DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY (BHU), VARANASI

Beyond Regime Change: Nepal's Political, Social and Ecological Transition

CONCEPT NOTE

Three-Day International Conference

Proposed Dates: 17-19th February 2027
Venue: BHU, Varanasi

Overview:

The Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), proposes to organize a two-day International Seminar titled "Beyond Regime Change: Nepal's Political, Social and Ecological Transition", Three-Day International Conference to be held from 17–19 February 2027at BHU, Varanasi. The conference will bring together scholars, policy practitioners, and public intellectuals from India and Nepal to examine Nepal's transition in context to the regime change. A youth-led movement toppled Nepal's government within days, and a decisive election brought a new regime to office. Regime change replaces who governs, while transition changes how power, resources and belonging are organised, and it takes far longer. Through political, social and ecological dimensions the seminar wants to understand such transitions.

Background and Rationale:

In 2025, Nepal saw a youth movement, triggered by ban on social media platforms, fuelled by corruption, nepotism and lack of opportunities. The Government was toppled in a matter of days. This was followed by an interim administration, a decisive election in which a new party Rashtriya Swatantrata Party came to power with Balendra Shah as the Prime Minister. The speed of the process would lead one to believe that the hard part is over. Though the regime has changed, the transition is about how power, resources and belongings are organised and distributed. Transition takes much more and longer than regime change. Therefore, the question that emerges now is what is going to happen beyond this change?

This conference wants to explore the transition in Nepal and suggest that the transition should be seen through three interlocking processes: political, social and the ecological. A transition which is only based on any one of these is going to be unsustainable. The political transition is about constitutional institutions, parties, accountability and federalism. It is about whether a massive mandate will produce institutions which will outlive the people who brought it? Whether justice for violence is going to be pursued? Whether power will be shared between the centre and the provinces or will it be concentrated in the hands of the executives? The social

transition is about generations, identity, inclusion, work and migration. It is about whether the young people who led the uprising will find a place in the institutions which they have so effectively destabilised; whether the groups that have long been on the margins of society will actually be represented; whether a country which is so dependent on the labour of its citizens overseas can offer them a reason to stay. The ecological transition is based on rivers, hydropower and climate related disasters. It should address who gets to decide how the natural resources are used, who bears the cost of the floods and the landslides as was evident from the August 2026 flash flood and landslide. Whether a state of limited capacity can actually manage climate risk while also having to negotiate water and energy with its larger neighbours?

To treat these as separate issues is to miss the point of their interlinkage. The administrative constraints which limit accountability also limit the state's capacity to respond to disaster. The revenue from the rivers is directly tied to the state's relationship with its neighbours, especially India and China. Migration has an effect on both political participation and on the ability of a household to recover from a flood. A government which is elected on a platform of institutional reform inherits the same weak state that it promises to repair. Therefore, it is important to understand what it takes for Nepal to move beyond regime change. Exploring questions of durable institutions, accountable power, inclusive distribution and ecological resilience. Two additional factors affect the way they interact. The first is that of foreign policy. The Nepali government has advocated for a balanced and independent foreign policy while both India and China are competing for influence in the areas of energy, infrastructure and security. Can the external partners help to promote the transition by supporting institutions, hydropower and disaster response or they would hinder it by linking revenue, investment and political decisions to their own interests? The way in which the government manages its two major neighbours will have a direct bearing on whether its political reforms will survive, whether its social promises can be fulfilled or whether it will be able to deal with shared rivers and climate risks. Also added to this is the question of USA's equation with Nepal. USA's relation with Nepal can be read as hedging which may provide an alternative to the overdominance of any single neighbour. This is clearly evident from the developmental assistance that is received by Nepal in the form of Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact. Therefore, the consequences of involvement of an extra-regional power and its effects will hold immense importance for the future of Nepal. The second factor is the regional context. Nepal is not the only South Asian country in which mass protests have brought down a government, and comparisons with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh show that similar starting points can result in different outcomes. By placing Nepal in this context alongside these other cases, it will be possible to draw a comparative and find its peculiarities.

Objectives:

1. To assess whether the political transition is building lasting institutions and fair accountability.

2. To examine whether the social transition includes youth and marginalised groups.

3. To analyse how Nepal governs its natural resources and climate risk.

4. To show how the three transitions reinforce or undermine one another.

5. To assess how Nepal's foreign policy in balancing amongst India, China and USA affect its transition.

6. To place Nepal in South Asian context by comparing it with other countries where mass protest had toppled governments.

Thematic Panels (Call for Papers)

Papers and presentations are invited under the following panels. Interdisciplinary approaches and empirically grounded work are especially encouraged.

1. **Institutions, Accountability and Rule of law**: This panel looks at how institutions perform after a decisive election. It asks whether the executive, the courts and constitutional bodies balance one another, and whether justice for protest-era and conflict-era violence can be pursued fairly, without becoming selective or retributive.

2. **Youth, Work and Migration**: This panel asks what young people, who led the uprising, now gain or lose. How should the state regulate social media after a ban that triggered a revolt? How can unemployment and migration shape their politics and their future prospects?

3. **Identity, Inclusion and Representation**: This panel asks who is represented and who remains outside. Does the new order change the place of Madhesi, Janajati, Dalit and women's politics and if so how and what are the challenges that looms large

4. **Rivers, Hydropower and Resource politics**: This panel examines who decides how water, land and forests are used, and who benefits out of it. How do hydropower projects and river agreements shape sovereignty, revenue and local livelihoods? How do this links to neighbouring power and Nepal's bargaining position?

5. **Climate change and related disaster:** This panel treats climate and disaster as political questions. Can a state of limited capacity deliver adaptation, and who pays? How are floods, landslides and glacier risk governed at national and local levels

6. **Foreign policy and the regional order:** This panel examines how Nepal handles relations with India, China and the United States under a government that calls for a balanced and independent foreign policy. It asks how far Nepal can hedge, what the US infrastructure compact adds, and how its dependence on India limits its room to manoeuvre

Abstract submission:

- 200–250 words; title up to 20 words
- Times New Roman 12; double-spaced
- Must indicate **one** panel (Panel 1–6)
- MS Word (.doc/.docx)

Full paper (selected presenters):

- 5,000–7,000 words including references
- APA 7th edition (consistent formatting)
- Original, plagiarism-free; proper citations
- MS Word (.doc/.docx)

Email for submission: nepalconference@bhu.ac.in

Timeline:

- Abstract submission deadline: 10.12.26
- Acceptance notification: 25.12.26
- Registration deadline (presenters): 01.02.27
- Full paper submission :08.02.27

Registration:

Registration amount will be Rs 1000 for the accepted paper presenters. And the account details for registration will be updated afterwards.

Patronage and Leadership:

Chief Patron: Prof. Ajit Kumar Chaturvedi, Vice-Chancellor, BHU

Patron: Prof. Ashok Kumar Upadhyay, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, BHU

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Convenor: Prof Tej Pratap Singh
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