign interests arise, the opposing factions accuse the interveners of prioritising their interests and label them illegal aggressors.

Indian intervention: Impact on Madhesi demand: As shown in this section, recognition of the madhesi claim to self-determination in Nepal is hindered by India's intervention. Military aggression is not always necessary for intervention. Press releases, economic sanctions, political pressure, and moral support for foreign agitation groups all count as interventions, according to Paquin and Saideman. By supporting Madhesi's demands for an independent state in the Terai region, India intervened in the ethnic conflict. However, mainstream political parties ratified the constitution without including the Madhesi requirement because they were concerned that India was attempting to retain the plains under their jurisdiction. The Nepalese government has rekindled its relationship with the Chinese government due to India's unannounced economic sanctions. The Indian government avoided discussing the Madhesi party and instead focused on strengthening ties with the mainstream political parties out of concern that it would lose control of Nepalese politics. India's support for the Madhesi requirement was the fundamental factor that led to the constitution's denial of self-determination as a right. The mainstream political parties did not realise that India's pressure was a legitimate concern for inclusion and coordination rather than an illegal invasion of state sovereignty. As a result, the Nepalese government issued a constitution that denies self-determination under Indian pressure. The country's anti-India sentiment grew as a result.

The diplomatic outreach of China

China, which reportedly mediated the communist alliance in Nepal in 2017, is still impacted by the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) government's fall in Nepal in March 2021. Interestingly, a portion of the Chinese strategic community believes that the US-Nepal millennium challenge agreement played a significant role in further intensifying the internal struggle between the communist factions, in addition to external factors like sectarianism and utilitarianism that have plagued the CPN since its inception.

India's influence in Nepal is older than China's. Nepal and China established economic ties in 2015, but China began to exert influence in Nepal in 2018. Its role in the formation of the party, Beijing, grew to affect the NCP government significantly. China's growing presence in the Nepalese economy indicated this influence. As part of the Belt and Road initiative, Chinese investment in infrastructure projects increased significantly.

Consequently, China became Nepal's largest investor, surpassing India. Importantly, Nepal's foreign policy became increasingly pro-China under the NCP administration. Oli began antagonising India and even agitated New Delhi by accusing it of acquiring these constitutional amendments, issuing maps showing disputed territory belonging to Nepal, and grabbing Nepali land. As a result, China has benefited from the NCP government.

US influence in Nepal

Nepal was one of the first countries in South Asia to receive aid from the United States. During the cold war, the United States utilised assistance as part of its foreign policy in Nepal, as it did

in other nations. The following were the primary goals of the United States of America's foreign policy toward Nepal:

- Support Nepal's efforts to preserve its neutrality and independence.
- Contain a potential communist threat in Nepal.
- Assist Nepal in its efforts to develop.
- Make Nepal more oriented toward the West.

Examining the fundamental goals of US aid to Nepal during the cold war, evaluating the significant accomplishments of those goals, and concluding the aid's future direction were the three primary objectives of this influence. However, given that some circumstances have remained the same since the end of the cold war, the aid that the United States provided to Nepal was ineffective in achieving its foreign policy goals. Nevertheless, the United States will continue pursuing its foreign policy interests.

Geopolitical and domestic politics

Geopolitical factors and external actors have historically impacted Nepal's domestic political landscape. Oli has recently sought to mend ties with India due to including Nepal's conflict-affected areas on his new political map. However, their relationship has been strained lately. As a result, India and Nepal recently made high-level visits. Additionally, as part of its efforts to promote vaccine diplomacy in the region, India gave Nepal one million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine. India has described the current power struggle as an "internal matter" to avoid retaliation from Nepal's decision-makers and escalate political unrest, despite previous involvement in Nepal's internal affairs.

However, China's rise has challenged India's traditional dominance in Nepal. Because it is concerned that Tibetans might use Nepali soil to carry out anti-China activities, China considers Nepal to be an essential component of its strategy for national security. Beijing's foreign policy has always been non-interventionist; however, the proactive efforts made by the Chinese ambassador to Nepal to deal with the NCP's current problems show that this strategy is changing over time. Nepal's media speculates that China favours maintaining the NCP because of its ideological kinship. It could assist China in expanding its political and economic control over Nepal.

China is aware of India's long-standing influence in Nepal, but the growing interest the United States has in the Himalayan nation casts doubt on China. In light of Oli's efforts to obtain parliament's approval for a \$500 million grant from the US Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to build electrical transmission lines in Nepal. Contrarily, Dahal has criticised the MCC and asserted that it is a component of the US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy to contain China. Moreover, Beijing may favour development projects based on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and exert pressure on the Nepali government to delay or reject projects led by the United States because Nepal is a signatory to the BRI.

CONCLUSION

The holistic approach followed in this study aimed to bring political stability to the fore in the political debate in Nepal. The researcher examined the role of the political parties and the monarchy in the decline of democracies in Nepal. It found that the main factors contributing to Nepal's political instability and making it easy for the monarchy to take control were partisan factionalism, personal political selfishness and leaders' failure to hold them accountable. On the other hand, the monarchy has always sought total power and direct rule, although the role of constitutional monarchs is recognised. The Maoist insurgency and non-institutional factors such as illiteracy, culture and economic conditions need further study to understand how they have affected Nepal's democratic path. Another factor cited as the cause of Nepal's political instability is the involvement of third countries in Nepalese politics, such as India, China, and the United States. Nepali democracy has faced numerous challenges and trials over the past two decades. The multi-party democracy established in 1990 was challenged by a Maoist insurgency that began in 1996. In a royal riot in 2005, the ruler, who guaranteed he wanted crisis powers to fight dissidents, overthrew the popularity-based government. The monarch was forced to step down in 2006 due to widespread street protests. However, it paved the way for elections in 2008 to a constituent assembly tasked with drafting a new constitution.

Regarding the outside world's influence on Nepali politics, India appeared to be patiently waiting with cautious optimism despite China's setback caused by the political crisis in Nepal. With the rise of the NCP, which held training on "Xi Jinping Thought" and had close ties to Beijing, New Delhi's long-standing influence over Kathmandu politics diminished. Due to the disputed Lipulekh, Kalapani, and Limpiadhura territories along Nepal's western border, India and Nepal were embroiled in a diplomatic dispute last spring. The political crisis in Nepal was also advantageous to the United States of America, which did not voice its disapproval of the prime minister's most recent actions. On the contrary, the United States of America, like India, sought to counter China in Nepal by expanding its influence.

Consequently, the prospects for democracy in Nepal have been examined in this paper. The author has concluded that economic growth will ultimately aid democracy's survival by enhancing people's literacy, broadening communication channels, and granting them more power. Nepal has many different cultures, and many people have been excluded and had no opportunities in the past. As a result, the exclusion is the most pressing issue in Nepali politics. According to the study's findings, the most apparent and theoretical solution to this exclusion is the establishment of inclusive institutions. The establishment of a power-sharing institution, the expansion of the economy, and a decrease in outsiders' involvement in Nepali politics all impact the prospects for democracy in Nepal shortly.

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