

The Persistence of Change in Political Systems in Nepal: Causes and Consequence

Santa Bahadur Thapa

Department of Political Science, Tri Chandra Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

ABSTRACT

This research is based on examining the enduring nature of change within political systems in Nepal, including its numerous manifestations, changing structures, and relevance in contemporary society. The research encompasses a variety of secondary sources, which are further reinforced by primary data sources. This research investigates the process of political system transition and its associated features using qualitative data analysis. The multi-party democracy endeavour in Nepal rapidly deteriorated into conflicts for control among and within the political parties. The prohibition and subsequent ineffectiveness of political parties not achieving global peace and security were seen. Examining countries that have effectively undergone economic change underscores the essential role played by governmental entities in managing such processes. The political growth of Nepal represents a distinct deviation from core political theory, morals, and values. Political parties have been detrimental to the functioning of democracy due to their failure to establish and sustain democratic advancements inside institutional frameworks effectively. Effective governance is needed to confront the dual challenges posed by the Maoist insurgency (often referred to as terrorism) and the deceleration of economic growth.

*Corresponding author

Santa Bahadur Thapa PhD, Department of Political Science, Tri Chandra Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Received: November 16, 2023; **Accepted:** November 21, 2023; **Published:** November 29, 2023

Keywords: Political System, Feudal System, Political Transition, Democracy, Constitution

Introduction

Nepal's trip towards vote-based change has been a while. The nation has had upwards of seven constitutions over 70 years, starting in the last part of the 1940s. The elected Prime Minister has served a full term since then. In that regard, at least three types of instability were evident: Legislative, executive, and constitutional. Nepal's most recent constitution, which the Constituent Assembly drafted, was elected twice and was promulgated in 2015; it has resolved some of the most important political issues; however, the more fundamental concerns regarding the country's economic development still require clarification.

Moreover, the cover obscures the problems associated with money-related change and intra-party conflicts, hurting the image of multi-party as a more significant part of controlling the government and impacting people's trust in the political structure.

Similarly, the entire process of capital formation has been monopolised or hijacked by a small group of people known as plutocrats or oligarchs, who control the economy and party politics [1]. Additionally, the conflict caused the NCP to split in two: The Nepal Communist Party (NCP) was formed in 2018 when the Maoist Centre, the United Marxists and Leninists (CPN-UML), and the Nepal Communist Party joined forces. External factors also significantly influence domestic politics, primarily due to the nation's "location" between the two enormous new powers. Since

Nepal cannot have its voice in international politics and policy, its heavy reliance on the outside world for development and other purposes only exacerbates the situation [2].

Method

This study examines the enduring nature of change within political systems from 1940 to 2022, focusing on its manifestations, changing characteristics, and relevance in contemporary society. The interpretive strategy focuses on understanding the semantic significance of words related to the subject matter. The research uses secondary and primary data sources, including interviews with individuals, corporate entities, and governmental entities, to gather initial data on their approaches to managing political responsibilities in Nepal. Qualitative data analysis is used to analyse the transformation and characteristics of the political system, allowing valid deductions from the information. The search construction includes practical and theoretical ideas, search phrases, keywords, and synonyms related to Nepal's political system breakdown. The researcher used both a scholarly journal and an official website.

Result and Discussion

There are undoubtedly many issues in Nepal. On the other hand, the solutions to Nepal's problems are unquestionably better understood but poorly implemented. Most "political communism" is to blame for politicising social and political issues, which only serves to consume the public and radicalise society in various ways. However, Nepal has successfully held local elections under the current political regime, pointing to a brighter political future, so it can certainly hope for the best.

2018, the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) formed a new government. However, the NCP government was overthrown by internal disagreements, mainly within the NCP. At this time, Nepal also signed the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), founded in the United States, and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The change in Nepal's political systems resulted in the overall downfall of Nepal's political system. The future of democratic politics and political stability will be determined by how political parties balance domestic politics and international relations, including those between China, India, and the West.

From 1950 to 1960, Nepal's people witnessed the first attempts at planned socioeconomic development and multi-party democracy for the first time. However, unfortunately, the experiment quickly devolved into power struggles between and within the parties. These led to political instability and prevented economic reforms that could last long. Widespread coordination flaws prevent these restrictions from being addressed, even though they are familiar. Lessons learned from nations that have successfully transformed their economies highlight the critical role that the government plays in managing economic transformation.

In 1960, King Mahendra used his constitutional authority to orchestrate a political upheaval aimed at undermining the two-thirds majority government via the imposition of a ban on multi-party democracy and the adoption of a system based on majority rule. The individual in question implemented a policy prohibiting the participation of notable political leaders, such as the Prime Minister, and then enacted legislation to criminalise political parties. The promulgation of the new constitution in 1959 marked the establishment of a Panchayat government devoid of political parties. Following the ousting of the first democratically elected government in 1960, King Mahendra implemented the Panchayat System. In this system, anyone who expressed dissent was labelled as "anti-national elements." This system, sometimes called a "Guided democracy," allowed for the election of representatives by the populace. The primary cause of the failure of the 1962 Constitution was the lack of sufficient convergence among the many government programmes.

Vested interests deliberately disseminated these stories. King Birendra was forced to enact this constitution with multi-party democracy after a year of struggle. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai quickly established an interim government after the Panchayat system of government was abolished. Nepal's way of life has changed dramatically since the advent of democracy. The ADB estimates GDP growth at its lowest level in two decades at 1%. Poor governance is to blame for Nepal's unfortunate situation. To manage the problem, a determined leadership must address the crisis of the economic slowdown. Nepal's political parties prefer something other than the executive presidential system and directly elected prime minister system because those systems require popular leadership, which is not with Nepal's parties.

Consequently, the republican political system is becoming a failure-friendly environment. Nepal's political development is a clear departure from fundamental political ideology, morality, and values. Political parties have ruined democracy because they were unable to institutionalise democratic gains. The government needs to prioritise the people's concerns over the interests of politicians. Nepal's political instability has led to a decline in the rule of law. Political parties, the bureaucracy, and law enforcement agencies are to blame. The state institutions required to carry out duties by the laws and the constitution have failed. Domestic politics take precedence over foreign policy when foreign policy becomes

subservient to rulers' interests.

Geopolitics and Politics' Intersection

The constitution was announced in 2015, and elections were held at all three levels of government in Nepal to establish a new political regime: local, provincial, and federal. 2018, the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) formed a new government. However, the NCP government was overthrown by internal disagreements, mainly within the NCP, before its term was up. The conflict also caused the NCP to split in two: In 2018, the Nepal Communist Party, the United Marxists and Leninists (CPN-UML), and the Maoist Centre joined forces to form the NCP. Although Communist parties have gone through numerous splits and (re)mergers since they entered the political scene, this may explain why most use the prefix "united" before their names [3].

The NCP's struggle under the surface developed so terribly that they could bring the North, the South, and the West's far-off neighbours, the US (U.S.) and its partners, into the conversation. They were minimised genuine and envisioned issues. It only intensified geopolitics in multiple ways. However, the ideological positions of the political parties have a more significant impact on Nepal's geopolitics, which is why it appeared to be difficult for Nepal to emerge from this vortex. At this time, Nepal also signed the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), founded in the United States, and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In theory, they both desired to construct Nepal's infrastructure. However, their reverberations splintered Nepalese politics, whether for positive or negative reasons, to the point where all other significant issues during the political transitions were overlooked [4].

The results of this geopolitical rivalry frequently showed up in Nepal's relationships with its neighbours. It was demonstrated by the border dispute between China and India between 2020 and 2021. Many claim their timing was undoubtedly a component of a more significant regional geopolitical conflict. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that neither has any issues with their borders. The twice-dissolution of the parliament was restored twice by the Supreme Court in 2020 and 21. However, it resulted in the demise of the NCP-led government with a two-thirds majority. The Nepali Congress led the government (N.C.), which has only 61 parliamentarians in the 275-member house, and other coalition partners who primarily came from the left of the political spectrum. It is comparable to politics [5].

Additionally, the region's high level of geopolitical endeavours has always made Nepal's external environment unfavourable, requiring Nepal's two significant neighbours, China and India, to have their ideas about Nepal's political system and relations. Although Western nations made substantial contributions to Nepal's democratisation and development, they frequently use this support to advance their strategic objectives by using Nepal as a launching pad, which impacts internal politics. Consequently, the future of democratic politics and political stability will be determined by how political parties balance domestic politics and international relations, including those between China, India, and the West [6].

The failure of the political system in Nepal and the democratic era ended and how that resulted in the overall downfall of Nepal's political system.

Reason for the End of 1950's Democracy in 1960

In 1951, Nepal's nation and economy were generally modified by the Shah rulers' re-visitation of force. On the political front,

the people of Nepal witnessed the first attempts at planned socioeconomic development and multi-party democracy for the first time in their history. The nation's initial annual budget was released in 1953, and the nation's initial development plan was launched in 1957. However, unfortunately, the multi-party democracy experiment quickly devolved into power struggles between and within the parties. This led to political instability and prevented economic reforms that could last a long time [7].

King Mahendra slammed the democratic Nepali Congress Party government in 1960 and ordered the suspension of the parliament as political unrest grew. He became president in 1960 and established the Panchayat system, Nepal's primary political system, for three decades. In this party-free pseudo-democracy, individuals elected their representatives from various constituencies individually rather than based on any political ideology or party [8]. From 1950 to 1960, the economic growth of Nepal exhibited intermittent and gradual expansion. The lack of productivity has impeded the process of achieving significant structural economic change, whereby the workforce transitions from low-productivity sectors to others that provide better returns and more productivity. Due to the limited capacity of the services sector and the stagnant manufacturing sector, many Nepalis leave the national labour market in search of employment abroad. In addition, investments in productive assets, industrial development, and foreign investment continue to lag behind comparable nations in Nepal [9].

Productive businesses were discouraged, stifled growth, and the potential for development was hampered, in addition to the adverse business environment and the high cost of transportation and energy. Widespread coordination flaws prevent these restrictions from being addressed, even though they are familiar. Lessons learned from nations that have successfully transformed their economies highlight the critical role that the government plays in managing economic transformation and dealing with market failures. Nepal's poor public administration, aid fragmentation, and lack of productive businesses also hindered the transformation process [10].

Internal conflicts within political parties and Conflict with King Mahendra of Nepali Congress: Mohan Shamsheer, the previous Prime Minister of the Rana, agreed to form a new government by 1951 in response to the people's movement as a result of a tripartite agreement between India, the Rana, and the King of Nepal. The Bhim Datta Panta revolt in western Nepal reflected this political instability and denied that the democratic transition had been completed even after that. As a result, Nepal entered a political conflict that lasted a decade over holding elections for the Constituent Assembly (C.A.) and drafting a new constitution for a fully democratic Nepal after the first government collapsed quickly [11]. King Tribhuvan had already promised the Nepalese people to hold an election in the CA in 1951. However, Mahendra, his son who took power in 1955, wanted to hold elections for Nepal's first parliament. He declared the King the source of all political power in the Kingdom of Nepal Constitution in 1959. The political parties could not oppose the Palace's apolitical action in this unfair political situation. However, they took part in the general election 1959, which worsened the political conflict between the court and cabinet. King Mahendra established a partyless Panchayat system in Nepal in 1961, lasting thirty years [12].

Analysis of the reasons for the failure of the 1958 constitution: In 1960, King Mahendra utilised his protected power to organise an

upset against the two-third government by forbidding multi-party a majority rules system because:

- Political gatherings have cultivated debasement hosted.
- Order was not maintained in the national interest.
- Political parties lend their support to anti-national elements.
- They were banned and failed to bring peace and security to the world.
- Neither the economy nor taxes rose during the reign of the Nepali Congress.
- There was lawlessness and political instability [13].

Thus, the abovementioned issues were a reason for the failure of the 1958 constitution.

Rise and Fall of the Panchayat System

Once more, claiming that the Congress government had fostered corruption, promoted party over national interest, failed to maintain law and order, and "encouraged anti-national elements," King Mahendra used his emergency powers in 1960 to take control for the betterment of the state. All prominent political figures, including the Prime Minister, were imprisoned, and political parties were outlawed. Press freedom was restricted, and civil liberties were restricted. An "exercise of the sovereign power and prerogatives inherent in us" resulted in King Mahendra's promulgation of a new constitution in December 1959 that established a party-less Panchayat system. Dissenters were called "anti-national elements" in this system, a "Guided democracy" in which the people could elect their representatives. At the same time, the monarch remained in actual control. After dissolving the parliament and overthrowing the first democratically elected government in 1960, King Mahendra developed the Panchayat System. King Mahendra appointed a council of five ministers to help run the government on December 26, 1961. Political parties were made illegal a few weeks later [14].

At first, the Nepali Congress leadership forged alliances with many political parties, including the Gorkha Parishad and the United Democratic Party. It advocated for a non-violent struggle against the new order. However, at the beginning of 1961, the King appointed four Central Secretariat officials to a committee to recommend amendments to the constitution that would replace political parties with a "National Guidance" system based on local panchayats led by the King directly. There was resentment toward the authoritarian regime and restrictions on political party freedom. Nepal's multi-party People's Movement of 1990 saw the end of absolute monarchy and the beginning of constitutional monarchy [15].

Thus, The failure of the 1962 Panchayati Constitution was primarily attributable to the lack of convergence among the various government programs and direct citizen participation in governance.

Failure of 1990's Democratic Constitution in 2002

The Nepalese people were fed up with the political leadership. They desired a return to the Panchayat era and direct kingly rule due to the government's poor performance following the implementation of the multi-party system in 1990. Vested interests deliberately disseminated these stories. Nepal needed more democracy than ever before at the time. King Birendra was forced to enact this constitution with multi-party democracy after a year of struggle in which the Communists and Nepali Congress joined forces to form a people's movement. However, it needed to be more naturally developed [16].

The economic crisis resulted from a dispute with India over various issues, mainly importing Chinese arms across the Himalayas, contrary to claims that India was involved. The Ruler was brought down because of the protesters' final march toward the Castle at the end of April. The military shot many. People may be unaware that many of the people who led the march toward the Palace are the ones who are opposing the central government at the moment. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai quickly established an interim government after the Panchayat system of government was abolished [17].

Corruption soon followed the interim government: there was no debasement in the past; instead, it was more widespread and challenging for many of the younger units that had endured such a considerable amount to obtain a multi-party majority rules system. It was sad to see many leaders of all stripes become corrupt and appear to be rushing to get as much money as possible before quitting. After that, people who rode bicycles started travelling in expensive cars. The Krishna Pavarotti's, a middle-class bakery, was replaced as the place to buy bread by the Annapurna Hotel bakery. The coffee shops of the five-star Annapurna or Yak and Yeti assembled along New Road and Thamel, where people first started meeting. As a result, the way of life has changed for nearly everyone [18]. The state of the economy could have been better. The ADB estimates GDP growth at around 3.5%, while the Far Eastern Economic Review stated that GDP growth was at its lowest level in two decades at 1%. One factor has been the cost of counterinsurgency operations. The decrease in the number of tourists is another possibility. More importantly, poor governance is to blame for Nepal's unfortunate situation [19].

Nepal appeared to be continuing its efforts to establish a viable political system. However, it only had democracy for a short time—a year and a half in the 1960s, then from 1990 onward. To manage the situation, a determined leadership must address the twin crises of the Maoists (read: terrorists) and the economic slowdown. Therefore, before considering re-examining the constitutional monarchy as the Maoists demanded, it was hoped that the political leadership and the King would have collaborated to resolve Nepal's significant issues [20].

The Constituent Assembly's republican governments had failed since the People's Movement 2006. Despite implementing the constitution, as mentioned above, political instability increased corruption, and the power interests of parties and party leaders continued to make the government unstable. In the November 20, 2022 elections, three significant parties, the Nepali Congress, won 89 seats, CPN-UML 73, and NCP-Maoist won 32. It is possible with a government that controls the country and has political stability. Because no party has won a clear majority in the federal elections, it is clear that there will be political instability again.

Consequently, the republican political system is also becoming a failure-friendly environment. The executive presidential and directly elected prime minister systems have yet to be practised in Nepal. The parties do not like those systems because a presidential system and a direct prime minister require popular leadership, which differs from Nepal's parties. The leaders of Nepal's parties are notorious in one way or another. It will now be the only option for political systems in Nepal after all other methods have failed. None of these systems will have democracy [21].

Causes of Failure of the Political System

Thus, those mentioned earlier are the initial causes of the loss of the political system, and the below-mentioned are the leading

causes of the failure of the political system in Nepal.

Politics without Ethics

Nepali politicians do not define ethical politics and procedures. Political parties have ruined democracy. Their struggles were meaningless because they were unable to institutionalise democratic gains. The political development of Nepal is a clear departure from fundamental political ideology, morality, and values. With a decreasing sense of the head of the government's political character, the rise of the government has raised the morality dimension. Its neighbours and vice versa have influenced Nepal, so it has yet to prioritise the people's concerns over the interests of politicians [22]. When the party's leaders refuse to listen to and address reasonable disagreement, even within the party, the morality of the government begins to slither. The "coterie of cronies" frequently defends decisions made by the government despite their moral judgments regarding what is right and wrong. The public authority's central participants accept that mainly those in their "inward circle" tell the truth. They keep considering whether analysis from inside the party and government reflects position predisposition. Nepali politics urgently requires a return to inclusive and participatory politics [23].

Lack of Rule of Law

Nepal's prolonged political instability has caused a decline in the rule of law despite periodic elections and the establishment of a majority government at the centre and in the provinces. Political parties, the bureaucracy, and law enforcement agencies are to blame for the weak rule of law and bad governance. The state institutions required to carry out duties by the laws and the constitution have failed to do so for the people's benefit. Periodic elections and the establishment of a majority government at the centre and in the provinces, prolonged political instability in Nepal has resulted in a decline in the rule of law [24]. The weak rule of law and bad governance is to blame on political parties, the bureaucracy, and law enforcement agencies. For the benefit of the people, state institutions are required to carry out responsibilities by the laws, and the constitution has failed. Nepali political parties' disregard for legal systems and the rule of law is to blame for the current situation. Nepal's political parties tend to believe that the government can be run without statutes and are above the law [25].

Nepal's foreign policy failure: Domestic politics take precedence over the objectives of foreign policy in Nepal when foreign policy becomes subservient to the rulers' interests. Nepal needs a practical and clearly defined foreign policy. Nepal's foreign policy has been based on impromptu arrangements, often punctuated by hyper-populism rather than principles. Nepal's foreign policy has been abandoned because selecting party members for diplomatic positions has been prioritised [26].

Conclusion

The public of Nepal has frequently been dissatisfied with the mediocrity of political leadership in the areas of the rule of law, meritocracy, democratic culture, and other similar concepts. It has always been a concern to ask why the political leadership has not taken a more active role in combating corruption and strengthening important democratic institutions like the judiciary. Despite the constitution's adoption, political unrest appears to continue in Nepal. Unless the significant parties unite, there will be no progress in resolving the country's most pressing issues—rebuilding after the earthquake, enforcing the constitution through elections, or simply expanding the economy.

References

1. Britannica (2019) Nepal-Federal Republic. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nepal/Federal-republic>
2. Zuberi M, Karan P P (2019) Nepal | Culture, History, & People. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nepal>
3. Balaji D M S (2017) Nepal-Holds First Local Level Elections in 20 Years. *Www.vifindia.org*. <https://www.vifindia.org/article/2017/july/31/nepal-holds-first-local-level-elections-in-20-years>
4. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal (2016) Tourism in Nepal - Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nepal MOFA. *Mofa.gov.np*. <https://mofa.gov.np/about-nepal/tourism-in-nepal/>
5. Sharma G (2021) Nepal's Supreme Court reinstated parliament and ordered a new PM to be appointed. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nepals-supreme-court-reinstates-parliament-orders-new-pm-be-appointed-2021-07-12/>
6. Bhatta C D (2022) Nepal Election Remaking of Politics in Madhes. *Https://Www.outlookindia.com/*. <https://www.outlookindia.com/international/nepal-election-2022-remaking-of-politics-in-madhes-news-239077>
7. Osmani S R (2022) A SHORT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY OF NEPAL. *Ulster.ac.uk*. <https://pure.ulster.ac.uk/files/11744362/Nepal.doc>
8. Shah S (1981) Developing an Economy - Nepal's Experience. *Asian Survey* 21: 1060-1079.
9. Pandey R (2021) Political and Economic Challenges Faced by Nepal and Its Impact on Indo-Nepal Relations. *India Foundation*. <https://indiafoundation.in/articles-and-commentaries/political-and-economic-challenges-faced-by-nepal-and-its-impact-on-indo-nepal-relations/>
10. Consing A Y (1963) The Economy of Nepal. *IMF Staff Papers* <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/024/1963/003/article-A005-en.xml>
11. United Nations Human Rights (2016) OHCHR | The Nepal Conflict Report. *OHCHR*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/nepal-conflict-report>
12. Tiwari R K (2013) Nepal's Armed Conflict and the Peace Process. *Tribhuvan University Journal* 28: 217-224.
13. Upadhyay P (2008) Quandary in Nepal: A Conflict Perspective. *Himalayan Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 3: 73-85.
14. US Library of Congress (2016) Nepal-The Panchayat System under King Mahendra. *Countrystudies.us*. <http://countrystudies.us/nepal/19.html>
15. Hays J (2018) HISTORY OF THE NEPALESE GOVERNMENT: MONARCHY, DEMOCRACY AND THE PANCHAYAT SYSTEM | Facts and Details. *Factsanddetails.com*. https://factsanddetails.com/south-asia/Nepal/Government_Justice_Military_Nepal/entry-7855.html
16. Outlook. (2022) Nepal: 1990 Constitution and After. <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/nepal-1990-constitution-and-after/216192>
17. Awale S (2022) Fueling Nepal's economic crisis. *Https://Www.nepalitimes.com/*. <https://www.nepalitimes.com/banner/fueling-nepals-economic-crisis/>
18. Gupta A K, Adhikari S H (2018) Corruption in Nepal: Level, Pattern and Trend Analysis. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334699194_Corruption_in_Nepal_Level_Pattern_and_Trend_Analysis
19. Prakash K, Shrestha (2010) Structural Changes and Economic Growth in Nepal. http://peri.umass.edu/fileadmin/pdf/conference_papers/newschool/prakash.pdf
20. Lawoti M (2008) Exclusionary Democratisation in Nepal, 1990–2002. *Democratisation*, 15: 363-385.
21. Maskey M, Deschene M (2008) Constituent Assembly and the Revolutionary Left in Nepal. *Economic and Political Weekly* 43: 9-12.
22. Dhakal R K (2020) The Decline in the Moral Foundations of Nepali Politics. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341180763_Decline_in_the_Moral_Foundations_of_Nepali_Politics
23. Pradhan T R (2021) Nepali politics is becoming devoid of principles, ethics and ideologies. *Kathmandupost.com*. <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2021/03/23/nepali-politics-is-becoming-devoid-of-principles-ethics-and-ideologies>
24. Ghimire B (2021) No regard for the rule of law as the Nepali state runs on ad hocism. *Kathmandupost.com*. <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2021/09/20/no-regard-for-rule-of-law-as-nepali-state-runs-on-ad-hocism>
25. Shrestha N (2020) Nepal: Lack of Accountability Undermining the Rule of Law. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/13/nepal-lack-accountability-undermining-rule-law>
26. Baral L R (2021) Opinion | Nepal's foreign policy failure. *Kathmandupost.com*. <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2021/06/23/nepal-s-foreign-policy-failure>

Copyright: ©2023 Santa Bahadur Thapa. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.