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# Political Parties of Nepal: Role and Significance in the Nepali Polity

*Palu Joshi*

**Abstract** Nepal is a small nation state between two Asian giants, yet standing tall on the basis of its unique cultural, historical and political heritage. It finds mention in ancient texts like the Mahabharata, Kautiliya's Arthashastra, the Buddhist and the Jain scriptures, etc. From 1000 BC till 18<sup>th</sup> century AD, the region was divided among several small kingdoms who were constantly at war with each other until King Prithvi Narayan Shah unified them to form the present day Nepal. His descendants ruled over the country until 2006. Monarchy has been one of the key players along with political parties in the Nepali politics. The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the waning of King's authority and the consequent rise of court nobles, which culminated in the establishment of absolute rule of the hereditary Rana prime ministers.

This "Ranarchy" was overthrown by a popular movement spearheaded by the Nepali Congress in 1948, thus ushering a new era of parliamentary monarchy under the guidance of King Tribhuvan.

However in 1962, King Mahendra aborted the system and enforced a totalitarian party less "Panchayat System". Many of the parties went underground to save their existence and to continue with the struggle to restore democracy. Their efforts bore fruit in the year 1991, when King Birendra re-established the parliamentary system as a result of a popular movement again lead by the Nepali Congress.

But there was still a certain section of Nepali polity that wanted the total abolishment of the King's rule and it initiated an armed struggle for the same in 1996. This revolution, led by the Communist groups of Nepal finally succeeded in 2006, but only when they supported by

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