



Kingdom of Nepal

Gorkha rule

After decades of rivalry between the medieval kingdoms, modern Nepal was unified in the latter half of the 18th century, when Prithvi Narayan Shah, the ruler of the small principality of Gorkha, formed a unified country from a number of independent hill high states. Prithvi Narayan Shah dedicated himself at an early age to the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley and the creation of a single state, which he achieved in 1768.

The country was frequently called the Gorkha Kingdom. It is a misconception that the Gorkhali took their name from the Gorkha region of Nepal; actually, the region was given its name after the Gorkhali had established their control of these areas.

After Shah's death, the Shah dynasty began to expand their kingdom into much of the Indian subcontinent. Between 1788 and 1791, during the Sino-Nepalese War, Nepal invaded Tibet and robbed Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse. Alarmed, the Qianlong Emperor of the Chinese Qing Dynasty appointed Fuk'anggan commander-in-chief of the Tibetan campaign; Fuk'anggan signed treaty to protect his troops thus attaining a draw. The draw was later converted to victory by Nepali forces sent on commands of PM Jung Bahadur Rana.

After 1800, the heirs of Prithvi Narayan Shah proved unable to maintain firm political control over Nepal. A period of internal turmoil followed. Rivalry between Nepal and the British East India Company over the princely states bordering Nepal and British-India eventually led to the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-16), in which Nepal suffered a heavy defeat. The Treaty of Sugauli was signed in 1816, ceding large parts of the Nepalese controlled territories to the British.

Rana rules

Jung Bahadur Rana was the first ruler from this dynasty. Rana rulers were titled "Shri Teen" and "Maharaja", whereas Shah kings were "Shri Panch" and "Maharajdiraj". Both the Rana dynasty and Shah dynasty are Rajput caste in the Hindu tradition. Jung Bahadur codified laws and modernized the state's bureaucracy. In the coup d'état of 1885, the nephews of Jung Bahadur and Ranodip Singh murdered Ranodip Singh and the sons of Jung Bahadur, stole the name of Jung Bahadur and took control of Nepal. Nine Rana rulers took the hereditary office of Prime Minister. All were styled (self proclaimed) Maharaja of Lamjung and Kaski.

The Rana regime, a tightly centralized autocracy, pursued a policy of isolating Nepal from external influences. This policy helped Nepal maintain its national independence during the British colonial era, but it also impeded the country's economic development and modernisation. The Ranas were staunchly pro-British and assisted the British during the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and later in both World Wars. At the same time, although Chinese claims, the British supported Nepalese independence at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In December 1923, Britain and Nepal formally signed a "treaty of perpetual peace and friendship" superseding the Sugauli Treaty of 1816 and upgrading the British resident in Kathmandu to an envoy. Following the German invasion of Poland, the Kingdom of Nepal declared war on Germany on September 4, 1939. Once Japan

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entered the conflict, sixteen battalions of the Royal Nepalese Army fought on the Burmese front. In addition to military support, Nepal contributed guns, equipment as well as hundreds of thousands of pounds of tea, sugar and raw materials such as timber to the Allied war effort.

Revolution of 1951

The revolution of 1951 started when dissatisfaction against the family rule of the Ranas had started emerging from among the few educated people, who had studied in various South Asian schools and colleges, and also from within the Ranas, many of whom were marginalized within the ruling Rana hierarchy. Many of these Nepalese in exile had actively taken part in the Indian Independence struggle and wanted to liberate Nepal as well from the autocratic Rana occupation. The political parties such as The Prajaparisad and Nepali Congress were already formed in exile by leaders such as B. P. Koirala, Ganesh Man Singh, Subarna Sumsher Rana, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Girija Prasad Koirala, and many other patriotic-minded Nepalis who urged the military and popular political movement in Nepal to overthrow the autocratic Rana Regime. Thus Nepali Congress formed a military wing Nepali Congress's Liberation Army. Among the prominent martyrs to die for the cause, executed at the hands of the Ranas, were Dharma Bhakta Mathema, Shukraraj Shastri, Gangalal Shrestha, and Dasharath Chand who were the members of Praja Parisad. This turmoil culminated in King Tribhuvan, a direct descendant of Prithvi Narayan Shah, fleeing from his "palace prison" in 1950, to India, touching off an armed revolt against the Rana administration. This eventually ended in the return of the Shah family to power and the appointment of a non-Rana as prime minister according to a tri-partite agreement signed called 'Delhi Compromise'. A period of quasi-constitutional rule followed, during which the monarch, assisted by the leaders of fledgling political parties, governed the country. During the 1950s, efforts were made to frame a constitution for Nepal that would establish a representative form of government, based on a British model. There was a 10-member cabinet under Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher having 5 members of Rana and 5 of Nepali Congress party. This government drafted a constitution called 'Interim Government Act' which was the first constitution of Nepal. But this government doomed as Ranas and Congressmen were never on good terms. So, on 1 Mangsir 2008 BS, the king formed a new government of 14 ministers, which was also dissolved. Later on Sharawan 2009 BS King formed 5 members councillors government which was also failed.



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Royal coup by King Mahendra

Declaring parliamentary democracy a failure, King Mahendra carried out a royal coup 18 months later, in 1960. He dismissed the elected Koirala government, declared that a "partyless" system would govern Nepal, and promulgated another new constitution on December 16, 1960.

Subsequently, the elected Prime Minister, Members of Parliament and hundreds of democratic activists were arrested. (In fact, this trend of arrest of political activists and democratic supporters continued for the entire 30-year period of partyless Panchayati System under King Mahendra and then his son, King Birendra).

The new constitution established a "partyless" system of panchayats (councils) which King Mahendra considered to be a democratic form of government, closer to Nepalese traditions. As a pyramidal structure, progressing from village assemblies to the Panchayat system constitutionalized the absolute power of the monarchy and kept the King as head of state with sole authority over all governmental institutions, including the Cabinet (Council of Ministers) and the Parliament. One-state-one-language became the national policy in an effort to carry out state unification, uniting various ethnic and regional groups into a singular Nepali nationalist bond. The 'Gaun Pharka Aviyan' launched in 1967, was one of the main rural development programs of the Panchayat system.

King Mahendra was succeeded by his 27-year-old son, King Birendra, in 1972. Amid student demonstrations and anti-regime activities in 1979, King Birendra called for a national referendum to decide on the nature of Nepal's government: either the continuation of the panchayat system along with democratic reforms or the

establishment of a multiparty system. The referendum was held in May 1980, and the panchayat system won a narrow victory. The king carried out the promised reforms, including selection of the prime minister by the Rastriya Panchayat.

Multiparty parliament

People in rural areas had expected that their interests would be better represented after the adoption of parliamentary democracy in 1990. The Nepali Congress with the support of "Alliance of leftist parties" decided to launch a decisive agitational movement, Jana Andolan, which forced the monarchy to accept constitutional reforms and to establish a multiparty parliament. In May 1991, Nepal held its first parliamentary elections in nearly 50 years. The Nepali Congress won 110 of the 205 seats and formed the first elected government in 32 years.

Civil strikes

In 1992, in a situation of economic crisis and chaos, with spiraling prices as a result of the implementation of changes in policy of the new Congress government, the radical left stepped up their political agitation. A Joint People's Agitation Committee was set up by the various groups.[18] A general strike was called for April 6.

Violent incidents began to occur on the evening before the strike. The Joint People's Agitation Committee had called for a 30-minute 'lights out' in the capital, and violence erupted outside Bir Hospital when activists tried to enforce the 'lights out'. At dawn on April 6, clashes between strike activists and police, outside a police station in Pulchok (Patan), left two activists dead.

Later in the day, a mass rally of the Agitation Committee at Tundikhel in the capital Kathmandu was attacked by police forces. As a result, riots broke out and the Nepal Telecommunications building was set on fire; police opened fire at the crowd, killing several persons. The Human Rights Organisation of Nepal estimated that 14 persons, including several onlookers, had been killed in police firing.

When promised land reforms failed to appear, people in some districts started to organize to enact their own land reform and to gain some power over their lives in the face of usurious landlords. However, this movement was repressed by the Nepali government, in "Operation Romeo" and "Operation Kilo Sera II", which took the lives of many of the leading activists of the struggle. As a result, many witnesses to this repression became radicalized.

Nepalese Civil War

In March 1997, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) started a bid to replace the parliamentary monarchy with a people's new democratic republic, through a Maoist revolutionary strategy known as the people's war, which led to the Nepalese Civil War. Led by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai and Pushpa Kamal Dahal (also known as "Prachanda"), the insurgency began in five districts in Nepal: Rolpa, Rukum, Jajarkot, Gorkha, and Sindhuli. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) established a provisional "people's government" at the district level in several locations.

On June 1, 2001, Prince Dipendra, went on a shooting-spree, assassinating 9 members of the royal family, including King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, before shooting himself. Due to his survival, he temporarily became king before dying of his wounds, after which Prince Gyanendra (HMG King Birendra's brother) inherited the throne, as per tradition. Meanwhile, the rebellion escalated, and in October 2002 the king temporarily deposed the government and took complete control of it. A week later he reappointed another government, but the country was still very unstable.

In the face of unstable governments and a siege on the Kathmandu Valley in August 2004, popular support for the monarchy began to wane. On February 1, 2005, Gyanendra dismissed the entire government and assumed full executive powers, declaring a "state of emergency" to quash the revolution. Politicians were placed under house arrest, phone and internet lines were cut, and freedom of the press was severely curtailed.

The king's new regime made little progress in his stated aim to suppress the insurgents. Municipal elections in February 2006 were

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described by the European Union as "a backward step for democracy", as the major parties boycotted the election and some candidates were forced to run for office by the army. In April 2006 strikes and street protests in Kathmandu forced the king to reinstate the parliament. A seven-party coalition resumed control of the government and stripped the king of most of his powers. As of 15 January 2007, Nepal was governed by a unicameral legislature under an interim constitution. On December 24, 2007, seven parties, including the former Maoist rebels and the ruling party, agreed to abolish the monarchy and declare Nepal the Federal Republic.[21] In the elections held on 10 April 2008, the Maoists secured a simple majority, with the prospect of forming a government to rule the proposed 'Republic of Nepal'.

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