

Patronage, politics and administration in Naya Nepal

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Hostility towards bureaucracy has been a durable feature, especially among political conservatives and economic liberals. They regard bureaucracy as a manifestation of big government and an instrument for governmental interference in the operations of the private sector. All who share this distaste believe that they are faced with some formidable problems through internal contradictions in the democratic political structure, especially created by the role of bureaucracy in it (Etzioni- Halevy, 1983). More often than not, academics and development experts see bureaucracy as a mechanism that acts against the spirit of democracy, a system that impedes the very process of democracy. This deduction has been carried over to comparative administration studies, which have assumed that an apparatus, which has the potential to overwhelm well-developed political institutions of the Western World, is more than likely to completely overshadow those weak, under-developed political institutions of new democracies and hinder their democratic growth. However, the case of Nepal proves it otherwise. Elected officials and not bureaucrats pose a formidable challenge to proper formation and functioning of democratic institutions in the country. According to Zakaria (2007, p. 102), an untempered democracy has the capacity to threaten liberty and constitutionalism. Zakaria's this conclusion rings true in the case of Nepal. The already hollowed bureaucracy, that has undergone various cutbacks due to the advice of international aid agencies operating in the region, totters further under increasing politicization. Efficient, effective and equitable bureaucratic operations are nonexistent. Political spoils have become the norm in the Nepalese bureaucratic system. Aggressive identity-based politics that have infiltrated every branch of government including the administrative branch undermine merit and modernity. In this backdrop, the Nepalese administrative state struggles in its quest for political development.

How has it evolved since the advent of multi-party democracy in 1990? What should be its role in the formation of "Naya Nepal"? How will a fractured, heavily politicized bureaucracy impact the process of

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democracy consolidation and constitution building? The paper seeks to answer these questions.