CHAPTER - II

THE FOREIGN POLICY-MAKING INSTITUTIONS OF BHUTAN
Administrative Map
Apart from determinants like geography, history, tradition, and culture, there are certain other factors which formulate the foreign policy of a state. These include statesmanship, governmental and non-governmental institutions etc. Such governmental institutions comprise executives, legislatures, foreign office and other relevant departments. The non-governmental institutions, include political parties, pressure groups, mass-media, public opinion, etc.

With regard to small states, the foreign policy-making institutions do not have a wide scope unlike as in intermediate or large states. The reason is, the foreign policy of small states is always influenced and shaped by the leaders or head of the Government. Sometimes, it is formulated by a certain elite class of society, who advise their ruler to save their own interest. Generally this trend is found in most weak or small countries in the Africa and Asia region. Even otherwise, the geographical and economic compulsions and political systems of these states do not permit them to develop or to have many more institutions for foreign policy formulation. For instance, small states cannot afford the expenses of representative foreign offices abroad.

In many small states, where power is concentrated in a single centre, the rulers are naturally cautious of any threat to their position through parallel power centres. Hence, they are against decentralisation of power, because it may allow foreigners to infiltrate into the country, or influence the power centres, thus disturbing the integrity and unity of the nation.
The foreign policy-making institutions of Bhutan will be discussed and analysed on the basis of the above parameters.

BACKGROUND OF ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF BHUTAN:

Bhutan once had a dual system of administration namely, under Deb Raja and Dharma Raja, two separate administrative systems. This system was known as Chhosi. To look after the entire administration, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594-1651) appointed two Tibetan monks. Of these two, one was called Chief Khempo (Dharma Raja) whose duties were 'to enforce the strict observance of priestly vows amongst the monks, direct to their studies and preside at religious ceremonies'. However, it is important to note that 'religion and politics in Bhutan were closely intertwined, the foreign activities of the pre-twentieth century Bhutanese were related to religious issues'. The second one was called Dug Desi or Deb Raja. The appointment of Deb Raja was done by Ngawang Namgyal himself. The purpose of this institution was to oversee the general administration of the state. Mainly, the functions of the Deb Raja related to foreign affairs, economic and financial matters and the needs of the lamas.

Besides these two institutions, the Namgyal, divided the country into administrative units. Each unit was controlled by the local governor known as Penlop, who had to obey the central authority.

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In practice, all the major decisions were taken by the Shabdrung Namgyal, thus making the decentralised administrative structure a nominal one. In Bhutan, there was the Council of States, consisting of the Deb Raja, Penlops and other high ranking religious and secular officers. Its function was to guide the affairs of state by offering concrete suggestions and laying down broad guidelines for policies to be implemented.

In modern times, so far as the foreign policy making institutions of Bhutan are concerned they are strongly influenced by its historical tradition, culture and especially the nature of political system, the monarchy. However in the hierarchy of decision-making or foreign policy-making institutions, the King of Bhutan, is at the apex of the pyramid, followed by the Advisory Council, Tshogudu, (the National Assembly of Bhutan), nobility, religious and economic vested interests.

The detailed discussion of these institutions follows in this manner.

**Monarchy:**

The death of Ngawang Namgyal in 1651 resulted in a setback to the administrative system of the country. Bhutan suffered from internal strife and civil war, and the election of Deb Raja became nominal. These features of the political scenario continued until the establishment of the hereditary monarchy in 1907. The institution of hereditary monarchy was quite unique in the historical annals of this tiny nation.

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3 Singh, n.1, pp.82-84.
The Tongsa Penlop, Ugyen Wangchuk, became the first hereditary King of Bhutan on December 17, 1907 at Punakha. Ugyen Wangchuk brought peace and stability to Bhutan. He was constantly in touch with the progress made by the neighbouring states like Sikkim, Assam and Bengal. He decided to modernise Bhutan, so that it could catch up with economic progress as had its neighbouring states.

To cultivate good-neighbourly relations with Sikkim, Ugyen Wangchuk, appointed Ugyen Dorji as Bhutan's diplomat to Kalimpong, because at that time, British India had appointed a political officer to Sikkim, who was responsible for the conduct of India's relations with Bhutan. The appointment of Bhutan's political agent at Kalimpong, proved the King's diplomatic skill, which he used to retain and to maintain his friendship with the British.

With a long-term perspective in mind, the King of Bhutan succeeded not only in forging good neighbourly links, but also in warding off any undesirable influences that might impinge on the state's political advance along the chosen path and that might seriously imperil the desired goal of an autonomous Tibet. This required statecraft of a high order and the King displayed it quite skilfully. The Druk Gyalpo or the King of Bhutan is the real executive of the country. In each and every aspect, the King of Bhutan acts as the Head of the State. As an executive, the King of

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Bhutan controls the internal administration of the State and also for the outside world, he symbolises the Head of the State. The King of Bhutan is not only the Chief of the State but also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He represents the highest court of appeal and controls both religious and spiritual matters. Thus ‘monarchy and the lama hierarchy are the only two institutions as of today which can sustain Bhutan's cultural and historical identity’. Up to 1952, the institution of monarchy in Bhutan centralised its power and integrated all the other areas of administration. It was only under the guidance of Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, that the discretion of this institution has deviated from its traditional way. Thus, since 1952, ‘Bhutan moved towards a new direction of more liberal and modern administrative system, seeking recognition as a sovereign independent country, with its own distinct identity and culture’.

He introduced liberal trends in his country's foreign policy and opened it to the outside world, introducing many reforms in economic and social fields, for the development of his country. At the same time, the King still treated with respect, the feelings of traditionalists in Bhutan, as total ignorance of the traditions and customs would result in the people being attracted to and being influenced by alien ideas and cultures.

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Thus, the institution of monarchy introduced major changes in the political as well as economic development of Bhutan. In the National Assembly, on 13 November 1968, the King of Bhutan expressed his desire, 'to form a government combining the monarchical and democratic systems in order to ensure the stability and solidarity of the country'. Since then the Druk Gyalpo has taken advice from the National Assembly and the Royal Advisory Council in running the affairs of state. Actually, the King of Bhutan functions through these advisory bodies to discharge his day-to-day functions. So the institution of monarchy, though it appears to be absolute, is limited by the institutional arrangements whereby the King is to function according to the advice given by these councils.

This change in the political system of Bhutan from absolute to constitutional monarchy aimed at giving the people a decisive voice in the country's affairs. This evolution of power can be seen with reference to various unhappy developments in the Kingdom. Too much dependence on Indian aid and advice, and incorporating a modern view and concepts into Bhutan's national and international affairs, resulted in two major incidents. Firstly, the assassination of Prime Minister Jigme Paldan Dorji in 1964, and in the same year an attempt to assassinate the King of Bhutan.

The King of Bhutan also introduced many other institutions which were similar to those of its friendly neighbour, India. For instance, whereas the Head of

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8 The Kuensel, (Thimpu), 30 November 1968.
10 Kapileshwar Labh, "Monarchical System of Bhutan : Challenges of modernisation" in Phadnis, Muni and Bahadur (eds.) : Domestic Conflicts in South Asia, (New Delhi : 1986), p. 188.
the state is the King of Bhutan, the Head of state in India is the President. India has a post of Prime Minister, so Bhutan created a position of Prime Minister to correspond with its Indian counterpart in bilateral dealings. However, the title of Prime Minister was not officially conferred on either Jigme Dorji or Lhendup Dorji. According to B.S. Das (who served as ambassador to Bhutan), a deliberate decision was taken to combine the offices of the Head of Government and State, preventing parallel seats of power from emerging.

However, the Bhutanese of Nepali origin have now demanded the total abolition of the monarchy system, and asked for the introduction of democratic rights such as civil liberties, freedom of speech of expression and so on. These demands are based on the allegations that the present institution of monarchy is responsible for the atrocities on the Nepali people and the suppression of their culture. Due to this ethnic crisis, the monarchy system of Bhutan has come into public notice and attracted the attention of various Human Rights organisations. At this point it must be said that sooner or later, Bhutan will have to reform its traditional institution of monarchy and adopt democratic institutions. In contradiction to this the Bhutanese officials insist: 'Ideologically, within the framework of a traditional Buddhist monarchy, Bhutanese society is highly

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11 In Bhutan there is no institution of Prime Minister as such. But it should be noted, 'Jigme P. Dorji was designated as Prime Minister as a matter of courtesy only. The title originated at the time of the visit of India's Prime Minister Nehru, 1958, out of sheer consideration for protocol'. See, Singh, n.1, p.100.
12 B.S. Das, n.6, p.301.
democratic with a well-developed system of decentralised administration right down to the village level'.

But at the practical level, any abuse of monarchy in Bhutan, may result in a halt in economic assistance and foreign aid which is very essential for its national development from the donor countries and various financial agencies.

The Tshogdu

The National Assembly of Bhutan:

In Bhutan, any gathering of people which discusses its common interests is termed as Jomdu, while large-scale or higher level meetings are called Tshogdu. In this way, the name Tshogdu is given to an assembly, where representatives of the people, the monasteries and the government come together to discuss matters of common interest and national importance.

The idea of Tshogdu or national assembly was conceived by His Highness the Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, in 1952 on his accession to the throne. With his wisdom and foresight, the King realised that for the rapid progress of the country, all sections of the people must participate in the deliberations on national issues and must advise on the formulation of any policies which would have an impact on the country and the people of Bhutan. That is why, the King of Bhutan officially inaugurated the legislative body at Punakha in 1953, the then capital of Bhutan, later shifted to Thimpu.

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15 Singh, n.1. pp. 96-112.
The National Assembly, comprises three categories of members namely the people's representatives, monastic representatives, and official representatives. In the year 1990 it consisted of 154 members comprising 105 elected representatives of the people, 10 representatives of the clergy and 39 nominated representatives of the government. They all served for a term of three years.\textsuperscript{16} The National assembly normally meets twice a year. The speaker and the Deputy speaker are elected by the National Assembly from amongst its members. The peoples' representatives in the National Assembly are elected indirectly by the selection of representatives of villages by consensus, and their subsequent nomination to the \textit{Tshogdu}.\textsuperscript{17} the people's representatives occupy 70 percent of the seats in the Assembly. The monastic representatives are nominated to the Assembly by the various monastic bodies located in the main dzongs of the country.\textsuperscript{18} Dzongs are the headquarters of the main districts. The monastic representatives constitutes only eight per cent of the total strength of the Assembly. Thirdly, the official representatives are mainly the official staff of the government institutions nominated by the King. They include ministers, members of the Royal Advisory Council, senior civil servants, judges of each dzong area and sub-divisional revenue officers. These are assigned twenty-two per cent of the reserved seats in the Assembly.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} Document on \textit{Tsongdu : The National Assembly of Bhutan}, (Gangtok, Sikkim : 1969).
\textsuperscript{18} ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Singh, n.1, p.101.
The Speaker is the presiding officer of the Tshogdu and has the most important position in the hierarchy of members. He has a term of three years. He is elected by a secret ballot by a simple majority vote in the assembly. He is usually a very senior member holding high rank in the monastic order.

The National Assembly plays a very important role as far as the powers and functions of the National Assembly are concerned. It does so at three levels, it enacts laws, approves senior appointments to the government and advises on all matters of national importance. Practically speaking, the Tshogdu performs legislative functions and also acts as an advisory body.

As for its legal functions, the Tshogdu enacts various civil, criminal and property laws. It passes laws relating to land taxation, compensation, property and the land tenure system. It confirms the appointments of the ministers and the members of the Royal Advisory Council. Although the King makes these appointments, he always obtains the prior approval of the Assembly. Even the privy purse of the King and the salaries of the ministers are debated in the house. As an advisory body, the Assembly plays a vital role in discussing national issues and policy. Each and every member of the Tshogdu has the right to express his or her opinion without any hesitation, can raise any issue related to the national or common interest and ask for revision or an amendment. Thus the Tshogdu simultaneously embodies the principles of democracy and monarchy.

Till 1968, the National Assembly did not possess legislative supremacy. To become law, the approval of the King was mandatory for all legislative bills which
were passed by the National Assembly. Before 1968, the King had veto power over an issue or bill. This he surrendered voluntarily in the Autumn session of 1968. At the same time, the King expressed his desire for a stable government in Bhutan, to maintain the peace and tranquility of the country in future, and to safeguard the country from any external threat. The King introduced this clause because Bhutan has a hereditary monarchy and in turbulent times there could emerge a passionate feeling for a radical change.

If the people did not cooperate with the King, it would be impossible for him to protect them. So it is better if the people have the choice of abolishing the hereditary monarchy because then they can achieve a change through peaceful means whenever necessary.

In his speech in the National Assembly in the Spring session of 1969 the King observed,

Rebellion will only bring disaster and disgrace to the country accompanied by loss of lives and chaos which will be exploited by outsiders to the detriment of the country. In case of misunderstanding between the King and the people, or if the King resorts to repression, the people, instead of rebelling, should convene the National Assembly.

He added,

I did not say that the system of hereditary monarchy should be abolished. My intention was to empower the National Assembly to change by peaceful means any King, including myself who is found unfit to rule the country.20

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Finally, in order to ensure the stability and solidarity of the country and to form a government combining the monarchical and democratic principles, the National Assembly unanimously decided that the system of hereditary monarchy should depend on popular approval. Under this act, the reigning monarch is obliged to abdicate if two-thirds of the Assembly's membership support a vote of no-confidence in his conduct of affairs.\textsuperscript{21}

However, the 1973 spring session of the Assembly took the decision to abolish the system of expressing confidence in the King,\textsuperscript{22} because the National Assembly felt that since Bhutan was a small and landlocked country, undesirable elements both within and outside the country could use this system to destabilise the country to further their own evil designs.

After studying all Bhutan's reforms one can say that the transformation from hereditary monarchy to constitutional monarchy has had the effect of liberalising the political system of Bhutan in modern times.

It should be noted that the National Assembly of Bhutan has been playing an important role in foreign policy making. For instance in July 1979, on the issue of Tibetan refugees in Bhutan, the National Assembly recommended to the King of Bhutan that 'all Tibetans refusing to accept Bhutanese nationality should be sent back to Tibet'.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[21]Ram Rahul, n.9, p. 112.
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Again recently in its 75th session, the National Assembly resolved that boundary talks with China should be continued in order to maintain current and cordial relations with China.\textsuperscript{24}

The National Assembly has also passed a resolution at its 74th session, banning employment of Nepalese nationals in government and private organisations.\textsuperscript{25} This action was taken in view of the recent ethnic problems in Bhutan and to avoid adverse developments in future. At the same time, the National Assembly is urging the Bhutanese government to negotiate with Nepal, regarding the settlement of the question of the ngolops in Bhutan.\textsuperscript{26}

These several instances illustrate the active role in foreign policy making played by the National Assembly.

\textbf{The Royal Advisory Council:}

The Royal Advisory Council or 'Lodoi Tsokde', was established by the King in 1965.\textsuperscript{27} It consists of nine members, out of whom six represent the people, two the clergy and one is nominated by the King. The Council is headed by a Chairman called \textit{Kalon}. He represents the government and is accorded the rank of a minister. The term of the council is for three years.\textsuperscript{28}

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\item \textsuperscript{24} 75th session, National Assembly, Debates, \textit{The Kuensel}, 9 August 1997, p.2.
\item \textsuperscript{25} 74th session, National Assembly, Debates, \textit{The Kuensel}, 10 August 1996, p.17.
\item \textsuperscript{26} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Singh, n.1, p. 98.
\item \textsuperscript{28} ibid.
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The Royal Council functions regularly without any break and is in session throughout the year, unlike the Tshongdu, the National Assembly, which meets only twice a year. The Royal Council is the main advisory organ of the state.

It is just like a Cabinet, which is essentially advisory in character and does not comprise all the ministers. At the same time, the Council is not responsible to the National Assembly.

The main function of this body is to render advice to the King whenever it is sought and also to his Council of Ministers on all matters of national importance especially foreign affairs. It also offers advice on domestic issues to promote the welfare of the people and to safeguard the interests of the Kingdom, to develop friendly and harmonious relations between the Government and the people. In addition to this, it makes its advice available to ensure that the laws and resolutions passed by the National Assembly are faithfully implemented by the Government and generally followed by the people. According to protocol, the Council holds, regular meetings every day and the ministers are required to attend its meetings once a week, and answer questions related to their respective departments.

The Council came into existence at an informal level in late 1950. It gained statutory recognition and became an official organ of the Government only in 1965. However, after a decade, i.e. in 1975, the membership of the Council was increased from nine to ten. Two members represent the monks, five members represent the

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29 ibid.
30 ibid., p.99.
people of the various regions. The Nepali-origin Bhutanese community and the
council. Although the Council had the authority to advise the King and to watch
over the performance of the Government, His Majesty felt that it lacked the
necessary clout to carry out its responsibilities. Therefore, a revised set of rules and
regulations for the functions and the responsibilities of the Royal Council was
formulated by the King. An important feature of the revised set of rules and
regulations is the inclusion of a clause which states

if any person, including His Majesty the King, does anything harmful
to the interest of the Kingdom and the people, the Royal Advisory
Council, without suppressing such matters and free of fear from any
quarter shall bring it to the attention of His Majesty the King and, if
necessary, even report it to the cabinet and the National Assembly.32

Although the King of Bhutan incorporated this new clause in the rules of the
Royal Council, the National Assembly took objection to it. The assembly felt that it
was a gross violation of traditional values and that it undermined the sacred

31 The Hindu, n.20.
32 ibid.
principles of unflinching loyalty to the throne. However, the King explained that the real purpose behind the clause was to inculcate a sense of responsibility in the future rulers of the nation and to commit them to certain accepted norms of behaviour. In a way, the clause was to act as a check on any unscrupulous behaviour of the monarchs. It removed the dangers of too much power being concentrated in the hands of the ruler. A harmonious linkage was thus established between legal opinion and public opinion.

The Royal Advisory Council also influences the foreign policy decisions. For example, after the discussion on the map controversy\(^{33}\) in the National Assembly, the members of the Council demanded in their speeches that, 'Bhutan now wanted to be a fully sovereign state with foreign relations of its own.'\(^{34}\) They asked the Royal Government of Bhutan to fully assert the sovereignty of their country.

**Council of Ministers:**

The National assembly of Bhutan took a major step to modernise the administrative system when it officially sanctioned the formation of the Council of Ministers on 16 May 1968.\(^{35}\) The new Ministry was formed with only four portfolios namely, Home Affairs, Finance and Trade, Industry and Development. However, three additional departments, namely, the Ministries of Communication, Tourism and Foreign Affairs, were added in 1973.\(^{36}\) All the ministers in Bhutan are

\(^{33}\) There was some misunderstanding in Bhutan about the map which was published by the Govt. See details in next chapter.

\(^{34}\) Ram Rahul, Modern Bhutan, (Delhi : 1971), p. 108.

\(^{35}\) Singh, n.1.

\(^{36}\) Rose, n.22, p.171.
ranked equally, unlike in neighbouring India, where there are three types of Minister: Cabinet, State and Deputy. In the absence of the institution of the Prime Minister, the King himself discharged the functions of the Head of the Government as well as the Head of the State.

The ministers are responsible to the Druk Gyalpo regarding the administration of their respective departments. Hence, their tenure in the ministry depends upon the discretion of the King of Bhutan.

The ministers are also responsible to the Tshogdu (the National Assembly), since it approves their appointment by a simple majority vote on the recommendation of the Druk Gyalpo. However, the National Assembly can ask any minister to resign on the basis of a motion of no-confidence carried out against him by a two-thirds majority.

The principle of collective responsibility has not yet been effectively introduced in the Council of Ministers as they are all responsible to the King in their individual capacity and serve at his pleasure. Although the position of the ministers is vulnerable and their appointment at the discretion of the King and the National Assembly, they do exercise a moderate amount of influence. They are responsible for the implementation of policy, and as such, play some role in the decision-making process. The Druk Gyalpo is thus dependent upon the ministers for effective administration and advice on policies and programmes, and also for the implementation of policy decisions.
Foreign Office:

The task of formulating foreign policy becomes a sensitive and delicate one in a weak country like Bhutan, which is landlocked and sandwiched between two rival powers. Therefore the portfolio of foreign affairs has been handled by the King himself. However, the Treaty of 1949, (The foreign policy of Bhutan would be guided by India), did not give much scope to Bhutan to take independent decisions in foreign affairs. This trend continued till the death of Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, in 1972. Till then, the other institutions like National Assembly or Royal Advisory Council functioned as a virtual rubber-stamp with regard to foreign policy.

Prior to formal establishment of the department of Foreign Affairs in 1972, the Bhutanese Prime Minister J.P. Dorji acted as a representative of Bhutan in India and international affairs till his death in 1964. For example, he represented Bhutan at the Asian Relations Conference in March-April 1947 and presented a paper entitled 'Bhutan'. Also he visited India many times for the meetings in connection with the Development Assistance programmes at which he represented Bhutan.

However, the need to have a department of foreign affairs arose due to some compulsions. For instance, Bhutan's entry into the United Nations in 1971, and its desire for mobilising financial resources from all corners of the world, compelled it to have a separate Ministry of External Affairs. To look after these matters, the Royal Government finally established a Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1972. Thus,

37 Dorji, n.4.
38 Rose, n.22, p.91.
it was the first government institution in Bhutan which was responsible to implement
and formulate the foreign policy of the country, 'a task that had been managed
previously on an ad-hoc, non-professional basis',\textsuperscript{39} by the King in consultation with
members of the nobility. Dawa Tsering was appointed as the first Foreign Minister
of Bhutan, and he is still handling the portfolio very intelligently and tactfully. The
other reason could be that the present King at that time was very young and needed
professional advice and guidance in the conduct of foreign affairs. Thus since 1973,
the office of Foreign Affairs has had the lion's share in formulating Bhutan's foreign
policy.

The foreign minister of Bhutan has very cleverly managed to project the
independent and sovereign status of his country in world affairs, particularly in
maintaining an ambivalent position between India and China.\textsuperscript{40} While maintaining
friendly relations with India, Bhutan has tactfully avoided alienating China. It also
played a significant role in various regional and international organisations namely
UN, NAM and SAARC and ESCAP. The foreign office of Bhutan chaired some
important sessions in the forum of NAM, ESCAP and SAARC.

The institution of Foreign office due to financial constraints avoided
establishing its resident diplomatic missions in each and every country of the world,
except in India and Bangladesh. But non-resident diplomatic missions have been

\textsuperscript{39} ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} This opinion is expressed by one of the senior official from Ministry of External Affairs,
Government of India.
established in many countries, namely south Asian neighbours and some donor countries which are helpful to Bhutan in various ways.

This strategy of Bhutan, has served the following three objectives:

(1) Without developing or establishing very close residential diplomatic relations with every one, it has sought to achieve the basic objective of its foreign policy.

(2) It has reduced the cost of maintenance of resident diplomatic missions in other countries.

(3) At the same time Bhutan has not permitted other countries to establish their resident diplomatic missions in Bhutan.

By doing so, Bhutan has avoided foreign influence on its soil and interference in both the external and internal affairs of the country. In this way the institution of foreign office of Bhutan has been functioning efficiently.

Religion and Traditions:

The national culture of any nation is always influenced by its religion, traditional values and customs. This is particularly so in a small state which does not have any material assets to assert its position in world affairs, where these factors become important. The culture and tradition become an inherent part of the foreign policy-making institutions. However, nowadays most of the states, whether, small or intermediate are using culture as a diplomatic tool. For instance, China always
formulates its foreign policy on the basis of its rich cultural heritage.\textsuperscript{41}

In the case of Bhutan, monarchy and religion are ‘inseparable, as a monarch is not only the Head of the State but also the protectorate of the Buddhist faith and culture’.\textsuperscript{42} The neglect of this culture was one of the causes leading to the resentment against and eventual assassination of Prime Minister Jigme Palden Dorji. After the Sino-Indian war of 1962, the rivalry between the two groups namely, religious traditionalists and modernists came to the surface. According to Nari Rustomji, (who served as Indian advisor to His Majesty of Bhutan in the early 1960s) Prime Minister J.P. Dorji ignored the institution of traditional groups, especially that of the Buddhist lamas, while introducing development in Bhutan. To quote him:

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Apart from the threat to religion, the lamas apprehended that their own influence and hold over the people would be undermined by changes they saw looming ahead.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

The tragic death of J. P. Dorji, brought about two developments to Bhutan. One, there was a strong feeling amongst the Bhutanese that Indians might be behind the murder, particularly, Nari Rustomji, Indian advisor.\textsuperscript{44} Hence, after his term, the post of Indian advisor was abolished in Bhutan. Secondly, to fill the vacuum caused

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\textsuperscript{44} ibid.
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by the abolition of the post of Indian advisery the monarch decided to establish a Royal Advisory Council in 1965. Therefore, it is quite possible that he gave representation to the institution of Buddhist lamas in the decision-making process of Bhutan's internal as well as external affairs. Two members are nominated from the clergy in the council.

Thus, the monarch himself decided to involve the monks in development programme and to make them aware of the importance of the latter for the country's development and new image.45

In this way, the King of Bhutan maintained a balance between the traditionalists and the modernists. On the other hand, Leo E. Rose holds the view that the national or international affairs of Bhutan are not much influenced by the institution of religion or religious groups. According to him, the vested interests among the elite are very influential in the formulation of Bhutan's foreign policy.46

However, it must be pointed out that Bhutan is still largely a traditional society. Each and every act in the life of the Bhutanese is directed by rituals and religion. Performing religious duties and traditions is not only a private matter but also a part of the public life of Bhutan. For example, after childbirth, only a Lama can decide the day and date of the naming ceremony of the child. Also, after the death of any person, it is the Lama who decides the place of cremation and other

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45 B.S. Das, n.6, p. 86.
46 Rose, n.22, pp. 84-88.
rituals. In this context, one cannot ignore the importance of religion and tradition in Bhutanese life in both the domestic and foreign policy spheres. In Bhutan, practically, all the activities, such as socio-eco-political ones are influenced by traditional values.

The recent experience of introducing the policy of Driglaham Namzha, (A revival of traditional Bhutanese culture) in Bhutan proves the influence of religious and traditional institutions in the foreign-policy making of Bhutan.

**Non-Governmental Institutions**

The non-governmental institutions which are influencing the decision-making process comprise public opinion, political parties, pressure groups, mass-media, etc. However such institution are not developed in Bhutan due to lack of education, absence of democracy and lack of a modernised social sector.

Bhutan’s monarchical system is relatively more sensitive to the socio-political developments. Therefore, the role of non-governmental institutions in foreign policy-making is almost negligible, and is hard to measure exactly. For instance, there is very limited scope for the influence of public opinion on foreign policy. In other words, it is not very vocal in Bhutan, due to the absence of the usual channels of communication except for official media, which is used as a mere channel for information. In fact, there is a government ban on the private media as also on political parties and pressure groups. While the ostensible reason for the ban is the

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47 I was told this by a local Bhutanese Lama during my visit to Bhutan in December 1994, as well as in November 1997.
need to protect Bhutanese culture, the real reason is the need to exercise political control and neutralise potential opposition and dissent.

However, there are certain other factors in Bhutan which influence the foreign policy, particularly, the emergence of the elite or middle class, which is engaged in the economic and social activities of the state. Basically this class is rich, in many instances is related to the royal family, and has links to business and the professions. It comprises of the educated, young and less traditionalist elements of Bhutanese society, who are interested in replacing the traditional monastic institutions by a modern state structure. Since they have already tasted the fruits of modernity either in India or abroad, they want to change the psychology of the people and establish their dominance in the state. On the foreign policy front, they have been instrumental in establishing non-residential diplomatic relations with several European states and even some of the richer countries in Asia. In this context, Prof. S.D. Muni says,

Some of the members of the ruling family have developed strong commercial contacts in Kathmandu, Singapore and Hongkong and thus work as a powerful pressure group behind Bhutan's trade and diplomatic diversification moves.

We may mention here the presence of pro-Chinese lobby in some circles of Bhutanese society. This lobby would advocate keeping a safe distance from India or at least equi-distance from both India and China. The purpose of such a policy

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48 Das, n.6, p.85.
50 Nari Rustomji, n.43.
posture would be to make the best of relations with both India and China. However, this lobby does not seem to be very powerful. Along with pro-China feelings, these groups have also spread anti-Indian feelings among the local Bhutanese. The incident of Bhutan's sudden decision to restrict the entry of Indians in 1968 demonstrated the influence of anti-Indian feeling on the decision making process of Bhutan.51

The institution of mass-media is government controlled, it functions as the mouth-piece of the Royal Government of Bhutan. For example, the Government runs a weekly newspaper known as The Kuensel. It brings out only the positive feedback from the readership and gives information about economic and social activities which are undertaken by the Government. It always gives adverse publicity to alleged subversive activities of dissidents of Nepali origin. Thus, another component needed to create public opinion, i.e. a free press is absent in Bhutan. Notwithstanding this, a Bhutanese official claims that,

the consultative process in which the views of the people are fully taken into consideration while formulating government policies and plans and the system of participating development have been institutionalised in Bhutan.52

However, the general impression is that Bhutan's foreign policy is not as much based on public opinion as is generally understood, since the people have little say in foreign affairs. This is one of the flaws of the foreign policy as pursued by

the monarchy, for it appears that only a few elite groups have some influence in foreign policy matters.

Besides these institutions, Bhutan also maintains its secret Internal Intelligence Services at an informal level. It keeps vigilance on the developments which are taking place in the country. It helps the King to know of developments within the country, so that he may take preventive and corrective measures. For instance, all the information about the secret decisions of the Government of India, or its policy towards Bhutan, reach the King from various sources, before being officially announced. On the basis of that information the King is able to deal with Indian Government officials across the table. The institutions of secret service help the King to know about the emergence of anti-Indian feelings or the pro-Chinese lobby. The King, thus is forewarned and can tailor his policies to suit emerging situations.

Thus, it can be stated in conclusion, that whatever the records or books might say about the foreign-policy making institutions, in practice the decisions on foreign policy are taken by one authority alone, i.e., the King of Bhutan. Although there exists a separate Ministry of Foreign Affairs, established way back in 1973 by the Royal Government, negotiations with the outside world are carried out mostly by the King himself in association with his trusted ministers and professionals. Apart from the existence of the monarchical system, this nation also suffers from the lack

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53 This was told by a senior officer, who served as Personnel in IMTRAT in Bhutan.
54 Ibid.
of a well-informed and advanced bureaucratic set-up, which is necessary to channelise foreign policy decisions. The inadequacy in the administrative set-up and lack of expertise lead to the concentration of the decision-making power in the hands of the King. Over all, it is the monarch alone, at the apex of the hierarchy, who has the final say in policy-making and its implementation.