CHAPTER - IV

NEPAL AS A ZONE OF PEACE
The proposal for establishing Nepal as a Zone of Peace became a major foreign policy plank for King Birendra of Nepal after his accession to the throne in January 1972. The announcement of the proposal was originally planned to be made at the Fourth Summit Conference of Non-aligned Nations at Algiers in September 1973. However, the reference to the peace zone was dropped by the King although the advance copies of the text of the speech released to the press contained the specific proposal that "Nepal, situated between two of the most populous countries in the world, wishes within her frontiers, to be enveloped in a Zone of Peace".¹

The formal announcement which had been deferred at Algiers was made by King Birendra on 25 February 1975 on the occasion of his own coronation. At the farewell reception the King stated:

We adhere to the policy of non-alignment because we believe that it brightens the prospects of peace. We need peace for our security, we need peace for development and we need peace for our independence. As a matter of fact Nepal in the past has signed formal peace and friendship treaties with both our friendly neighbours. And if today, peace is an over riding concern with us, it is only because our people genuinely desire peace in our country, in our region and everywhere in the world. It is with this earnest desire to institutionalize peace that I stand to make a proposition that my country, Nepal be declared a zone of peace. Only under a condition of peace we will be able to create a particularly stable Nepal with a sound economy which will in no

¹ Rising Nepal (Kathmandu), 9 September 1973.
way be detrimental to any country. I also wish to declare that in making this proposition for a zone of peace, we are not prompted out of fear or threat from any country or quarter.²

The scope and definition of the zone came much later in February 1982, when the then Prime Minister, S.B. Thapa announced to the world, a seven point definition of the peace zone proposal for Nepal. These seven points are:

1. Nepal will adhere to the policy of peace, non-alignment and peaceful co-existence and will constantly endeavour to develop friendly relations with all countries of the world regardless of their social and political systems and particularly with its neighbours on the basis of equality and respect for each others independence and sovereignty.

2. Nepal will be seek peaceful settlement of all disputes between itself and any other state or states.

3. Nepal will not resort to use or threat of use of force in any way, which might endanger the peace and security of other countries.

4. Nepal will not interfere in the internal affairs of other states.

5. Nepal will not permit activities on its soil that are hostile to other states supporting this proposal and in

reciprocity other states supporting this proposal will not permit any activities hostile to Nepal.

6. Nepal will continue to honour the obligations of all the existing treaties which it has concluded with other countries as long as they remain valid.

7. In conformity with its policy of peace and non-alignment, Nepal will not enter into military alliance nor will it allow the establishment of any foreign military base on its soil. In reciprocity other countries supporting this proposal will not enter into military alliance nor will they allow establishment of military bases in their soil directed against Nepal.³

Till the formulation of this definition two main arguments that were advanced in support of the peace zone were first (without legally becoming neutral) Nepal does not intend to take sides in any regional conflict, and secondly, the establishment of a peace zone would ensure political stability and economic progress. This implied keeping equidistance from India and China, and refuting Nepal's strategic importance to India. The Mustang region of Nepal which extends to the Northern slopes of the Himalayas was cited to link Nepal to the trans-Himalayan region. The King's visit to China and establishing airlinks with that country was followed by repeated statements to give the impression of equidistance from China and India.⁴

³ For details see Bishwa Pradhan, Nepal a Peace Zone (New Delhi, 1982).

During the reign of King Mahendra efforts were made to achieve this objective. Initially there was reorganisation of the Indian Military Mission and Advisory Group and finally they were withdrawn in 1970. A request was also made to withdraw the Indian intelligence posts in Nepal. Demands were made to abrogate the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950.\(^5\)

The genesis of the peace zone proposal lay in a host of factors which can be attributed to both domestic perception and external developments.\(^4\)

**EVOLUTION OF THE PEACE ZONE WITHIN THE KINGDOM**

The ruling elite of Nepal disapproved of their country's mutual security arrangements with India under the 1950 Treaty. Their main grievance was that the treaty was concluded while the Ranas were in power and as such it did not reflect the aspirations of the new nationalist government in Nepal. Under the Article 2 of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship which was concluded between India and Nepal on 31 July 1950,\(^6\) and the letters of exchange, both India and Nepal undertook, "to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighbouring state likely to cause any breach in the friendly relations subsisting between the two government."\(^7\) The letters exchanged alongwith the Treaty further stipulated:

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\(^5\) ibid, p. 783.


Neither Government shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor. To deal with any such threat, the two Governments shall consult with each other and devise effective counter measures.

King Tribhuvan's regime was marked by India's "special relations" with Nepal. However, the popular enthusiasm towards India proved to be transient and it soon gave way to protests allegedly due to India's interference in Nepal's internal affairs. The protests gradually crystallized into widespread anti-Indian sentiments. In 1955, King Mahendra came to the throne and the new assertive monarch sought to modify his country's "special relations" with India in favour of "equal friendship" with all countries; and as a first step, Nepal forged diplomatic links with China. Nepal maintained a strict neutrality in the Sino-Indian border conflict of 1962 and refrained from extending any support to India. King Mahendra made every effort to diversify the kingdom's trade and economic relations.

In the year 1969, the Nepalese Prime Minister, Kritinidhi Bista, openly questioned the validity of such provisions of the 1950 Treaty as those relating to mutual consultations between

8 The letter remained secret until Nehru disclosed it in course of his speech in Rajya Sabha in 1959. See Jawaharlal Nehru, India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961 (Delhi, 1961), p. 374.


10 Gorkhapatra (Kathmandu), 25 April 1964.
the two countries in security matters. On 22 November, 1977, four prominent political leaders belonging to different outlawed parties, namely S.P. Upadhyaya former Home Minister, T.P. Acharya, former Prime Minister, D.R. Regmi, former Foreign Minister and K.J. Rayamajhi, Secretary of the banned Communist Party of Nepal, came out with a joint statement demanding the scrapping it. They termed the prevailing arrangement for recruiting Nepalese citizens for the Indian and British armies as a "national disgrace" and demanded the closure of the recruiting centres.

Nepal's desire to assert its independence and identity was a long term policy but the immediate reason that forced the pace and the intensity of the demand for a peace zone was that, within the country a strong challenge was posed by the Nepali Congress to the throne and the partyless Panchayat system. Further, the spate of violent activities and protests, the attack on Haripur Police Station in Nepal Terai in August 1972; the hijacking of the RNAC plane, in June 1973 and the looting of 30 lakhs by the activists of the Nepali Congress; a major fire that destroyed large parts of the famous Sigha Durbar (Central Secretariat Building) in Kathmandu rattled the Nepali authorities. Moreover, B.P. Koirala's call for armed revolution


12 Hindustan-Times (New Delhi), 23 November 1977; See also, Times of India (New Delhi), 14 January 1981.
in 1975 to restore democracy further increased the anxiety of the King.\(^{13}\)

The King foresaw a possibility of Indian backing to the Nepali Congress in its revolt against the monarchy, even while the Government of India, in deference to the King's fears, had restricted the movement of leaders of the Nepali Congress along India's border with Nepal. King Birendra was further assured explicitly, during his visit to India in October 1973, that 'no hostile activities' would be allowed against his regime from the India soil.\(^{14}\)

EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS

The first half of 1970s saw significant changes in the pattern of power equation among the countries of the region - a development which, the King of Nepal felt, had a direct bearing on the security of the kingdom. The events leading to the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971, the dismemberment of Pakistan and emergence of a new nation- Bangladesh, shattered the continuing quest for parity of power and military strength between India and Pakistan. India established herself as a dominant power in South Asia. India's role in the liberation war of Bangladesh was critically reviewed by a section of the Nepalese press. The Himali Bela regarded it as - "a serious development which does


\(^{14}\) Muni, n.4, p. 785.
not augur well for small countries such as Nepal". The Nava Yug Weekly even went further to condemn "Indian expansionism" and accused India of harbouring evil designs, on the pretext of assisting the Mukti Bahini (the freedom fighters of Bangladesh). The mass revolt against the military regime which was actively supported by India caused considerable apprehension in the King's mind with regard to the survival of Monarchy in Nepal.

In the 1960s, despite cooling of relations between India and Nepal there was no apprehension of any real threat to Nepal's security from India. Following the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 Nepal drew strength from the assumption that China, in view of its assurance of support in case of any external aggression on Nepal, could be used as an effective counterbalance. Also the belief of apparent parity of military strength between the two principal powers of the region - India and Pakistan had contributed, in no small measure to Nepal's security. However, the decisive victory of India over Pakistan in the Indo-Pak War of 1971 left these two assumptions gravely shattered. China's helplessness to come to the aid of its Pakistani ally and save the latter from dismemberment adequately proved that the military capability of the People's

15 Himali Bela (Kathamandu), 9 December 1971.
16 Nava Yug Weekly (Kathamandu), 17 December 1971.
Republic of China to the south of the Himalayas was limited. These events undoubtedly brought about a sea change in the security perception of the land-locked Himalayan kingdom. As a result of their perceived fear of India, and the desire to be free from the periodical ups and downs in relations between its two giant neighbours, seems to have prompted Nepal to ensure that through the recognition of the proposition of peace zone their independence and sovereignty would be protected for all times to come.

Some other developments in the Indian sub-continent which consolidated India's position as the major regional power only accentuated the Nepalese apprehensions. The two most notable developments were the peaceful nuclear test explosion conducted by India on 18 May, 1974 and the agitation in Sikkim in the same year leading to its integration with India in 1975. Though the official circles in Nepal refrained from reacting adversely to India's successful nuclear test explosion, many voices of concern were expressed in the Nepalese press regarding the security of the kingdom. They also expected that Sikkim's merger with India would anger the Chinese, who claimed their suzerainty over Sikkim in the past, resulting in further Sino-Indian tensions. Nepal's reactions at the official level came to be known when its Foreign Minister, G.B. Karki made a statement in the Rashtriya Panchayat expressing his country's

18 See, Charcha Weekly (Kathmandu), 20 May 1974; Matripbhumi Weekly (Kathmandu), 21 May 1974; and Sahi Awaj (Kathmandhu), 24 July 1974.
protest against external interference in the affairs of any nation.\textsuperscript{19} The Indian action also came in for open criticism by some quarters of the Nepalese press for harbouring imperialist designs. The anti-Indian feelings in the kingdom reached a new high and massive demonstrations were organised in the capital to register protest and resentment.

The ruling elite of Nepal also became apprehensive that the developments in Sikkim leading to the victory of the democratic forces there, would undermine the partyless Panchayat System in Nepal. The active role of the banned Nepali Congress and its exiled leader B. P. Koirala in support of the Sikkim Congress in the elections to the Sikkim Assembly in 1974 was particularly disturbing to the ruling elite in Kathmandu.\textsuperscript{20} In this context, the origin of the peace zone proposition can be attributed to the desire of the Nepalese ruling elite to ward off any potential threat to the monarchical system by insulating their territory from outside influence.

CANVASSING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

The peace zone proposal was put forward by the King in the form of an appeal to all friendly countries to recognize Nepal's sincere desire for peace which springs from its strategic geopolitical location. King Birendra said that it was not, "prompted out of fear of threat from any quarter but rather inspired by nothing more than a desire to see that our freedom

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Rising Nepal, 4 September 1974.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Hindustan Times, 15 October 1974.
\end{itemize}
and independence shall not be thwarted by the changing flux of
time when understanding is replaced by misunderstanding, when
conciliation is replaced by belligerancy and war". 21

When King Birendra visited Yugoslavia in September 1975,
he told, "we can contribute to peace in our region in ensuring
that the soil of our country is not used to build up tensions or
in mounting hostilities against another country". He added that
this proposition would not only make Nepal a bulwark for peace
in the region, but it would also contribute to the prospects of
peace elsewhere in the world. 22

The Fifth Summit Conference of the Non-aligned countries
held in Colombo in 1976, offered an excellent opportunity to the
Nepalese foreign policy makers to give the widest possible
publicity to the peace zone idea. Addressing the Conference on
17 August 1976, King Birendra elaborated:

This proposition implies a desire, on our part, to
look for a permanence of our country's destiny. When
free from turmoil or turbulence, we can work out our
future in peace and freedom. For a country, placed
in a geopolitical situation that Nepal is, there is
nothing unnatural to harbour our desire for peace.
Nepal wants no situation either for the present or
in perpetuity, that gives room for tension, fear or
anxiety or instability .... Being a small landlocked
country we hardly can afford to waste our resources
.... Exigencies demand that we continue to intensify
our efforts at economic development. Hence the Zone
of Peace proposition, which in our view gives
substance to our faith in the principles of both the
United Nations and Non-alignment. 23

21 King Birendra, n. 2, p. 121.
22 ibid, p. 133.
23 ibid, pp. 164-65.
While speaking at the Nepal-Soviet Friendship Society in Moscow on 18 November 1976, during a state visit to the USSR, King Birendra expressed satisfaction over the external reaction to and the appreciation for his peace zone proposition and said:

In ensuring on a reciprocal basis that the territory of one country is not used for conflict against another country which is what my Zone of Peace proposal aims at for Nepal, we are reducing to a degree the possible areas of tension and brightening in the same measure the prospect of peace. We assure all countries that our initiations have been conceived not in the context of rivalry or power politics but rather from our urge to maintain our sovereign identity in a framework of peace that is durable and that does not fluctuate with the degree of relationship among nations outside our frontiers.24

At Havana while addressing the Sixth Conference of the Heads of States and Governments of the Non-aligned countries, King Birendra again explained the rationale and justification of his peace zone proposal. "Institutionalizing peace", he reiterated, "for a small developing country like Nepal nothing is more natural than a deeprooted aspiration for peace and development".25 In his address to the Seventh Summit Conference of the Non-aligned countries held in New Delhi on 8 March 1983, King Birendra in a precisely worded reference to the peace zone proposition stated:

24 ibid, pp. 174-75.
In any age, when the culture of army is threatening the very survival of man, the foundation of peace can be laid step by step, brick by brick. This consideration has prompted us to welcome and support the initiatives to have different parts of the world established as Zones of Peace. It was along this road that we proposed Nepal to be declared a 'Zone of Peace'.

King Birendra, during his state visit to USA in December 1983, made a serious attempt to explain the relevance of the peace zone concept. The King said:

In a region of the world which has seen several wars, no cause would be more sane than to institutionalise peace. This is what my proposal of Nepal as a zone of peace aims, at Nepal's zone of peace proposal would essentially be non-alignment, non-aggression, peaceful settlement of disputes and peaceful economic and social development for the cause of peace and justice. As we have conceived it, the Zone of Peace proposal does not fall into any such obvious precedents as neutralization, demilitarization, mutual defence system, or a regional peace-keeping system. We think that this proposal adds up to something distinct from all such precedents. What it implies in the final analysis is that the creation of a status which is possessed by an individual State is given legal force by its recognition by other States.

When the proposal was first enunciated, the Motherland, an English language daily, made a discreet reference to the nature of the concept of a peace zone by characterising it as the, "often expressed but never seriously taken idea of making Nepal a Switzerland of the East". Nepal, owing to its peculiar geopolitical setting, state of economic development and

26 Nepal News (New Delhi), 15 March 1983.
27 Statesman (New Delhi), 10 December 1983.
28 Cited in, Indian Express (New Delhi), 28 August 1975.
differing historical antecedents, cannot be placed on an equal footing with Switzerland and this rules out the possibility of Nepal following the Swiss model of neutrality. In an attempt to dispel the doubts and misconceptions of this sort, the former Prime Minister, Tulsi Giri in an interview to the French News Agency (Agence France Presse) in January 1976, categorically stated:

Nepal's zone of peace would not mean neutrality. As an original and active member of the Non-aligned community, Nepal has never expressed its desire to transform herself into the status of neutrality or to remain in isolation extricating itself from the events around the world. Why we are not neutral or for that matter, why we are not in favour of a neutralist policy can well be deduced from the statement of his Majesty delivered at the Algiers Non-aligned Summit which makes clear that "prospects for peace are brightened and become greater when conditions exist which allow every country of the world to take an independent stand on issues of concern and participate on the basis of full equality in all international decisions which have global bearing."

He indicated that Nepal sought a substantial and precisely worded peace and friendship treaty recognising Nepal as a Zone of Peace.

NEPALESE PERCEPTION OF THE PEACE ZONE

King Birendra's peace zone proposal received more or less uncritical support within the country. According to the former Prime Minister and a prominent leader of the Panchayat System, M.P. Koirala, the zone of peace proposal reflects the desire of

desire of the Nepalese people to build the country with a stable economy under a condition of peace.\textsuperscript{30} The former Prime Minister, Tulsi Giri claims that the proposal assumes added significance in the present context of international tension reaching Nepal's doorsteps.\textsuperscript{31} Pashupathi Shumshere J.B. Rana, a noted economist, described the zone of peace as, "the acme of our aspirations for peace".\textsuperscript{32}

Shailendra Kumar Upadhyaya, Nepal's former Permanent Representative to the United Nations, justified Nepal's peace zone proposal and stated that:

At time acts of naked aggression have been committed against small powers. The small powers could not defend themselves by means of acquisitions of military hardware because because they could never compete with medium and big powers. So the only answer to the security of small nations is a proposal like this (The Zone of Peace).\textsuperscript{33}

The Peace Zone proposal, nevertheless, did arouse suspicion and strong criticism from some political parties and leaders who were opposed to the Monarchy and the party less Panchayat system. The official formulation aroused adverse
comments in a section of the local press. The Jana Jagriti Weekly (10 January, 1982) wrote:

The formulation appears to be based largely on the principles of Panchasheela, but a close scrutiny would reveal that its main objective is to control internal politics. This proposal must be regarded as wholly restrictive in scope if it can be used as an instrument to suppress the opponents of the Panchayat System. If this is so, the countries now refusing to accept the peace zone proposal gainst broad public support rather than incur hostility. Only when the peace zone proposal gains broad public support will it be difficult for any country to refuse to accept it.

According to the official formulation, Nepal will not allow its territory to be used for political and military operations against any country accepting the proposal nor will any such country let its territory be used for hostile activities against Nepal. It is not clear whether this means that regime should be denied the right to engage in political activities safely in any country accepting the peace zone proposal. That the government itself is not clear as to what it means is obvious also from the fact that it recently released five Khampas who had been sentenced to life imprisonment on the charge of having used Nepali territory for subversive activities against China, one of the countries accepting the Peace Zone proposal; allowed the Dalai Lama to visit Lumbini and make a political speech there; and released consignments of Soviet espionage equipment meant for installation within Nepali territory.34

The Jana Jagriti Weekly pointed out two contradictions in the official stand on the peace zone proposal. It wrote:

In as much as all existing treaties and agreements will be retained, the possibility of revising even unequal treaties is completely ruled out. Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa's view that the peace zone proposal and the 1950 Nepal-India Peace and Friendship Treaty - which must be considered an unequal treaty and therefore no longer relevant, are

34 Nepal Press Digest (Kathmandu), 11 January 1982.
not mutually exclusive, adds to our mis-givings about the proposal. If such a treaty is to remain valid even in the present circumstances, India will naturally question the need for declaring Nepal a peace zone. Another contradiction is the presence of foreign military recruitment centres in Nepal. The tripartite agreement between Nepal-India and Britain regarding military recruitment in Nepal is still in force, and foreign military personnel have been staying in Nepal in the name of such centres. How can a nation call itself a peace zone when it is tied to a sort of military pact with foreign countries.35

In an article published in the Charcha Weekly on 11 January 1992, a commentator dubbed the peace zone proposal as,

a reactionary conspiracy aimed at denying the people's rights and suppressing the people's resolution. ...we have no use for the hypocrisy of a peace zone where the people cannot launch a struggle against the reactionary rulers and their agents, bureaucrats, capitalists and feudal forces...36

The Nepal Congress (O) leader Ganesh Man Singh said that,

The objective of the peace zone proposal may be good, but the people will think that it will be used only to sustain the undemocratic regime so long as they have to follow the line laid by the rulers. Indeed, people seem to be withholding support for the peace zone proposal because they apprehend that it is being used as a means to mobilize external support for suppressing their voice. We are now facing problems because the proposal was presented without preparing the necessary background.37

The former Prime Minister and leader of the banned Nepali Congress, the late B.P. Koirala, who questioned the rationale proposal saying that it looked as if not enough homework had

35 ibid.
36 ibid.
been done by its sponsors before its formal enunciation. However, in later years, a change in Koirala's stand was discernible. In a written statement to the special issue of the Weekly Mirror on "Nepal's Peace Zone Proposal", Koirala expressed the view:

In the context of global tension the small nations of the world have become extremely sensitive on the question of their independence and sovereignty. Concern for the safeguarding of their national integrity is the first item on their national agenda. The big power rivalry and the resultant tensions have specifically affected South Asia in recent years. The nations in this region have been subjected to upheavals and become centres of instability through international machinations. Nepal is acutely conscious of this dangerous international machination? We must understand this background when His Majesty announced the peace zone proposal. This proposal therefore reflects the sensitive state of national independence and primary concern of Nepal to safeguard it".39

Koirala had come round to the dominant view in the kingdom on the peace zone proposition and about six months before his death, in a statement to Rashtriya Samachar Samiti, he had stated that the peace zone proposal of the king, had been basically aimed at safeguarding nationalism, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Nepal.40

Kesher Jung Raymajhi a prominent leftist leader, felt that:

The geopolitical situation of country makes the proposal relevant and significant. It is a

38 Yoban (Youth Digest) Paush-Chaitra, 2037, B.S., p. 95.
39 Weekly Mirror, n. 32, p. 85.
40 Nepal Press Digest (Kathmandu), 4 January 1982.
contribution to strengthen peace in the region and will benefit the neighbouring countries as they will not feel the necessity of stationing troops etc., in the bordering Nepal.41

The Rashtriya Panchayat on 8 September, 1981 unanimously adopted a resolution urging the government to spare no efforts to win the support of all the friendly countries and to mobilise world opinion in favour of the king's proposition to have Nepal declared a Zone of Peace.

The peace zone idea was well-received in the domestic press and several newspapers wrote editorials welcoming King Birendra's proposal that Nepal be declared a Zone of Peace.42 Describing the proposal as "bold", The Motherland, on 27th February 1975 commented in its editorial.

The ideal of making Nepal a Switzerland of the East has been talked about frequently but has never been seriously considered. The Royal proposal is inspired by the firm conviction that Nepal cannot forge ahead without peace. At this juncture, we require singleminded concentration on development. This is not possible if distraction in the form of big-power politics make their appearance in Nepal.43

The Nepal Times, putting the proposal in its proper perspective, maintained that His Majesty had not made this proposal,

...in order that Nepal may become the Switzerland of the East, for in that case Nepal will have to give up voluntarily its obligations to national and international security, and replace its policy of non-alignment by one of the neutrality.44

41 ibid, p. 86.
42 ibid, 3 March 1975.
43 ibid.
44 ibid.
This pronouncements of King Birendra and other advocates of the peace zone proposal reveal that the following assumptions have gone into the formulation of the peace proposal:

1. The creation of a Zone of Peace is a geo-political necessity due to Nepal's size and location.

2. A Zone of Peace may be a better safeguard where non-alignment fails to promote security in view of the superpowers and great power intervention.

3. Establishing a peace zone can ameliorate regional tensions and create an atmosphere for uninterrupted economic development.

4. It would help Nepal to play a more vigorous and active role in international affairs.

5. By maintaining a political equidistance from its two great neighbours, it would satisfy the urges and aspirations of the nascent Nepali nationalism.

6. Through a formal declaration of peace zone for Nepal it wants a formal guarantee from the two big neighbours that the kingdom's continued sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity would be respected for all time to come.45

The peace zone proposition was also incorporated by the Third Amendment to the Nepalese Constitution on 14 December, 1980, in Chapter IV, Article 19(6) as one of the Directive

Principles of State Policy. It states that the Panchayat System will strive to achieve the objective of getting Nepal declared a Zone of Peace, "based on the ideals of the United Nations and the principles of non-alignment". The incorporation of the King's proposal in the fundamental law of the land is seen as a pre-emptive move to place the proposal beyond the scope and ambit of public discussion and controversy. It betrays the determined effort of the king and his foreign policy advisers to enlist the support of as many countries as possible and exert subtle pressure on those countries whose endorsement is essential to make the proposal a meaningful exercise (like India).

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Nepal has been relentlessly trying to secure the support of the maximum number of countries with whom it has diplomatic relations. The Soviet Union initially supported the King's proposal on 20 July, 1975 and the Soviet Ambassador to Nepal K.B. Udumyan declared:

The Soviet people heartily acclaim the policy of positive neutrality being followed by Nepal. They strongly support Nepal's policy of peace, and of opposition to imperialism, and neo-colonialism. His Majesty's proposition that Nepal be declared a zone of peace is very similar to the Soviet proposal of an Asian Collective Security System.

47 Das, n. 45, p. 132; See also, Nepal Press Digest, March 1975.
48 Samiksha Weekly (Kathmandu), 25 July 1975.
However, his equating Nepal's Peace Zone proposal with the Soviet Asian Collective Security proposal invited strong criticism in the Nepalese press. In an attempt to distinguish between the two proposals, the Arati Weekly wrote:

His Majesty put forward the proposition in the belief that it will help Nepal to steer clear of regional disputes and achieve rapid economic progress, and not because he apprehended a threat of aggression from any quarter. On the other hand, the Soviet proposal is aimed at enabling Asian nations to defend themselves against aggression by a certain Asian power. Because of its geo-political situation, Nepal can not accept the Soviet proposal. In fact, it will not be in Nepal's national interest to do so. At the same time Nepal has not expressed any negative reaction to the Soviet proposal.49

The Soviet interest in the King's proposal declined considerably and lost its relevance when U.S.S.R. interpreted the initial support merely as its endorsement of Nepal's policy of positive non-alignment and of the King's desire not to allow Nepal to be an areas of tension and a centre for hostilities against other countries.50

This change of attitude, was viewed as an attempt to tie the king's proposal to the oft-repeated Soviet demand that the allegedly anti-Soviet and anti-Indian propaganda conducted by the embassies of China and Pakistan in Nepal should cease.51

49 Arati Weekly (Kathmandu), 31 July 1975.
50 Gorkhapatra, (Kathmandu), 5 March 1976; Also see Rishikesh Shaha, Essays in the Practice of Government in Nepal (New Delhi, 1982), p. 212.
51 Rishikesh Shaha, Nepal Politics: Retrospect and Prospect (Delhi, 1978), p. 163.
In an attempt to shed further light on Nepal's proposal, King Birendra, in the course of his address to the Soviet-Nepal Friendship Society in Moscow on 18 November, 1976, said:

We believe that peace is the most important factor for the progress of man in every society. From this perspective, we have welcomed the active efforts made to create peace zones in different parts of the world. I am pleased that our proposal to declare Nepal a zone of peace is being understood by a growing number of countries.52

However, despite repeated references to the peace zone proposal, King Birendra could not break the ice and the joint communique which was issued on 22 November, 1976 at the end of the King's visit was conspicuously silent on the peace zone question.

Again, in December 1981, when V.V. Kuznetsov the then first Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was on an official visit to the Kingdom, the peace zone proposition was reportedly discussed between the Nepalese Prime Minister and the visiting Soviet dignitary. However, Kuznetsov did not go beyond the assurance that the proposal would remain under official consideration.53

The other superpower, the United States was among the early supporters of Nepal's move for establishing peace in the region, but refrained from giving formal recognition to the

52 Gorkhapatra, 19 November 1976 and Himali_Bela (Kathmandu), 24 November 1976.

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proposal initially. Charles Percy, who had visited Nepal as a
member of the United States Official delegation to the
coronation of King Birendra told the Senator on 17 March 1975,
that Nepal had impressed upon them the determination to preserve
its independence and sovereignty, and to make progress towards
overcoming its challenging development problems. He further
informed that the US delegation stressed the United States'
continuing interests in good relations with Nepal and assured
King Birendra that the primary interest of the USA in South Asia
was peace and stability. 54 US Special Envoy, Ambassador Vernon
A. Walters said: "My country supports peace in general.
However, endorsement of Nepal's proposal by the countries in the
area is essential before the US considers or reviews its outlook
on it". 55 During King Birendra's visit to the United States in
December 1983, President Ronald Reagan said that the USA
supported the objectives of the proposal and "We endorse it".
However, he urged Nepal to work closely with neighbours to make
the zone of peace a reality. 56

The noteworthy aspects of the Reagan Administration's
stand are first, that US support for the peace zone would help
Nepal in not diverting its scarce resources for defence purposes
and secondly that Nepal should work closely with her neighbours
to make the proposal a reality. However, Nepal has interpreted
this more in terms of political stability for economic progress

55 Rising Nepal, 4 April 1982.
56 The Telegraph (Calcutta), 9 December 1983.
rather than channelising funds for developmental purposes. Moreover, the US support is reciprocal to Nepalese gestures like support to US policy in the United Nations on Afghanistan and Kampuchea. Nepal's friendly ties with Israel has also been appreciated by USA.57

President Mitterand extended the French support to Nepal's peace zone proposal during his visit to Nepal in May 1983. His gesture was not unqualified as the French Ambassador later explained that the precise nature of support of the French stand would be declared only after consulting the legal and political advisors. Britain also gave her token support to the proposal, advising Nepal to obtain the neighbouring countries' backing to its idea in order to make it workable.58

In the neighbourhood, Pakistan not only welcomed King Birendra's peace proposal, but also pledged unequivocal support for its implementation. The objective was clearly to neutralise Indian influence in the Himalayan Kingdom. In an interview to the New Herald, at Lahore on 11 March 1975, Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto said:

Pakistan welcomes His Majesty King Birendra's proposition that Nepal be declared a zone of peace. We have ourselves initiated certain proposals on the same line. We welcome any other proposal made by a friendly country and a friendly sovereign like His Majesty King Birendra.59

57 Muni, n. 4, p. 788
58 ibid.
59 Nepal Press Digest, 24 March 1975; Also see, Shah, n.43, p.212.
The Sino-US rapprochement of the early 1970s coincided with the Nepalese peace zone development. The withdrawal of US support to the Khampa armed operations against the Tibet region of China removed a major irritant in the Sino-Nepalese relations and further facilitated Chinese support to the peace zone proposal.60

China's positive response and strong support to Nepal's peace zone proposal came as early as May 1976. The former Prime Minister, Hua Guofeng of China, speaking at an official banquet given in honour of the visiting Pakistani Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on 26 May 1976 remarked: "We firmly support the just stand taken by His Majesty the King of Nepal in declaring Nepal a zone of peace. We are ready to assume appropriate commitments arising therefrom".61 The joint communique released on 30 May 1976, at the end of the then Pakistani Prime Minister's five-day visit declared that China and Pakistan firmly supported His Majesty King Birendra's proposal to have Nepal declared 'Zone of Peace'.62 This early and unequivocal support to the Nepalese proposal by China and Pakistan, the two powers being India's adversaries and competitors in the region is quite understandable. The Chinese support was reiterated during King Birendra's visit to Szechuan.

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60 Muni, n.4, p. 786; Also see the article published in Peking Daily on 1 August, 1975 entitled 'Twenty Years of Friendship and Cooperation Between China and Nepal" which was quoted in Rising Nepal, 2 August 1975.

61 New China News Agency (Beijing), 26 May 1976.

province of China the same year. Later addressing the UN General Assembly in October 1976, the former Chinese Foreign Minister, Chiao Kuanhua declared that his country strongly supported the proposition that Nepal be declared a zone of peace. Deng Xiaoping, the former first Vice-Premier of China, during his visit to Nepal in February 1978, made a similar assertion of China's support to the Nepalese peace zone proposal and pledged China's readiness to assume appropriate commitments arising therefrom. The Chinese Prime Minister Zhao Ziang renewed his support to the Nepalese proposal during his visit to the Himalayan Kingdom in June 1981.

Bangladesh first welcomed the zone of peace proposal when the former President late Ziaur Rehman visited Nepal in December 1977. A joint communique issued at the end of the visit said that the Bangladesh President welcomed the Nepalese proposal as a 'laudable move' towards peace and stability in the region. In a joint communique issued at the end of a state visit by King Birendra and Queen Aiswarya to Bangladesh a month later said: "The two Heads of State agreed that such declarations would be beneficial politically and economically for the region."

Later President Ershad visited Kathmandu on 10 November 1982 where he declared "Bangladesh has supported the cause that

63 New China News Agency, n. 54.
64 Asian Recorder (New Delhi), 12-18 March 1978, p. 14217.
65 Rising Nepal, 5 June 1981.
66 Asian Recorder, n. 64, p. 14219.
the entire region of South Asia should be an area of peace, and we have specifically supported the UN resolution on the declaration of the Indian Ocean and denuclearization of South Asia. Bangladesh also firmly supports His Majesty's proposal for declaring Nepal a zone of peace.68

_Sri Lanka_ supported the Zone of Peace proposal in February 1980. A joint communique released after the state visit of King Birendra to Sri Lanka said:

The President of Sri Lanka supported the concept of zones of peace in all parts of the world including Nepal, and that in this context the proposal of His Majesty the King that Nepal be declared a Zone of Peace is a valuable contribution in this concept.69

It cannot be ruled out that certain countries with their vested interests in mind exploited the King's apprehensions vis-à-vis India and prompted him to go ahead with the Zone of Peace proposal. China, Pakistan and USA may be specially mentioned here. China and Pakistan have always encouraged Nepal to weaken its dependence upon and security relations with India. The Zone of Peace eminently suited their objectives in the context of regional politics in the subcontinent. Furthermore,

... the US was equally interested in 'restraining India' in the subcontinent in the aftermath of the emergence of Bangladesh. If there was any hesitation it was removed following India's peaceful nuclear explosion of May 1974 and thereafter, the integration of Sikkim with India as an associate

68 Rising Nepal (Kathmandu), 11 November 1982.
69 Rising Nepal, 28 February 1980.
state. In the wake of the developments in Sikkim the US connections with the Chogyal through his American wife and the CIA activities in the subcontinent had come under strong criticism in India which continued through the 1975-76 emergency period. It was in the background of these developments that Pakistan was encouraged to initiate and pursue the proposal of South Asia as a nuclear weapon-free zone. Another zone of peace proposal in the region such as that of Nepal was bound to embarass India in its pursuit of the proposal of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.70

The growing interest shown by the international community in King Birendra's proposal could also be attributed to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in late 1979. The Nepalese claim was that the highly alarming interventionist and destabilizing policies of one of the superpowers leading to the events in Afghanistan had vindicated the rationale of the peace zone proposal. In this context the remarks of King Birendra, while addressing a press conference in Paris in September 1981, that Nepal, if necessary, would take up the issue at the United Nations to secure further support, assumes relevance.71 However, the fact remains that howsoever wide the support of the international community may be, Nepal's peace zone proposal cannot really take off without the formal support of the Indian Government. In fact, the endorsement of the proposal by the

70 Muni, n.4, p. 7.
71 Rising Nepal, 6 September 1981.
immediate neighbours is vital before it can formally be brought before the United Nations.

INDIA'S RESPONSE TO NEPAL'S PEACE ZONE PROPOSAL

The official Indian response to the Nepalese proposal has been one of non-commitment. India's explanation for the non-endorsement of this proposal is that since Nepal already had peace and friendship treaties with both of its giant neighbours (with India in 1930 and China in 1960) ensuring its security, the Himalayan kingdom, in effect, is already a zone of peace and it is difficult to comprehend from which quarter Nepal perceived a threat to its security.

The initial hesitation on the part of India to react to the King's proposal was owing to the lack of clarity. Any declaration of this nature affecting the existing pattern of relationships in the region and Nepal's international status must be backed by explanations regarding the practical consequences and implications of the proposal before a general endorsement is sought. It is interesting to note that the ambiguous and general nature of the proposal suited the needs of some countries who viewed it from their own standpoint. The Soviet Union has appreciated the proposition in the context of its Asian Collective Security proposal. The Nepal-Soviet Friendship Association held a function on 20 July 1975, to celebrate the 19th Anniversary of the establishment of

diplomatic relations between Nepal and Soviet Union. Addressing the function, Ambassador Dr. K.B. Udamyan declared, ".... His Majesty's proposition that Nepal be declared a zone of peace is very similar to the Soviet proposal for an Asian Collective System". Similarly, Pakistan has linked it with its own proposal for the declaration of South Asia as a nuclear-free zone. The Rashtra Pukar Weekly wrote on 1 May 1975 that,

...our Government has not put forward an authoritative definition of His Majesty's proposition that Nepal be declared a zone of peace; hence different nations are supporting that proposition in keeping with their own interests. For instance, the USSR has linked it with the proposal for collective security in Asia, and Pakistan and China with the declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, and of South Asia as a nuclear-free zone. Why does not our government clarify its stand on this question?

Against such a background, India's reaction needs analysis and understanding.

It is clear that the proposal is directed against India to the extent that through this proposal Nepal wants to underplay its age-old political, economic and socio-cultural ties. As noted earlier it is not surprising that India's adversaries in the region like China and Pakistan were among the first to support the Nepalese proposal. The first occasion when the

73 Unlike China, "The Soviet Union has supported the proposition in the context of its Asian Security Proposal" while "Pakistan has supported the proposition in the context of its relations with India". Quoted in Janahita Weekly (Kathmandu), 15 November 1975.

74 Nepal Press Digest, 5 May 1975.
issue was taken up for discussion at the bilateral level was during the visit of late Y.B. Chavan the former External Affairs Minister, to Nepal in January 1976. Speaking at a dinner the then Nepalese Foreign Minister, emphasized the need for peace and stability for the development of his country and suggested that Indo-Nepalese relations, "should be based on current realities". The visiting Indian External Affairs Minister refrained from making any commitment to support the Nepalese proposition. On 18 February 1976, in an address to the Nepal Council of World Affairs, Tulsi Giri, the then Prime Minister of Nepal in an attempt to explain the rationale and justification of the proposal stated:

"because our country is of geopolitical importance to the surrounding nations, we offer that Nepal be a sphere of abstention from rivalry of other nations, so that peace in our vicinity may be of equal importance to others."

As a rejoinder to Tulsi Giri's remarks, Times of India commented on the 'Zone of Peace' and expressed the view that "Dr. Giri's elaboration ignores the very geographical realities which according to him, account for the proposal". It underlined India's special position, especially its security interest, in Nepal on the ground of geographical proximity of the Kingdom to India. Throwing light on Tulsi Giri's clarification, the official daily, Rising Nepal commented in its editorial that

75 Gorkhapatra, 20 January 1976.
76 Ibid., 20 February 1976.
77 Times of India, 21 February 1976.
India should view Nepal's desire to be declared a zone of peace in the same perspective as it believes that world peace could be made more durable by making the Indian Ocean free from big power rivalry. Subsequently, during his own visit to India, while speaking at a banquet held by the Indian Prime Minister in his honour on 7 April 1976, Giri further explained, "Our proposal of peace for Nepal is based on the twin pillars of peace and development an objective which is both fundamental and the need of the hour". However, his failure to convince the Indian leaders became evident from his statement that some misunderstanding about the peace zone proposition had crept in. Indira Gandhi, he said, did not accept the plan on the ground that Indo-Nepalese relations could not be equated with Sino-Nepalese relations.

The coming to power of the Janata Party in India did not bring about any fundamental change in the basic tenets of India's foreign policy. During his visit to Nepal in July 1977, the new External Affairs Minister of India reminded the Nepal of India's special interest in her and expressed the hope that "Nepal understands our concern and the unexceptionable objectives of India's foreign policy". Vajpayee attempted to nullify Nepal's proposal for a Zone of Peace by putting forth a

79 Ibid, 8 April 1976.
80 *Indian Express* (New Delhi), 8 April 1976.
81 *Foreign Affairs Record* (New Delhi), vol. 27 July 1977, p. 129; Also see *Times of India*, 16 July 1977.
counter-proposal that "the entire subcontinent should be an area of peace." 82

In an interview with a Japanese newspaper before his visit to Nepal, the then Prime Minister, Morarji Desai had observed, "We have a treaty between us (India and Nepal) and there is no question of Nepal being in danger from us". 83 Nevertheless, the Janata Government's attempt to restore the relations between India and Nepal to one of "trustful friendship" and its compliance with Kathmandu's long-standing demand for separate treaties on trade and transit softened the attitude of Nepal. These gestures of the then Prime Minister Desai, however, created an impression that he was willing to consider Kathmandu's peace zone proposal. As a result, when the then Nepalese prime Minister Kirthinidhi Bista paid a ten-day official visit of India in April 1978, he did not insist on India's recognition of the Zone of Peace proposal in his talks with the Indian leaders.

The proposal was revived again in diplomatic parleys between Nepal and India following Indira Gandhi's return to power in January 1980. India's former External Affairs Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao visited Kathmandu in November 1981 and held wide-ranging talks with the Nepalese leaders. In December,

82 Foreign Affairs Record, ibid; Times of India, 27 July 1977.

soon after the External Affairs Minister's visit, President Sanjiva Reddy paid a three-day visit. The Nepalese Prime Minister reiterated his request for India's endorsement of the peace proposal in course of his talk with the Indian President, who was reportedly believed to have told his host that the proposal to declare Nepal as a Zone of Peace had to be seen in the light of the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the two countries as also the peace and amity which had prevailed between the two countries for the past 2,500 years or even larger. However, during the banquet given in his honour by King Birendra, President Reddy departed from the prepared text of his banquet speech and stated:

I had the pleasure of hearing from you and also from Prime Minister after arriving here, which I think needs a little time and understanding, and it takes greater a little more effort on the part of your Prime Minister to talk about this with our Prime Minister and the concerned Ministers in India.84

For the Nepalese side this little gesture was interpreted as a direct hint of a significant shift in New Delhi's attitude.

The next Indian move was an official request to Kathmandu for a concrete outline of the peace zone proposition, to which the Nepal responded with a specific seven-point plan. India felt that some aspects of the Seven point proposal were in conflict with the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the two countries and India's perception of security in the subcontinent. India had sought clarifications from Nepal on

84 Foreign Affairs Record, vol. 23, July 1987, p. 129.
both these controversial clauses and, India's External Affairs Minister informed the Lok Sabha on 11 March, 1982, that India was studying the proposal with a view to examining its "implications" and determining its response. The former Indian Prime Minister, late Srimati Indira Gandhi had again asked Nepal to clarify from which source it feared threat to its own peace and security.

Nepal's move has caused considerable concern to India specially on three major aspects. First India found it unacceptable that the king's policy of equidistance which was being sought to be achieved at the cost of even distorting the geopolitical reality. The security of the two countries was interwined to such an extent that neither country can wish that other way. Secondly, India was unable to comprehend what Nepal meant by taking the proposal to the United Nations and adding legal force to it. This would imply internationalising Nepal's bilateral relations with India. It would not only violate the established UN convention but may also invite external great power politics into the region. Thirdly, on the provision concerning 'hostile activities' India has expressed serious reservation. The provision was aimed precisely at ensuring political stability in Nepal. In the given context this meant stability of the Monarchy and the Panchayat system which was why

85 Lok Sabha Unstarred Question, no.2854, 11 March 1982, col. no. 144-46.
86 Muni, n. 4, p. 789.
the King had got the proposal incorporated into the Nepalese Constitution. 87

CONCLUSION

Any attempt to analyse the implications of the peace zone proposition cannot ignore the differing perceptions and motivations of India and Nepal regarding the vital question of security.

The divergence of views between the two countries regarding the peace zone proposition is a direct outcome of the differing geopolitical and security perceptions of Nepal and India. From the point of view of India's security, the Himalayan crest is considered to be an important geostrategic factor. Consequently, from the time when India's defence and foreign policies were being shaped by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru down to the present day, Nepal has been regarded as within the Indian security perimeter and India in its defence calculations considers Nepal as part of its security obligations. It is generally explained on geopolitical grounds that the presence of Indian troops in Nepal is not a threat to China but Chinese military presence in Nepal makes India highly vulnerable and gravely exposes the entire Indo-Gangetic plain due to the existence of a long and open border.

There is a strong feeling in India that the security interest of India cannot be sacrificed in the name of sovereign

87 ibid, pp. 789-90.
equality of nations. An eminent expert on defence studies warns that:

It must be made clear to our neighbours what kind of concessions they can legitimately expect from their big neighbour and what they cannot. Any proposal which jeopardises India's security should be clearly ruled out and Nepal's zone of peace and neutrality is one such proposal.88

King Birendra in course of an interview with an American news magazine maintained that, "Nepal is not a part of the subcontinent, it is really that part of Asia, which touches both China and India.89

However, an experienced diplomat, and a former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, Rishikesh Shah adopts a more realistic view when he explain that:

...the fact that some of Nepal's high Himalayan valleys lies beyond the main Himalayan crest and are enclosed between it and the Tibetan border mountains does not mean that Nepal has an equal degree of virtually, the entire population of Nepal lives in the south of the Himalayas, and the largest portion of nepal's gross national income comes from the low lying flat plains of the tarai which is, geographically speaking, part of the Indo-Gangetic plains.90

He further added that:

Nepal is bound by Indian territory on three sides and has no access to the sea except through India". Moreover, given the geographical realities, China will not be able to supply Nepal's needs 'as promptly and economically as India can'. Shah

oberves that the tradition of mutual understanding between Nepal and India on matters of security and defence, extending over a period of more than a century and a half, cannot be abandoned at will.91

Situated between the two most populous nations, which have contending regional and global interests, Nepal's desire to maintain its security and political stability through some sort of international guarantee is understandable. The Nepalese claim that the concept of Zone of Peace fits well in the emerging national ideology of concentrating on urgent developmental tasks without having resort to an expensive armament and militarisation programme. But the argument seems to lack credibility. Recent reports indicate that Nepal has procured huge amount of arms and ammunitions from China. These include anti-aircraft guns, medium ranges missiles, AK-49 rifles and military uniforms.

The Chinese have given away these arms at throwaway prices, this obviously is a carefully considered and politically inspired generosity on China's part. For Nepal, this deal is a step forward in its search for strategic diversification and distancing from India. While Nepal's right to buy arms from any source cannot be questioned, the Nepalese move is indeed in conflict with the spirit of Indo-Nepalese arrangements in the security field.92

India is already committed to Nepal's territorial integrity, independence, security and stability through the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship. With China, Nepal has also concluded a Treaty of Friendship based upon the five Principles of Peaceful

91 ibid.


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Co-existence. Hence naturally, the question arises, from which quarter does Nepal perceive threat to its security?

An argument advanced against the peace zone idea refers to the fact that at present no nation, least of all one of the world's least developed countries, can be immunized from the pressure of ideas and events in the neighbouring regions.

Rishikesh Shah argues:

The changing pattern of interrelationship between the South Asian countries, particularly fluctuations in the relations between India and China, will no doubt affect Nepal in the future as in the past. While Nepal cannot be insulated from the effect of the state of relations between its neighbours, empty declarations of peaceful intent and purpose, and treaties of permanent neutrality are not a substitute for diplomacy. Nepal's purpose will be served by continuing to regulate its dealings with its giant neighbours on a pragmatic basis rather than by seeking to institutionalize a procedure based on an entirely theoretical concept. It is neither diplomatic nor politic for public officials to arbitrarily define their nation's ties to immediate neighbours whose goodwill they need in all circumstances.93

In support of his contention he cites that Nepal could successfully avoid involvement in the regional armed conflicts of 1962, 1965 and 1971 without being recognised as a Zone of Peace relying mostly on its diplomatic skill.

In any case, the realisation of Nepal's peace zone plan is likely to have some far-reaching implications. It involves some basic alterations and adjustments in mutual obligations and understandings. Though the Government of India has not

93 Shah, n. 80, p. 220.
officially rejected the proposal, its continued silence indicates that India has reservations against the proposal to declare Nepal as a Zone of Peace. The Indian stances have been succinctly described by Leo E-Rose and John T. Scholz:

And the Indian position on this issue was made perfectly clear by both the Indira Gandhi and the Morarji Desai Governments - namely, that New Delhi will not buy it in any form, shape, or definition. The usual Indian approach is to blithely dismiss the proposal that Nepal be declared a zone of peace by stating that it is India's objective to have the whole of South Asia - or sometimes Asia or the world - declared a zone of peace. This amounts to a rejection of the proposal.94

The Indian apprehensions as we identified earlier, centre round the following two motivations behind the Nepalese peace zone proposal. First, the proposal is interpreted as a subtle means to immunize the kingdom through some sort of international guarantee in order to preclude any possible adverse external reaction to the attempt of perpetuating the partyless Panchayat System. Second, the present Zone of Peace proposal is presumably intended to implicitly repudiate the 1950 Treaty in order to maintain, rather apparently, an equidistance between the two powerful neighbours. This is substantiated by a recent unilateral attempt made by Nepal to alter the status of the open border with India mentioned in the 1950 Treaty. Nepal's official draft Sixth Plan for 1980-85 released in late 1980 included allocations for scientific and rational regulations of the international open border with India. According to the

Nepalese interpretation, however,

The treaty envisages Indo-Nepalese joint action on Indian soil alone and does not obliges Nepal to accept Indian troops on its soil. All the same, officials show considerable anxiety over the Indian suggestion that geography makes Nepal irrelevant to Chinese security but that India's defence against China cannot be secured as Nepal's southern border in the Gangetic plains and will have to be met along the Himalayan mountain passes within Nepal.95

In fact, Nepal's intention to develop and maintain its own political system without any interference from outside has been already provided for in the Panchsheel to which India is firmly committed and what is more, it has observed the principle of non-interference in Nepal's internal affairs scrupulously since the establishment of the Panchayat System in 1962.

On the question of 'hostile activities', experience shows that both India and Nepal have scrupulously observed the principle of not allowing their respective soils for the use of such activities against each other.

The government of India extended every possible cooperation to Nepal in curbing extremists who were making use of Indian territory in Bihar and Naxalbari (West Bengal) area. The Nepal Government on its part did not allow anti-emergency activists or Khalistan leaders like Jagjit Singh Chauhan to use its soil for their activities. Clearly, therefore, necessary understanding about not permitting hostile activities exists between the two countries even without Indian endorsement of the zone of peace proposal.96

96 S.D. Muni, n.4, p. 791.
Moreover, India never wished Nepal to be directly or indirectly involved in the regional conflicts involving India and its two other neighbours, China and Pakistan in 1962, 1965 and 1971.

The apprehensions created in India regarding the other implication that the proposal is nothing but an attempt by the Himalayan Kingdom to change the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship have been substantially allayed by Nepal's categorical assurance of its willingness to honour all the existing treaty obligations which is stipulated in clause six of the seven point formulation. Nevertheless, Nepal, still cannot ignore its geopolitical reality vis-a-vis India which has interwined the two countries to such an extent that the security of one cannot be separated from the security of the other.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The year 1990 has heralded a sea change in Nepal's political life. The mass upsurge and street demonstrations against the Panchayat System has lead the Monarch to dissolve the partyless Panchayat System and lift the ban on Nepali Congress and the left parties. The interim government has been struggling to draft a new constitution for Nepal.97 The nascent democratic process is still to strike roots, but the political parties like the Nepali Congress have shed some light on the

policy and programmes that they would be following when they formally and effectively take over the reigns of the government. The Nepali Congress has given strong indication that the new democratic regime was seriously reviewing the demand for declaring Nepal as a Zone of Peace.98

The Nepali Congress has emphasised the need for establishing "Special relationship" with India with which Nepalese has had close social, emotional and cultural ties. The Nepali Congress views the Peace Zone proposal as one of the biggest sore points between India and Nepal. It will now be watched with interest as to whether the Peace Zone demand would be eventually dropped or put into cold storage to revive the warmth of the Indo-Nepalese relations.

98. Times of India, 28 April, 1990.