Chapter-III

Determinants of the Foreign Policy of Nepal

3.1 Geo-Political Determinants.
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3.1 Geo-Political Determinants (Nepal as a Buffer State)

Geography is considered to be one of the most important factors among the various determinants of foreign policy because it’s more or less permanent nature. It has rightly been regarded as the cornerstone of international politics. In the present times because of certain factors like the technological advancement changes in the nature of international security system, economic independence etc, the role of geography has been affected considerably. Nevertheless it still stands as an important determinant of foreign policy, particularly in the third world countries, which are technologically less advanced. There are very few countries in the world, which are as intimately connected with each other geographically, economically, and socio-culturally as India and Nepal is. Since times immemorial the two countries have been having frequent mutual visits of saints, sages and scholars. The people of the two countries have been driving their religions, cultural and linguistic inspirations from identical sources.

Nepal, situated along the southern slopes of the Himalayas, separates the acrid Tibetan plateau all from the gengetic plains of India. It is in fact, a big dent with in the huge geographical arch formed by the Kremlin and the Himalayan Mountain. It provides an example where different types of environments ranging from the plains of the Terai to high peaks are found. In terms of location Nepal has certain significant features. It extends over five hundred miles east west along Himalayas and its width varies from 80 to 150 miles. It is surrounded in the three sides - west, south and east by uttarakhand, Bihar, west Bengal and Sikkim, states of India. The south east of the kingdom is separated from Bangladesh by a narrow strip of 17 miles of Indian Territory in the west Bengal.

Nepal’s border with India is an open one. Long patches of natural barriers of forest and rivers (Kali in the west and Vista on the east) lie between the two countries. Nepal’s northern region forms a natural frontier with the Tibetan region. China and Nepal had concluded a border

The whole border is covered by snow clad mountains. However, the high ranges of Himalayas do not form the border everywhere. In the central and western parts of the Nepal-China border there are a number of broad high attitude valleys. Their inhabitants belong to aurot-mongloid stock and exhibit close socio-cultural affinities with their neighboring Tibetan counterparts. The high Himalayas are breached by several passes. Through some of these passes regular cultural and commercial contacts have been maintained between Tibet and Nepal. The history also bears testimony to the fact that China had sent its armed forces across the Himalayas during the Nepal-Tibet wars.

The river system of the Nepal is also significant in the sense that almost it’s rivers flows vertically, passing into the Indian plains after crossing the Nepalese territory. Most of these south flowing rivers have their origin in the Himalayan glaciers or springs. Therefore, water flow is maintained in these rivers throughout the year. During the rainy seasons some of these devastating rivers cause flood in the Indian plains.

**Politico-Strategic Location**

Nepal’s strategic location in the Himalayas has not only made it important in India’s northern defence parameters, but also influenced Nepal’s relations with that country. It is a fact that the Indo-Nepal border is an open without any barrier against human traffic across the border. Both have preferred an open border and the idea of close border has never been acceptable to them because of ages old socio-cultural connections. It may also be pointed here that India’s richest agro-industrial belt is along with Indo-Nepalese border. Therefore, India cannot defend itself from any northern invasion through Nepal on this border. Instead it is possible only in the north of Nepal. Nepal’s northern frontier though natural and rugged is not impenetrable. Moreover, China has built important strategic roads in all over the Himalayas. The Kathmandu-Kodari road provides it a direct access to the Kingdom.

Nepal has serious limitations to play the role of a geographical buffer between India and China. Actually a buffer should have enough physical viability to ward off external invasion. But Nepal is physically too

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66 Ramakant: “Geography as a Factor in Nepal’s Foreign Policy, South Asian Studies, Vol.8, No.2, P.55.

It is clear as I said that in regard to certain the interest of India and Nepal are inevitably joined for instance, if I may mention it, it is not possible for the Indian government to tolerate any invasion of Nepal from Anywhere. It is not necessary for us to have a military alliance with Nepal ….But apart from any pact or alliance, the fact remains that we cannot tolerate any invasion from any foreign country on any part of the Indian sub-continent or whatever you may like to call it. And any possible invasion of Nepal would inevitably involve the safety of India."  

Nepal, on the other hand, has believed that India’s geo-strategic interests in the Himalayas have provided it leverage for political interference in the kingdom. It had begun to look at India’s political and economic role in that country with high eye brows and considered it as Indian hegemony. In addition to that Nepal’s small size complex and topographical constraints have lead to the development of a peculiar fear-psychosis against India. Nepal has felt that it is being over shadowed by India. It has naturally resulted in Nepal’s quest for national identity and self-image. This has indeed become a major focus of Nepalese nationalism and foreign policy. Infect the complexities and apprehensions, emanated from Nepal’s geographical position have found expression in growth of a peculiar kind of nationalism which has serious anti-Indian overtones. It is because of these complexities and fear psychosis that the Nepalese ruling elite has tried to advocate that Nepal is not a part of South Asia; instead, it is a trans-Himalayan country.

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69 Nehru, Jawahar Lal.: ÍIndiaâ Foreign Policy¿ Selected Speeched, September 1946-April 1961, Pg.364.

**Land-Locked Country**

With an area of 1,45,302 sq. kilometers and a population of 15.02 million, Nepal is one of the hard core least developed countries. Nepal is one of the poorest and economically weakest even among the least developed countries is revealed from United Nations report\(^71\). This disappointing over-all performance of the domestic economy has led a World Bank mission to Nepal in May/June 1979 to sound note of warning. The report says: By indication then, Nepal has reached a critical time in its development. The country is caught in a vicious circle of poverty in which the ability to raise investment and per capita income in constrained by the thin natural resource base, scarcity of trained manpower, limited domestic resource mobilization prospects, and consumption demands of the rapidly growing population itself. The dynamics of these forces are such that as difficult as it is to break this circle, the next five to ten years may represent Nepal’s last chance to do so without having to become completely dependent upon the goodwill of the aid donors. This unfavourable geographical location renders Nepal completely land-locked with no direct access to the sea\(^72\).

Moreover, on the issue of transit routes the choices open to Nepal are extremely limited. A look at the relative location of two Asian land-locked countries, Nepal and Afghanistan brings out the glaring differences existing between them in terms of their access to the sea. Nepal has no option in the choice of transit routes. China’s ports and main production and consumption centers are far removed being several hundred miles away from Nepal, while the Indian ports are relatively nearer. Even the construction of the Arniko Rajmarg which connects Kathmandu with the Tibetan region of the people’s Republic of China, did not prove viable from the standpoint of trade and transit. Despite the link provided by this road between Kathmandu and the Tibetan border, it is more profitable for commercial traffic between Nepal and China to pass through the Indian sea port at Calcutta. Thus, Nepal’s is, as the Nepalese frequently observe, for obvious reasons, ‘India-looked.’

The compulsion of Nepal’s size faces the obstacle of its location. For Nepal is not only land-locked but historically had access to

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\(^{71}\) Nepal in a Nutshell\(\odot\) (Department of Information, Ministry of Communications, HMG, Kathmandu, 1978) Rishing Nepal, 8 February 1982.

the sea only through India. In the past she has had to buy and sell with the world at large only via India. Even the building of the Kathmandu-Kodari Road gave the economy only more effective access to the Tibetan market. It did not add an alternative transit route for the enormous distance to any Chinese part from Nepal means that Calcutta remains the only viable part of economic access to the rest of the world. This monopoly over transit facilities enjoyed by one neighbour has been to Nepal’s peculiar disadvantage.\footnote{Pashupati Shumshere J.B. Rana, “India and Nepal: Political Economy of a Relationship,” Asian Survey (Berkeley, California) July 1971, p.654.}
Social, religious and cultural ties between Nepal and India are inseparable from geographical proximity and date back to the ancient past. Pilgrims in thousands from Nepal and India cross each other's territory every year to visit the temple of Lord Shiva of Pashupatinatha in Kathmandu and to pay homage to Lord Viswanatha in Varanasi. Instances of ethnic and linguistic similarities and affinities between the people living in the tarai region of Nepal and those living in the adjoining districts of UP, Bihar and West Bengal are too many and need not be enumerated here in detail. Marriage relations and family ties among ethnic groups, tribes and communities of both Nepal and India, particularly in the border areas, are quite common.

As in physical geography, demographically too, there is a great deal of variation. Broadly, there are two dominant strains, the Mongoloids in the north and the Indo-Aryans in the South. Ethnically the Indo-Aryan group is the largest and the most prestigious in Nepalese history. The ruling families have been from this group. People of Mongoloid origin migrated into Nepal from Tibet. Besides the two major components, there are about ten to twelve groups represented in the population. Of these the more important ones are Magyars, the Gurungs, the Limbos, the Rays, the Taming, the Shahs, the Bhatia’s, and the Sherpas. The famous Gorham of Nepal comes mainly from the Goring and Magyar tribes.

Despite all variations, predominantly the cultural orientation of the people is towards Hinduism which of course, is the state religion of Nepal. Over 80 per cent of the population is Hindus, and the remaining mostly Buddhists. The distribution of religious groups does not follow the lines of ethnic division; many groups and tribes are divided into the two religions. In the lower Himalayan valleys, Buddhism and Hinduism have become more or less fused, the practices and beliefs as well as the gods and shrines of both being equally worshipped by the people.

Although Nepal's foreign policy is devoid of ethnic or racial orientation. Pressure has come from the people of Terai region because of socio-economic reasons. Due to the ethnic and religious complexities


75 Dutt, Som, (1966), 'The Defence of India's Northern Border,' Indian Quarterly, January-March, p.23.
Nepal, like other societies in South Asia, is confronting the problem of bringing a national consciousness and stability of government into an area where every factor mitigates against such unification. Moreover, because of far reaching Indian influence on the cultural life of the people of Nepal, the fear of absorption into Indian mother culture has heightened the tendency to emphasize the distinct identity of Nepal. By way of reaction therefore, they are constrained to assert this distinctiveness from the Indians at every possible opportunity.  

One of the important and effective means of promoting cultural relations is education. Indian co-operation in this vital sector has been significant and productive. Immediately after the dawn of democracy in the fifties, Nepal found itself weak in infrastructure, an essential prerequisite to national development. India assisted this country not only in opening new education institutions and strengthening the existing ones but also provided opportunities and facilities to Nepalese students to receive training and pursue higher studies in various disciplines including technical subjects like medicine and engineering in reputed Indian universities. The exchange of teachers, scientists and artists enhanced goodwill and understanding at the people-to-people level and significantly contributed to cultural enrichment groups. King Birendra of Nepal during his state visit to India has rightly observed: “Relations between Nepal and India are nurtured and enriched by the noble ideals, values and principles that are common to our cultural heritage. People as inheritors of these valued traditions provide continuity infusing timelessness in our relationship. The extensive interaction and contacts that exist between our countries at the people-to-people level have helped to foster deeper understanding and appreciation of each other’s aspirations. In other words, securely founded, the bonds that tie our two peoples are barely touched by the vicissitudes nations go through over time.”

From the religious-cultural point of view both the countries are inseparable. Nepal is indeed the farthest corner in the Himalayas where Hindu religion is dominant. Not only that there are very close religious cultural, and linguistic similarities, but the people of the two countries have maintained close social links. It is for this reason that one may state

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76 Muni S.D: “Foreign Policy of Nepal”, New Delhi, (1973), Pg .36.

77 Olaf, Caroe, (1960), The Geography and Ethics of India’s Northern Frontiers, Geographical Journal, Vol.126, p.299
that it is difficult to understand Indo-Nepal relations merely on political grounds. The socio-cultural dimension is very important and more stable than the political dimensions.\textsuperscript{78}

To sum up, it can be said that no other factor has been so dominant in shaping Nepal’s relations with India than that of geography. The geo-strategic location of Nepal has indeed made those countries natural partners. Nepal has to maintain a close understanding with India—politically, strategically, economically and socio-culturally but on the other hand India had to reciprocate it with good will and sympathy.

Nepal’s geography has made it largely dependent on India economically. Nepal is a landlocked country and India alone provides it a sea route. For long Nepal has remained heavily dependent on India in matters of trade and aid. There are certain areas where a close economic cooperation between the two countries is not only desirable but even necessary. The development of rivers water, flood control and ecology are some examples of such cooperation. It is a fact that despite Nepal’s quest for diversification of its economic dependence over India, it has not been possible beyond certain limits. Informal economic relations between the people of the two countries have become much more important. The open border has facilitated such economic relations to a great extent.\textsuperscript{79}

Nepal, like Bhutan, is also counted among the poorest in the world. Before 1950 the country lacked all such infrastructure which is essential for economic development. It was only after the end of Rana’s rule in 1951, when King Tribhuvana assumed power that development schemes were launched. Nepal had only about 325 miles of roads, about half of which were fair weather roads. India built the 75 miles long all weather Tribhuvana Rajpath connecting Kathmandu with India in 1956. A decade later the Kathmandu-Kodari road, connecting capital of Nepal with Tibet region of China was completed with the Chinese help. Planning was introduced in Nepal in 1956. Like other countries in South Asia, Nepal is primarily an agricultural country and its economy is predominantly agrarian. Nepal’s resource base and potentialities offer only limited prospects of expansion and mobilization. Consequently, Nepal's ruling elites have developed a perception of ‘vulnerability’ when placed in comparison to her neighbours, both India and China.\textsuperscript{80}

The background of Nepal's economy is the Terai region and this has given rise to regional disparity. While the Terai has registered concentrated growth, the Trans-Himalayan valleys and even temperate highlands have badly lagged behind. People in these regions are still dependent on agriculture or pastoral arthritis. The development of the Terai has had the inevitable effect of forging strong bonds with India. It is


more integrated with Indian market economy than with that of Nepal. Economic backwardness of Nepal has placed a heavy premium on foreign aid and assistance from external sources. This constitutes a major thrust in Nepal's foreign policy. Policy of non-alignment was also motivated to draw assistance from the countries of both the blocs including arms aid. Nepal's overwhelming dependence on India, because of transit facilities for its exports, imports, employment, capital and even skilled labour, is of decisive importance in the economy. Hence, expansion of economic ties with the countries in South Asia and outside, by exploring alternative routes and accesses, has been a major foreign policy plank of Nepal.

Nepal had virtually become the economic colony of British India. Goods manufactured in British India found easy access to the Nepalese market. Besides, the British government used the open border to procure raw materials and forest products from Nepal and processed them as finished products for re-export to this country. There was no remarkable change or improvement in the situation even after Nepal and India signed the Treaty of 1950 followed by agreements on trade and transit. Indian goods continued to dominate the Nepalese market. In other words, as a primary producing country Nepal depended on India for more than ninety per cent of her foreign trade.

Trade deficit with India has remained an issue of serious concern for Nepal. Nepalese goods did not have free access until recently to the Indian market as there was restriction on the eligibility of such goods if the raw material content was less than 50 per cent. Nepalese export to India has been outweighed by Indian goods imported by this country, with the result that the balance of trade has been heavily weighted in favour of India with adverse impact on Nepal’s balance of payments.

The post-Cold War wave of globalisation and liberalisation left no country in the world untouched. Nepal and India adopted liberal economic policies and recognised the important role of the private sector in industrial growth, export promotion and economic modernisation. The Trade Treaty signed between Nepal and India in 1996 was the result of close collaboration and partnership between the government and private sectors of the two countries. Hailed by all sections, in particular the

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The Treaty has helped to increase the growth rate of Nepalese exports to India. Dr. R.S. Mahat, a former Finance Minister of Nepal and Padma Jyoti, a noted Nepalese industrialist and businessmen, have confirmed in their public statements that the export of manufactured goods from Nepal to India has gone up from one and a half billion rupees to over ten billion rupees after the implementation of the Treaty\textsuperscript{83}.

It is now being increasingly realised that Nepal must improve its competitive capacity while seeking to benefit from the preferential treatment given by India to Nepalese export products. No less important for Nepal is her ability to attract professional and reputed companies of India for joint ventures in this country. Mention may be made of the three areas of competitive advantage, namely, infrastructure (power, telecommunications, water, roads and airports), tourism in all aspects and high value agriculture identified by the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) on a priority basis. There is indeed tremendous scope for productive investment in Nepal, particularly in hydro-power and tourism sectors\textsuperscript{84}.

Apart from trade, India has positively responded to Nepalese request for automatic renewal of the Transit Treaty at the end of seven years. The state of being land-locked is a permanent geographical disadvantage. It is heartening that freedom of transit, a long cherished desire of the people of this country has been guaranteed in the Transit Treaty recently renewed at the Ministerial level in Kathmandu for seven years. The Treaty contains simplified and liberalised procedures for the transit of Nepal’s cargo through Calcutta port. India assured the Nepalese business community that the Indian government would look into Nepalese grievances about operational hurdles such as cumbersome transit-transport procedures\textsuperscript{85}.

India’s decision during the former Prime Minister I.K. Gujral’s visit to Nepal in June 1997 to grant the Phulbari transit route was another milestone in Nepal-India relations. As stated earlier, Nepal surrounded by India on three sides must look to her southern neighbors for access to the sea including overland transit. Prime Minister G.P. Koirala of Nepal has welcomed the Indian gesture and expressed the hope that “The


facilitate expansion and diversification of trade in Nepal”. The new transit route linking three countries as members of the growth quadrangle is expected to inject further dynamism into emerging sub-regionalism. The potential for sub-regional co-operation within the SAARC framework exists abundantly in such fields as transit, multi-modal transport, energy, environment, tourism, trade and investments. Geographical proximity is again at the centre of sub-regional co-operation.

A unique feature of geographical proximity affecting Nepal-India relationship is the 1,800 km long open border with its own advantages and disadvantages. While the free movement of people and goods has facilitated people-to-people contacts in social, religious and cultural terms and has enabled the people on both sides to benefit from cross-border economic activities including border trade. The open border has also been misused for large scale unaccounted migration creating imbalance in Nepal’s demographic composition as well as for undesirable activities such as terrorism, subversion, drug-smuggling, trade deflection and trafficking in women such activities have given rise to tensions, misunderstanding and occasional irritants in bilateral relations. Nepal has viewed with serious concern, the cross border movement of terrorist and criminal elements and has repeatedly made it clear that she will not allow her territory to be such elements for their subversive and terrorist operations against her neighbours. Despite criticism in the Indian Press that Nepal has become a safe haven for international terrorism and has not done much to curb such terrorism. Nepalese police has remained alert and apprehended terrorism including a Kashmiri terrorist in possession of some deadly explosive material called RDX-Rapid Detonating Explosives.

It will be futile to blame a single country for cross-border terrorism and undesirable activities such as robbery, smuggling, kidnapping and other crimes. The need for regulating the border movement of goods and people through joint endeavours, vigilance and patrolling has been highlighted by policy-makers, administrators and experts on both sides. Dr. Prakash C. Lohani, a former minister of Nepal for foreign affairs, touched on this issue and observed: “Nepal and India have a long open border. Considering the overall climate of political tension and strife in

now time for both our countries to think over this phenomenon and take measures that are in the interest of both. Basically, both our countries should now discuss seriously on the modalities for keeping track of cross border movement of people on both sides, so that the open border does not become a source of new problems in the future”. The observation of the former minister is pertinent, as it throws light on the existing reality and merits attention as a first step to take care of mutual security concerns. Nepal and India do not have any visa system. Given this reality, it is all the more necessary to regulate the open border. An exodus of approximately one hundred thousand refugees from Bhutan, victims of ethnic cleansing and how stranded in eastern Nepal, took place some eight years ago through the open border between Nepal and India. There is a strong feeling in Nepal that the problem cannot be solved without the co-operation of India which is also the first entry point of asylum for refugees from Bhutan. Some refugees reportedly trying to return home through Indian Territory have been pushed back into Nepalese territory by Indian security forces and police. The refugee issue has been cited here to illustrate the gravity of the problem and other complications arising from the sprawling, open and unregulated border between Nepal and India.

In recent years, the Nepal-India boundary has become a topic of public debate and discussion. The Joint Technical Level Boundary Committee set up in 1981, according to P.P. Oli, a Nepalese boundary expert, was entrusted with the task of maintaining the boundary pillars, keeping the boundary line intact and working out modalities for future inspection. The Committee’s report is eagerly awaited. There is a complaint that the Indian side has given less priority to the issue of boundary demarcation. But slow progress in solving the boundary dispute such as the Kalapani in the Mahakali Zone of Nepal may whip up political passions to the detriment of friendly relations between the two


The boundary dispute is a sensitive issue and must be resolved in the interest of both countries.\textsuperscript{90}

Discussion in the preceding paragraphs makes it abundantly clear that the geographical location of a country is a major variable determining its history, culture, economy, demographic composition, the eco-system and the basic parameters of its foreign policy. Viewed in the context of geographical proximity, Nepal and India, irrespective of their size, population, resources and the level of development, are close neighbors with common cultural heritage and common problems characterised by poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, disease, population pressure, environmental degradation and overall backwardness. Through prudent and productive utilisation of the Himalayan rivers both Nepal and India can meet the growing demand for power as well as water for irrigation, drinking and industrial use. The Treaty signed between the two countries some years ago for the integrated development of the Pancheswer and Mahakali river basins has yet to be implemented and remains a test case of bilateral co-operation.\textsuperscript{91} The guiding principles of this Treaty are equality and mutual benefit. Differences are bound to come up between the neighbours with a common border, and more so if the border is open and unregulated. Differences in the past have cropped up due to misunderstanding and lack of communication. Given good will, understanding and the spirit of genuine co-operation and friendship, such differences can be resolved to mutual satisfaction. Nepal and India together they must live to share each other’s joys and sorrows, together they must work, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder, to resolve their common problems and promote the well being of their peoples and together they must face challenges and opportunities in the days ahead.


\textsuperscript{91} Lohani, Prakash Chandra, Address to the Nepal Council of World Affairs, Kathmandu, May 15, 1996.
Till May 1990 when Nepal chose to have a parliamentary model, and for a brief stint of 1959-60, the monarchical system of government enabled the king to play a leading role in policy planning and implementation. It is, therefore, the King's perception of the regional and global environment as also of Nepal's national interest, which has primarily been the guiding principle of the foreign policy. Obviously king Mahendra and Birendra, have been the Chief architects of the foreign policy of Nepal. King Tribhuvana, who was so much obliged to India for the restoration of his rule, did not depart from the established framework of "special relations" with India. King Mahendra, who ruled for seventeen years from 1955 to 1972, was primarily responsible for giving shape to Nepal's foreign policy of "equidistance" or "balanced relationship" with India and China. Besides, he also very effectively, used foreign policy to stabilise his regime. Following him, King Birendra, without making a major shift in the policy goals, reoriented policy strategies to suit the altered regional and global environment of Nepal. His "zone of peace" proposal can be cited as a distinct illustration in this regard. Another person who can be counted in this category is B.P. Koirala, who was the Prime Minister of Nepal for a brief two year period of 1959-60. Koirala, in spite of his close association with the Indian leaders, realised that the national interest of Nepal can best be safeguarded by not following a "titled" but an independent looking foreign policy. Yet, without breaking with China, during his time, Indo-Nepal bilateral relations improved as he was perceived to be closer to India\textsuperscript{92}.

In the early 1990s, the military retained its generally privileged position in society. Constitutional arrangements mandating an unprecedented degree of civilian control over national defence and military affairs still were being ironed out, however, the country's experiment in participatory democracy still was in an embryonic stage. The Royal Nepal Army's position during the 1990 pro-democracy campaign prompted many observers to predict that the military would willingly accept its role in the new constitutional order. Other observers, noting possibilities of heightened political competition and strife in the kingdom, were not so sanguine. Nepal, however, has never experienced a military coup. In sum, the military's position in society and its

authority was a continuing process, not a settled fact.

There were calls from some political quarters, particularly radical communists and a section of the intelligentsia, to abolish the monarchy, overhaul the military chain of command, slash the defence budget, and banned Indian and British military recruiting of Nepalese citizens. These objectives were not shared by the ruling Nepali Congress Party government, King Birendra, large sections of the Nepalese public, and the military itself. All of which voiced unequivocal opposition to any political attempts to radically alter traditional patterns of civil-military relations. By 1991 the Royal Nepal Army, long a bulwark of the monarchy, appeared to be adjusting to the new requirements laid down by the constitution and the new democratically elected government. Most civilian politicians also recognised the value of maintaining a disciplined, reliable military that could enforce public order, symbolize the nation's independence, and allow the government to proceed with the monumental task of improving the economic well-being of its citizens.

The king’s role was supreme and unviable. Such a crown could not remain an ideal spectator of events in the country. On a theoretical basis, the termination of parties created a void of political leadership and political opposition of an organised nature. So, the king remained the only authority to guide and channelise the aspiration of the nation. This was also reinforced by the fact that there was no authority to contest the royal claim of leadership. The King was the center of the country’s sovereignty and all political power of the State emanated from him. Internally, the king was supposed to be a source of national unity in the midst of ethnic plurality. Although the constitution had provided for three autonomous institutions of the National panchayat, the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Court as legislative, executive and judicial agencies respectively, all of them were under the direct command of the king. The underlying philosophy was two fold: one that the King can do no wrong and two that he has no separate interest from the collective interest of the state. The first is the outcome of the concept of limited


authority. The second is a corollary responsibility. But the king Mahendra had the ingenuity of waiving both without appearing paradoxical.\textsuperscript{96} The leadership of the crown had been very loudly propounded as a fundamental principal of the Panchayat. However, during the years after the referendum there was a mixed feeling resulting from the excessive intervention of the palace in the affairs of the National Panchayat\textsuperscript{97}. The following table shows the mixed feeling of the members of the National Panchayat on the question of the active leadership of the King.

Since the promulgation of the first democratic constitution 1990, establishment of a workable democratic system in Nepal has been an enormously difficult task. In the first general elections held in May 1991, Nepali Congress (NC) and the United Marxist Leninist Communist Party of Nepal (UML) shared most of the votes. The leader of the Nepali Congress, G.P. Koirala became the prime minister. But factionalism soon engulfed the NC in which Koirala, Ganesh Man Singh, the party supreme leader and K. P Bhattacharai, the party president sought to implement policies and programmes of the government resigned and called for mid-term elections in 1994.

The mid-term general election in November 1994 gave no party a clear majority. The UML secured 89 seats while the Nepali Congress secured 83 seats. Significantly, the National Democratic Party (NDP) formed by politicians from the former Panchayat era, won 20 seats. Man Mohan Adhikari of the UML formed a minority government with the support of small political parties. Nepal thus became the first communist party government under monarchy. But the government collapsed within a few months. Thereafter, with splits emerging in all the major parties, a series of four coalition government came to power before next general elections were held in 1999. This time, the NC got a clear majority of 113 seats. K. P. Bhattacharai became the Prime Minister. But due to factionalism within the NC, he was replaced by G. P. Koirala in early 2000 and later by the leader of the younger generation in the party, Sher Bahadur Deuba in July 2001.

The Maoist ‘people’s war’ which was launched in 1996 had assumed grave proportions. The Maoist used terror tactics to spread their influence in the rural areas and taken effective control of administration in five districts. In the early years of the Maoist movement,


\textsuperscript{97}Ibid. p. 87.
Nepalese politicians belonging to the leftist camp displayed a fraternal resistance to taking any harsh measures toward the Maoists. The CPN/ML, the third largest political party in Nepal, openly endorsed the aims of the CPN (Maoist) even while disapproving of its working style. The major ruling party, the NC, beset with internal problems, could not take concrete action to deal with the Maoist problem.

The Maoist insurgency added confusion in the democratic politics of Nepal that was already running under factionalism which ultimately led to a constitutional crisis. In May 2002, the Deuba government recommended the dissolution of the parliament but found it difficult to hold elections because of the Maoist insurgency. King Gyanendra seized this opportunity and invoked Article 127 of the Constitution to dismiss the prime minister and his cabinet for “incompetence” in October 2002. He nominated Lokendra Bahadur Chand, Leader of the royalist Rastriya Parjatantra Party (RPP), to head a nine-member interim government with a mandate to restore law and order, hold midterm elections and elections to the local bodies which were dissolved in July 2002, solve Maoist insurgency, implement development works and stop the economy sliding further downhill.

Major political parties which were critical of the king’s action did not participate in the interim government. In March 2003, the mainstream forces in Nepal forged an alliance and finalised an 18 point common minimum programme and launched a movement against the monarchic takeover. Since then, a tripartite power struggle has dominated in Nepali politics, between the king, the mainstream political parties and the Maoists. Monarchy, backed by the Royal Nepal Army, is seeking to resume the role in the national polity that it enjoyed before the 1990 constitution came into effect and circumscribed its power. The mainstream political parties are demanding a return to constitutional government through the restoration of the dissolved parliament or the creation of an all-party interim government. The Maoists remain adamant in their demand for the creation of a constituent assembly to draft a drastically revised constitution to make Nepal a sovereign Republic under democratic political system.


In the 1950s, Nepal began a gradual opening up and a commitment to a policy of neutrality and non-alignment. At the 1973 summit of the Nonaligned Movement in Algiers, King Birendra proposed that "Nepal, situated between two of the most populous countries of the world, wishes her frontiers to be declared a zone of peace." In Birendra's 1975 coronation address, he formally asked other countries to endorse his proposal. Since then, the concept of Nepal as a zone of peace has become a main theme of Kathmandu's foreign policy.

As of mid-1991, Nepal had been endorsed as a zone of peace by more than 110 nations. Many of these countries also recommended a regional approach to peace as the goal. Without the endorsement of India and the former Soviet Union, however, the prospect of broader international acceptance was dim.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Nepal had established diplomatic relations with approximately 100 countries. Nepal was an active member of the United Nations (UN) and participated in a number of its specialized agencies. Nepal also was a founder member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and had successfully negotiated several bilateral and multilateral economic, cultural, and technical assistance programs. Because of its geographical proximity to and historical links with China and India, Nepal's foreign policy was focused mainly on maintaining close and friendly relations with these two countries and on safeguarding its national security and independence. Nepal's relations with the United States, Europe, and the Soviet Union showed new signs of vitality in 1991.

The urges of preservation of identity, existence and stability shaped Nepal's relations with her neighbours, India and China. The same considerations guided Nepal in the establishment of diplomatic and economic contacts with the Great Powers, including USA and the erstwhile Soviet Union. In 1947, Great Britain reaffirmed Nepalese independence they raised the status of their respective diplomatic legations to the level of Embassies. Nepal continued with the arrangement of providing Gorkhas to the British army. USA also recognised Nepal's independence, although Residential Ambassadors were exchanged only in 1958. The expansion of Nepal's external contacts began only during the diversification phase of Nepalese history of foreign policy strategically and politically, Nepal was closer to the Western bloc. As such Kathmandu was useful for the West in the pursuit
of their policy of containment of communism. Besides, as a developing country, Nepal depended a great deal on the American assistance. At one stage during 1951-65 USA was spending more than even India on the developmental activities in Nepal. In 1964 both USA and UK agreed for the first time, to a Nepalese request for military assistance.

Relatively speaking, Soviet interests in Nepal were marginal. Nevertheless, as Moscow started taking active interest in South Asia, and particularly developing stronger ties with India her interests in Nepal also got enlivened in the post-Stalin period. As a non-aligned country, Nepal did not participate in the Cold War relationships of the two Super Powers. But, towards the close of the decade of 1950s both the Super Powers were competing to increase their influence in Nepal by stepping up aid. The Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971 was perceived as a step towards the change in the regional order and Nepal reacted by leaning more towards China. With the global changes of 1970s and 1980s both the Super Powers seem to have adopted some kind of parallel policies on account of which their mutual rivalries or competition may not affect Nepal much. The post-cold war situation has obviously strengthened US presence and influence in Nepal.

Nepal looks upon the United Nations as a source of support to her freedom and independence and also as a bulwark against the encroachment of bigger powers. Being militarily weak, Nepal has attached considerable importance to the peace-keeping role of the United Nations. 'As a developing country, it was natural for Nepal to take an 'active interest in the development programmes and activities of the United Nations. But, the most significant contribution of Nepal has been in raising the issues concerning the rights of the land-locked countries. Nepal served on the 40 members sub-committee appointed by (UNCTAD I) to consider the proposal for the formulation of an international convention on the transit rights of the land-locked states. On the whole the UN membership has provided Nepal with an opportunity to articulate her international personality and strengthen her sense of security by projecting an image of an independent nation state.

In the sub-continent Nepal has largely identified herself with the other small powers of the region, particularly Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan. Bangladesh's importance is vital for Nepal in the promotion of her trade interests. Therefore, even though Nepal had some reservations

100 Blaikie, P and Others, Nepal in Crisis: Growth and stagnation at the periphery, Delhi, 1986, PP 143-45.
101 Muni S. D: Nepal As A Zone of Peace Strategic Analysis, New Delhi, Jan 1984, PP. 786-89
On the role that India played, in what was perceived as the dismemberment of Pakistan, once Bangladesh became a reality, Nepalese response was that of a friendly neighbor. Nepal recognised Bangladesh in January 1972. The two entered into trade and transit agreements in 1973. By the transit treaty of 1978 India conceded to Nepal the transit route through Radhikapur on West Bengal-Bangladesh border. This overland route facility has enabled Nepal to have another outlet to the sea, a breakthrough for which Nepal had been yarning for years. However, due to various factors, Nepal has not been able to make use of this access. Bangladesh offers market for Nepal's textiles synthetics, imported from abroad and stainless steel. The inter river waters and river systems offer yet another opportunity for co-operation between Bangladesh and Nepal. In fact, while negotiating with India on the question of the sharing of Ganga waters, this was the persistent demand of Bangladesh that Nepal must also be included into the talks. With the willingness of India now the three States can have a common approach to the question of harnessing the water resources for the benefit of the people of the region, if that appears to be realistically feasible.

The non-aligned foreign policy of Nepal can best be explained in geo-political terms. The most persistent and the most dominant feature of her foreign policy is, therefore, to acquire capability so as to overpower her natural and physical constraints. If geography is the domestic compulsion, Sino-Indian relations is the most important external input of the foreign policy of Nepal. India is the nearest and the closest neighbour with whom Nepal wants to maintain a "friendly" distance. China, though a distant neighbour, yet with whom Nepal wants to be "equally" friendly. Kathmandu sympathises with the small, the poorest of all the under-developed countries of the world, and strongly pleads their case on the platform of the regional and global institutions.

Nepal’s Peace Zone Proposal and India

One significant development in Nepal’s quest for an equitable relationship with her two close neighbours China and India has been its idea of creating a peace Zone for itself. The proposal was symbolic to its

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In a Nepal scholar’s independent status and confidence building activity. In a Nepal scholar’s view for a weak state like Nepal, the recourse to foreign policy is the only strategy for survival. King Birendra wanted to give a new shape to Nepal’s foreign policy, particularly in view of its geo-political and strategic situation. “Nepal’s policy of friendship and non-alignment is a self evident fact. Like a yam between two huge boulders, Nepal has always striven for friendship and harmony. It is true that even when centuries of peace and amity were broken by brief spells of conflict and war, Nepal acted so as to drive home the expansionist powers the realization that peace is preferable to war, that friendship pays more dividend than conflict.”

Emphasising the need for cooperation and reciprocity in Nepal’s development efforts the king further elucidated that: in Nepal, we neither have enemies to fight against no battle to win. If fight, we must, the battle lies well within our territory, it is a battle against backwardness, destitution to fight which I have exhorted the need for development… We are therefore, desirous to see that our foreign policy has a bearing on our aspirations for peace, security and our economic development. As we extend our hands of friendship to nations and to our neighbours, we expect co-operation and reciprocity in our development efforts.”

When King Birendra led a Nepalese delegation to the Fourth Summit Conference of the nonaligned nations at Algiers, he wanted to move his peace zone proposal. 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 developed in a Zone of Peace”. But in the king’s speech, the reference to the peace zone was not mentioned. However, king’s speech underlined his full support to the declaration of Indian Ocean as a “Zone of Peace” as passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1971.

King Birendra ascended the throne; he was in favour of peace zones. And therefore, he put forward his proposal about Nepal as zone of peace on 25 Feb. 1975 before the distinguished foreign dignitaries assembled on the occasion of His coronation function.

106 Ibid.
At Havana while addressing the Sixth Conference of the Heads of the Non-aligned countries, King Birendra again explained the rationale and justification of his peace zone proposal. Highlighting Nepal’s desire for institutionalising peace, he reiterated: “For a small developing country like Nepal, nothing is more natural that a deep rooted aspiration for peace and development.” 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:

_In an age, when the culture of army is treating 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 Zone 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 the US in December 1983, appears to have made a more attempt to explain the relevance of the peace zone concept. The king said:

_Nepal has followed a scrupulous policy of peace, friendship and cooperation. In a region of the world which has seen several wars, no cause would be more save than to institutionalize 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 upto 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._

Various foreign policy pronouncements of King Birendra seem to be the manifestations of his concern about growing challenges to Nepal’s independence and sovereignty as to internal political stability. The peace zone proposal is, no doubt, a subtle attempt on his part to give a new

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108 His Majesty King Birendra op. cit., n. 6, 1980, p. 40.
policy of non-alignment so as to withstand the land-
locked kingdom’s growing vulnerability to international pulls and
pressures. It is a proposal for guarantee of peace not guarantee of
neutrality. On the one hand, the proposition represents a desire to look
for a permanency of the country’s destiny; on the other it is a desire to be
immune from tensions, fear and anxiety. The king emphasised that in
making the proposition he was not prompted out of fear or threat from
any country or quarter. Nepal has repeatedly made it clear that it harbors
no ill-will or unfriendly feeling towards any country in the world and as
such it is claimed that the peace plan seeks to promote its national
interest without posing any threat to the interests of others. Moreover,
Nepal has made it clear that it would, under no circumstances, allow its
territory to be used for hostile operations against other states and would
expect reciprocity in the matter. In sum, in terms of the present day
regional and international power politics, the peace zone proposal
appears as an attempt to reinforce the principles of non-alignment.

As has been stated Nepal took a considerable long time to define
the essential components of its Zone of Peace proposal. A seven point
definition formulated by the Foreign Ministry in early 1981 was made
public for the first time by the then Prime Minister Surya Bhadur Thapa in
Feb 1982. Untill the formulation of this definition; the explanation
extended in support of the proposal underlined two themes. One was
Nepal’s desire to maintain neutrality in all possible regional conflicts
without legally becoming a neutral State like Austria or Switzerland. The second theme was that the proposal of Zone of Peace aimed at
ensuring domestic political stability and economic development. This
aspect was clearly mentioned in the King’s initial statement of February
1975 and was reiterated subsequently on many occasions. Both these of
equidistance and internal stability have found adequate reflection in the
seven point definition of the Zone of Peace proposal. 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 system, and particularly with its neighbours on
the basis of equality and respect for each other’s independence
and sovereignty.

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111 Kanskar V. B. S: ÒNepal, China and India: Population Profile and PoliticsÓ Stretegic Studies Series
(Kathmandu), 1985, PP 52-55.
Nepal will not resort to the use or threat of force in any way which might endanger the peace and security of other countries.

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

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

5. 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.

6. Nepal will not permit any activities on its soil that is hostile to other states supporting this proposal and in reciprocity other states supporting this proposal will not permit any activities hostile to Nepal.

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 allow establishment of military base on their soil directed against Nepal.

This definition is silent on the intended international legal aspect of the proposal which has been hinted at, otherwise king Birendra while addressing the U.N. Conference on Least Developed Countries in Paris in September 1981 said that Nepal might take the issue to the United Nations for endorsement.  

Nepal has made vigorous diplomatic efforts to secure international support for the king’s Zone of Peace proposal. The King himself either on his official foreign visits or when a foreign dignitary visits Nepal tries to get endorsement for his proposal. It is claimed that by October 1984, some 44 countries have endorsed the proposal, the latest being United States. In fact the US may be mentioned as one of the early supporters of proposal along with China, the Soviet Union and Pakistan. What was new about the US support in December 1983 was the statement to that effect made by President Reagan on 7 December 1983 in Washington when King Birendra was on a state visit.

The most unqualified and enthusiastic support extended to the proposal has come only from China and Pakistan. This is natural in view of the fact that the proposal in effect aims at qualitatively changing the existing nature of Indo-Nepalese relations to India’s disadvantage. It may be recalled here that the two countries lauded Nepal’s proposal during

112 Rising Nepal, 6 September 1981.
113 Pradhan Bishva: “A Peace Zone”, Publisher Durga Devi Pradhan, Kathmandu, Nepal, pp. 7-12.
Bhutto’s official visit to China in May 1976. The then Chinese Premier Hua-Kuo Feng said: “We firmly support the just stand taken by His majesty, the King of Nepal, in declaring a Zone of Peace. We are ready to assume appropriate commitments arising there from”. Initially, the Chinese used to describe the proposal as a step in the direction of struggle against “hegemonism and expansionism”. Over the past couple of years, however, they have tried to interpret it in the context of growing need for co-operation and understanding in South Asia.

India is the only country in South Asia which has not endorsed Nepal’s Zone of Peace proposal. Nepal knows that the proposal would not make much sense in effective terms without India agreeing to it. As such, Nepal’s drive to mobilise increasing international support for the proposal may be seen as an attempt to indirectly pressurise India for doing the same.

India’s initial response to the proposal was that of disapproval as being unnecessary, because Nepal has treaties of peace and friendship with India and China. India also sought clarification from Nepal about what precisely it wanted to achieve through the proposal. The seven point definition of the proposal which was put forward by Nepal after six to seven years of the announcement of the proposal still leaves things ambiguous. After the formulation of this definition India’s formal reaction has been that the proposal is being studied. This was disclosed by Foreign Minister Narasimha Rao in Parliament on 11 March 1983. Recently in November 1983 Mrs. Gandhi again asked Nepal to clarify as to from which source it fears threat to its peace and security. This was an obvious indication of India’s displeasure with the proposal and hence its reluctance to endorse the same.

It is, therefore, a truism that Nepal’s Peace Zone proposal loses much relevance without India’s endorsement. India has consistently taken the stand that the peace proposal should be examined with all its implication, for India’s security system. As the 1950 Treaty concluded between the two countries has put together in order to avoid any threat from third country, India would not like to interpret its original security perception as it will create risk, which still persists either from western India. Pakistan borders or from northern Sino-Indian borders.

India’s initial response to the proposal was that of the “lack of clarity.” Unfortunately, Nepalese authorities did not fairly elaborate the concept of peace zone proposal. It is interesting to note that the ambiguous and general nature of the proposal suited the need of some countries, who viewed it from their own view point. For instance, Pakistan has linked it with its own proposal for the declaration of South Asia as a nuclear-free zone. Against such a background, India’s reaction to the proposal needs a thorough analysis and understanding.

The first occasion when the ZOP issue was taken up for discussion of the bilateral level was during the visit of the India’s External Affairs Minister, Y.B. Chavan to Nepal in January 1976. Speaking at the dinner Krishna Raj Aryal had maintained that “Indo-Nepalese relation should be based on current realities.” Mr. Chavan refrained from making any commitment to support the Nepalese proposition and later explained that India was committed to the views and ideas of world peace and said “We have continued to work for the ideal in our own regions as also in the world at large.” He added, “India regards peace, stability and economic development.” Dr. Tulsi Giri, Prime Minister of Nepal in an attempt to explain the justification of ZOP stated:

“Through the proposition Nepal wishes to accelerate its development. As a small state situated between the two giant countries, our capacity to influence the overall policies of other nations is limited. We do not seek, therefore, its transform to the existing affairs in the region but because our country is of geo-politically important to the surrounding nations, we offer that Nepal is a sphere of abstention from rivalry of other nations, so that peace in our vicinity may be of equal importance to others. The proposition is neither a contradiction of our past policies nor a deviation from our policy of non-alignment.”

As a reply to Giri’s remarks, the Times of India (New Delhi) commented on the “Zone of Peace” proposal and explained that “Dr. Giri’s elaboration completely ignores the very geographical realities, which according to him, account for proposal.” It underlined India’s special position, especially its security interest, in Nepal on the ground of

115 Rising Nepal, 23 February 1976
117 Ibid., 22 January 1976.
118 Ibid., 20 February 1976.
119 Times of India, 21 February 1976.
of the kingdom to India. Throwing light on Tulsi Giri’s clarification, the official daily, the Rising Nepal commented in its editorial that “India should view Nepal’s desire to be declared in the same perspective as it believes that world could be made more durable by making the Indian Ocean free from big power rivalry”. However, Nepal could not succeed in convincing India to accept the proposal. Dr. Giri himself accepted this when he said that “Indira Gandhi did not accept the plan on the ground that Indo-Nepalese relations could not be equated with Sino-Nepalese relations”.

The Janata Government’s response to this proposal was also not very encouraging as 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. India’s External Affairs Minister, Vajpayee laid repeated stress on friendship between the two countries. He declared: “Given friendship, India will consider it a privilege to make sacrifices without demanding equal benefits in return”. As far as the ZOP proposal, during his visit to Kathmandu in July 1977, the new External Affairs Minister of India A.B. Bajpayee reminded the Nepalese of India’s special position in Nepal and expressed the hope that “Nepal understands our concern and the unexceptionable objectives of India’s foreign policy”. At the same time he attempted to nullify Nepal’s proposal for a Zone of Peace by putting forth a counter proposal that “the entire sub-continent should be an area of peace”. He informed the Lok Sabha after his visit to Kathmandu that:

“... We also discussed the Nepal’s side ideas about the zone of peace. I recalled to my hosts that the Janata Government’s earnest desire is that the entire sub-continent should be an area of peace, and steps are being taken by the new Government to improve relations with all of India’s neighbours. As for Nepal, I indicated that we would in keeping with our friendly relations; consider any suggestions from the Government of Nepal with an open mind. I reaffirmed that there is a Treaty of Peace and Friendship between India and Nepal, which has accepted that both countries would live in perpetual peace. This Treaty and our subsequent actions (already) fully reaffirm the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Nepal”.

120 Rising Nepal, 23 February 1976.
121 Indian Express, 8 April 1976.
122 Times of India, 16 July 1976.
India’s Prime Minister Morarji Desai also expressed similar views about Nepal’s peace zone proposal. He made a statement that Nepal was already “a peaceful zone” and that “because of the existing 1950 Indo-Nepalese Treaty of Peace and Friendship there was no question of Nepal being in danger from the side of India”. Indeed he said with an air of finality that there being peace between the two countries, there was no need to declare Nepal a zone of peace.124

Following Indira Gandhi’s return to power in January 1980, the Nepalese peace zone proposal again figured in diplomatic parleys between Nepal and India. India's then Foreign Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao visited Kathmandu in November 1981 and held wide ranging talks with the Nepalese leaders. In December soon after his visit President Sanjiva Reddy paid a three-day visit, to the strategically located Himalayan kingdom. During both these visits the leaders reiterated and sought India’s support for the proposal. While Rao refrained from publicly responding to the peace zone reference by the Nepalese Prime Minister, S.B. Thapa, he was reported to have promised his hosts that India would soon ‘study’ and try to ‘understand’ the Nepalese proposal.

During President Sanjiva Reddy’s visit this issue again came before him. The Prime Minster S. B. Thapa reiterated his request for India’s endorsement of the peace proposal in course of his talk with the Indian President, who also told his hosts that the proposal to declare Nepal a zone of peace had to be seen in the light of he 1950 Treaty of peace and Friendship between the two countries for the past over 2,500 years125. Finally the next Indian move was an official request to Kathmandu for a broad outline of the peace zone proposal which the Nepal Government responded with a specific seven points proposal which was subsequently explained by the Nepal’s Prime Minster126.

As has been given earlier the Nepal’s plan for peace zone is essentially a quest for an international guarantee against any possible conflict between the big nations. It is interesting to note, on the other hand, that five clauses of the plan are based upon the ideals enshrined in the charter of the United Nations. However, two main aspects of the seven point proposal fifth and the seventh clauses apparently conflict with the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the two countries.

125 Hindustan Times, 9 December 1977.
The plan India’s formal reaction has been that it is being studied. In November 1983, Mrs. Gandhi had again asked Nepal to clarify as to from which sources it fears threat to its own peace and security. This was an obvious displeasure with the proposal and hence its reluctance to endorse the same.

Therefore, so far as the vital question of India’s endorsement to the plan all the three Governments: the Janata Government, the Congress Government and the National Front Government have shared the same view stating the peace in parts in irrelevant when the entire south-Asian and Indian Ocean areas are threatened by internal conflict or external machinations. This is particularly so because Nepal’s Peace and Friendship Treaty with India is much more comprehensive and precise than any other comparable Treaty or Agreement. In order to meet India’s susceptibilities in this regard, Nepal has incorporated a provision in the definition of Zone of Peace reaffirming its “respect for all existing treaties”. But this formulation does not include arrangements other than Treaties. Further, even in relations to the Treaties, the provision in the proposal of sixth point is in contradiction with its first point regarding “friendly relations on the “basis of equality” …How then relations be established on the “basis of equality” it is being asked. Nepal has so far not extended any satisfactory explanation for this obvious contradiction between the proposal and existing relations.

The second and related aspect about which India is not convinced is the often-repeated reference to take the proposal to United Nations and aiding legal force to it. What will be the form of this? The implication as may be generally understood is obvious that it will internationalise Nepal’s bilateral relations with India (as also other countries). Since the endorsement of the proposal can not be but at the bilateral level. India may like to know Nepal’s thinking on the role the U.N. or any other international agency will play, if and when the obligations arising out of the Zone of Peace status are violated by Nepal or another country which has endorsed the proposal.

The third and most important reason on which India has its serious reservation, the clause of the seven point plan of the Peace Zone proposal which lays down that Nepal will not permit any activities on its soil that are hostile to other states supporting this proposal and in

Supporting this proposal will not permit any activities hostile to Nepal. This clause has been clearly aimed at restricting the domestic opposition groups in Nepal ranging from extreme Marxist Leninist to moderate democrats who have all shown their reservations regarding the peace zone proposals. Since India is generally used as a sanctuary for their hostile activities, whatever freedom the Nepali dissidents have been enjoying for decades in India would be severely curtailed. The Indian stand has been that how can India give a guarantee for curbing the activities of democratic forces, who enjoy the rights given by the Constitution of the land. Since India is a vast country and since there is a practice of an open border between the two neighbours, it is impossible to control the Nepali emigrants. As S. D. Muni remarks:

There is nothing to suggest that India wishes to disturb the present system but since the Zone of Peace proposal has so closely been identified with specific aspects of International politics, it is not possible for India or any other country to extend a categorical endorsement of it without becoming controversial within Nepal. Particularly so, because none of the major non-panchayat political groups has supported the King’s proposal. They clearly see this as a device by the King to mobilise implicitly international support for perpetuating his system

A powerful lobby in Nepal tends to link Nepal-India relations with the rise of communist activities within the kingdom. During the official visit of the Nepali Prime Minister, Surya Bahadur Thapa, in 1983, Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s reference to the “unknown and invisible forces was interpreted in Nepal as nothing more than her view on the probable communist menace to Nepal and India. What is credible in this sentiment is that there is an awareness of the growing influence of anti-democratic forces in recent years. But the difference between Nepal and India is that the Nepali monarch, who is likely to be an ultimate target of such a menace, seems to ensure the security through the pursuit of a more independent policy rather than by replying on any bilaterally agreed upon arrangement. Although the threat perception is not wholly ruled out by the establishment and other “liberal democrats”, contrary to their tendency to undermine it, effective measures for combating these forces should, however, be devised internally.

129 Rising Nepal, 22 February 1982
130 S. D. Muni, n. 35 pp. 791-92.
131 Rising Nepal, 5 February 1983.
What specific circumstance prompted king Birendra to declare Nepal as a Zone of Peace, have not yet been proved by any Nepali or foreign scholars or analysts? However, in the current scheme of things both India and Nepal should steer to develop a cooperative relationship with one another on the principle of co-equality, co-sharing and non-dominance. This is the basic concept of a balanced relationship among the nations of the world. Let the Zone of Peace not come in the way of our open border relationship which will only cramp our progress towards understanding and eventual brotherhood. It would be a retrograde step in our traditional relationship of amity and understanding built over the centuries.