



# Land Reform and Peasant Marginalization in Nepal: Evaluating the 1964 Act through a Marxian Perspective

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## Abstract

Nepal's Land Reform Act of 1964 marked a critical juncture in the country's transition from a feudal agrarian system to a modern developmental state. This study evaluates the socio-economic impacts of the reform on the peasantry class, particularly smallholder farmers, through a Marxian analytical lens. Drawing from secondary qualitative and quantitative data, including policy archives, empirical case studies, and scholarly critiques, this paper contends that the 1964 reform aimed to dismantle traditional landlordism but fell short in eradicating class inequality and land-based exploitation. While the reform nominally introduced tenancy rights and land ceilings, structural loopholes enabled elite landlords to retain control over large landholdings by circumventing laws through proxy ownership and kinship-based fragmentation. Moreover, the reform failed to challenge the deeply entrenched class hierarchy, reinforcing semi-feudal relations in many rural areas. Findings indicate that the reform had mixed outcomes: while some tenant farmers benefited from land titles and legal protection, others remained landless or vulnerable to informal tenancy arrangements. The research utilizes Marx's theory of historical materialism and the class struggle to demonstrate how legal reforms, without revolutionary transformation in the ownership structure, merely reproduced existing inequalities under a new guise. The study concludes by recommending a renewed policy framework that addresses loopholes, ensures distributive justice, and centers peasant agency. This research contributes to broader discourses on agrarian transformation, state-led reforms, and postcolonial class dynamics in South Asia.

**Keywords:** landownership systems, agrarian reforms, Nepalese peasant, peasant livelihoods

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## **1. Introduction**

The agrarian transformation of Nepal has long been shaped by historical class structures rooted in a feudal landholding system. Prior to the 1950s, the rural economy of Nepal was overwhelmingly characterized by landlord-tenant relations, where a small elite class of landowners controlled vast tracts of arable land while most cultivators worked under exploitative tenancy arrangements (Regmi, 1978). The introduction of the Land Reform Act of 1964 was a landmark state intervention that sought to disrupt this asymmetrical socio-economic structure by abolishing the zamindari-style landlordism and empowering tenant farmers. This legislative effort was driven by the post-Rana state's aspiration to modernize agriculture, curb rural unrest, and strengthen its control over land revenue (Blaikie, Cameron, & Seddon, 2002). Despite its progressive aims, however, the actual outcomes of the reform remain heavily contested.

From a Marxian theoretical perspective, land is not merely a productive asset but a central axis around which class struggle and exploitation revolve. Marx's (1867/1976) historical materialism posits that legal reforms alone cannot resolve the contradictions of a feudal agrarian structure without fundamentally transforming the relations of production. In the Nepali context, although the 1964 reforms introduced ceilings on landholding, tenancy security, and redistribution schemes, the persistence of informal tenancies, bureaucratic manipulation, and elite capture suggests that the reforms served to stabilize, rather than revolutionize, class relations (Upreti, 2001).

This paper interrogates the degree to which the Land Reform Act of 1964 alleviated structural inequalities faced by the peasantry. It also explores how the reform operated within a framework of class compromise rather than rupture. By doing so, the study raises broader questions about state-led land reform programs in post-feudal societies and their capacity to catalyze genuine socio-economic transformation. The paper specifically focuses on the experiences of smallholder cultivators, tenant farmers, and landless laborers—the rural subalterns often left out of formal land entitlements.

Empirical data collected from secondary literature, case studies, and government reports suggest that while the reform did provide some legal recognition and security to tenants, it failed to redistribute land on a significant scale (Ojha, 1983; Adhikari, 2008). Moreover, the landed elite, often well-connected to political and administrative networks, successfully evaded redistribution mandates through kinship partitioning, falsified land records, and manipulation of tenancy registers (Sharma, 2001). As such, the reform served more as a mechanism for political legitimization than a revolutionary restructuring of agrarian relations.

The significance of this inquiry lies not only in revisiting a major historical policy event but also in contributing to contemporary policy debates in Nepal, where land inequality, rural poverty, and agrarian distress remain pressing issues. In fact, successive

governments have launched additional reform attempts, such as the National Land Policy (2019), in part as a response to the limitations of the 1964 Act. These recent developments further highlight the relevance of critically assessing past reforms through rigorous theoretical and empirical frameworks.

Land inequality and rural poverty remain serious problems in Nepal. Studying the 1964 Land Reform Act through a Marxian perspective helps us understand why the reform failed to bring real change for tenant farmers, smallholders, and landless laborers. By examining how class, elite control, and state policies shaped the outcomes, this research highlights important lessons for current and future land reform efforts. Therefore, the study **“Land Reform and Peasant Marginalization in Nepal: Evaluating the 1964 Act through a Marxian Perspective”** is important to understand past challenges and guide policies for reducing rural inequality in Nepal.

## **2. Literature Review**

This literature review is organized into three main parts. First, the policy review looks at the history and legal framework of land reform in Nepal, examining how laws were designed to redistribute land and protect tenant farmers. Second, the theoretical framework applies a Marxian perspective to understand how land reforms affected class relations and whether they challenged or reinforced existing inequalities. Finally, the empirical studies section reviews evidence from past research on the outcomes of the 1964 land reform, highlighting both the successes, such as granting land titles to some tenants, and the limitations, including ongoing landlessness and informal tenancy arrangements.

### **2.1 Policy Review: Historical and Legal Context of Land Reform in Nepal**

Nepal's land tenure system before the 1950s was characterized by semi-feudal arrangements dominated by Birta (tax-free grants), Jagir (state service-based grants), and Raikar (state-owned land managed by tenants) systems. These systems concentrated land ownership in the hands of elites such as royals, military officials, and civil administrators, leaving cultivators vulnerable to rent extraction and eviction (Regmi, 1978). The Rana oligarchy (1846–1951) institutionalized landlordism by strengthening hereditary landholding rights while relegating cultivators to dependent tenancy status (Blaikie et al., 2002).

Following the political changes of 1951, the Nepali state adopted a development-oriented agenda that emphasized agrarian reform as a tool for modernization. After the peasants' revolution in many places of the country, the Land Reform Commission Report of 1953 laid the groundwork for tenancy protection and land redistribution. This culminated in the Land Reform Act of 1964, which introduced three main policy mechanisms: (1) abolition of intermediaries (landlords), (2) fixation of land ceiling limits, and (3) granting ownership rights to tenants (Government of Nepal, 1964).

However, implementation remained inconsistent. According to the National Planning Commission (NPC, 1980), elite resistance, administrative corruption, and lack of political will undermined the objectives of the Act. The 1991 World Bank review concluded that land ceiling enforcement was sporadic, and redistributive outcomes were minimal. The High-Level Land Reform Commission in Nepal appears to agree with these conclusions (see Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2010).

In summary, while the 1964 Land Reform Act aimed to modernize Nepal's agrarian structure and empower tenant farmers, its implementation was hampered by elite resistance, bureaucratic inefficiency, and limited political will, resulting in minimal redistribution and persistent rural landlessness.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework: Marxian Critique of Agrarian Reform**

From a Marxian perspective, land reform must be understood not merely as a technical or administrative endeavor, but as a terrain of class struggle between the landed elite and the landless or land-poor peasantry (Marx, 1867/1976). Marx viewed land as a form of capital embedded in social relations, and agrarian reform as a potentially revolutionary means of transforming production relations. However, in the absence of proletarian leadership or mass mobilization, state-led reforms often become mechanisms for "passive revolution" (Gramsci, 1971), wherein the ruling class co-opts reform agendas to maintain social order.

Applied to Nepal, the 1964 reform represented a case of top-down restructuring aimed at diffusing agrarian unrest and integrating the peasantry into the state apparatus, rather than disrupting the foundations of elite dominance. Scholars such as Upreti (2004) argue that the reform served to "defuse class tensions without redistributing power." Similarly, Hart (1986) warns that reforms that operate within the limits of bourgeois legality tend to reinforce existing hierarchies by legalizing elite advantages.

Lenin's writings on agrarian questions also provide insights. He emphasized the importance of land collectivization and full peasant mobilization as essential for dismantling landlordism (Lenin, 1907/1964). The lack of such mobilization in Nepal, combined with a weak state structure, meant that reforms were captured by local power brokers who manipulated the process in their favor.

Contemporary neo-Marxist scholars have advanced this critique by linking Nepal's land reform with global capitalist integration. Sugden (2013) argues that the state's interest in capitalist development, especially through rural monetization and agricultural commercialization, shaped land policies that prioritized efficiency over justice. This ideological orientation made reform technocratic rather than emancipatory, favoring wealthier peasants and landlords who could adapt to market logic.

In sum, the Land Reform Act of 1964 illustrates how state-led agrarian reforms in Nepal, while framed as emancipatory, primarily reinforced existing class hierarchies, leaving the rural peasantry only partially empowered and highlighting the limits of reform without grassroots mobilization and structural transformation.

### **2.3 Empirical Studies: Evidence of Outcomes and Limitations**

Numerous empirical studies confirm the limited redistributive success of the 1964 land reform. Adhikari (2008), in a survey of hills and Tarai villages, found that most tenant cultivators had not received land titles even decades after the reform. In many cases, landlords pre-emptively registered land in the names of kin to evade ceiling laws. Similarly, Acharya and Zafarullah (1992) documented widespread manipulation of tenancy records, with government officials often complicit in excluding genuine tenants.

Ojha (1983) observed that in the Tarai region, where land values were higher, elite families converted landholdings into multiple titles using fictitious names, thus nullifying ceiling provisions. This not only maintained but often expanded elite control over land. In contrast, in the hill regions, poor infrastructure and fragmentation made land less lucrative, resulting in a relatively higher proportion of tenant ownership, though still limited.

Rural sociologists have highlighted the reform's gender and caste biases. Tamang (2002) found that women's land rights were almost entirely ignored in implementation. Similarly, lower-caste Dalit households remained landless at disproportionately high rates. The Agricultural Census of Nepal (2001) reported that only 10% of the total land was owned by the bottom 50% of cultivators, indicating persistent inequality. Fieldwork-based studies also report a mismatch between legal entitlements and social reality. For example, Ramesh (2011) notes that although tenancy rights were nominally protected, informal evictions continued in many areas, as tenants lacked legal literacy or access to justice. Moreover, even when ownership was granted, the small plot sizes—often under 0.5 hectares—were insufficient for livelihood security, reinforcing dependence on seasonal wage labor or out-migration (Community Self-Reliance Centre, 2005).

Recent policy evaluations echo these concerns. The National Land Policy of 2019 acknowledges past failures and proposes a shift toward integrated land governance, with digitized records, gender equity, and recognition of informal settlements (MoLRM, 2019). However, critics argue that without addressing underlying class interests and enforcing existing laws, the cycle of elite capture may persist (Paudel et al., 2020).

While the 1964 Land Reform Act was a progressive milestone on paper, its actual implementation was marred by contradictions, elite resistance, and systemic inertia. From a Marxian standpoint, this aligns with the view that reforms enacted from above, without mass mobilization or structural rupture, are bound to be limited in emancipatory

potential. The empirical findings, drawn from various geographic and demographic contexts, support the argument that land reform in Nepal has been more symbolic than transformative. Overall, these empirical findings underscore that the 1964 Land Reform Act, despite its progressive intentions, largely failed to alter entrenched land hierarchies, leaving the Nepali peasantry - particularly women, lower-caste groups, and tenant farmers - marginalized and highlighting the enduring gap between reform policy and substantive agrarian justice.

### **3. Research Gap**

Despite decades of scholarship on Nepal's 1964 Land Reform Act, significant gaps remain in understanding its broader structural and socio-economic implications for the peasantry. While existing studies document limited redistributive success, elite manipulation, and persistent inequalities along class, caste, and gender lines, few have systematically analyzed how these dynamics interacted with state policy, local power structures, and grassroots responses to shape long-term agrarian outcomes. Moreover, most research emphasizes either legal frameworks or isolated empirical cases, without integrating a class-conscious theoretical lens that links policy design to lived peasant realities. Addressing this gap, the present study—*From Feudalism to Reform: The Implications of Land Reform Acts of 1964 on Nepali Peasantry*—adopts a Marxian perspective to critically examine how the reform mediated class relations, reinforced or challenged elite dominance, and affected the socio-economic agency of smallholder cultivators, tenant farmers, and landless laborers. By combining historical, theoretical, and empirical insights, this research seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the reform's emancipatory limits and enduring structural consequences for rural Nepal.

### **4. Objectives**

This study primarily seeks to examine the historical and socio-economic impact of the Land Reform Act of 1964 on Nepal's rural peasantry. First, it investigates whether the reform led to a substantive redistribution of land and the dismantling of feudal power structures that had historically oppressed tenant farmers and landless laborers. Second, the research evaluates the extent to which the reform transformed class relations in the countryside, particularly considering ongoing land inequality, elite dominance, and the persistence of informal tenures. By exploring these dimensions through a Marxian theoretical lens, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how reform laws in post-feudal societies can reproduce, rather than eliminate, structural inequalities.

### **5. Methodology**

This research adopts a qualitative and interpretive methodology that relies on secondary data analysis (Pederson et al., 2020), with particular emphasis on class analysis and

historical structural critique. Drawing on the Marxian framework of historical materialism, the study treats land not only as a productive resource but as a social relation embedded within broader structures of power and exploitation (Marx, 1976). The analysis is based on diverse secondary sources including legislative documents such as the 1964 Land Reform Act and subsequent land policy amendments, empirical studies and surveys from the Agricultural Census of Nepal (1981, 2001) and reports by the Ministry of Land Reform and Management (MoLRM), peer-reviewed academic literature from scholars like Regmi (1978), Blaikie et al. (2002), Upreti (2004), Adhikari (2008), and Paudel et al. (2020); theoretical contributions from classical and neo-Marxist thinkers such as Marx, Lenin (1907/1964), Gramsci (1971), and contemporary agrarian political economists like Sugden (2013).

The following section presents findings on: limited redistribution and the persistence of land inequality, elite capture and administrative subversion, continued marginalization of landless and Dalit communities, inadequate tenancy security and informal evictions, gender exclusion in land ownership, emergence of a rural petty bourgeoisie and agrarian stratification, impact on peasant livelihoods, and reform as a tool of state legitimization.

## **6. Findings**

### **6.1 Limited Redistribution and the Persistence of Land Inequality**

Although the Land Reform Act of 1964 legally established ceilings on landholding and promised tenancy rights, it led to only limited land redistribution in practice. Most of the productive land remained concentrated in the hands of a small elite. This result contradicted the intended goal of dismantling semi-feudal ownership and achieving equitable access to land.

The Agricultural Census of 2001 reported that over 70% of cultivators owned less than one hectare of land, while fewer than 5% of households controlled more than 25% of arable land (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2001). In many Tarai districts, landed elites used kin-based partitioning and fake ownership transfers to circumvent land ceiling rules (Ojha, 1983). Thus, while the law appeared progressive on paper, it enabled landlords to preserve ownership under legally permissible guises, reinforcing what Marx (1976) described as the transformation of formal equality into substantive inequality through capitalist legal forms.

### **6.2 Elite Capture and Administrative Subversion**

Empirical studies show that Nepal's landed elites manipulated the implementation of the reform through political influence and bureaucratic collusion. Landlords often bribed officials to keep tenant names off formal registers (Adhikari, 2008). In some areas, such as Siraha and Saptari, peasants who had cultivated land for decades found

themselves excluded from legal recognition, while absentee landlords registered false tenants to retain ownership (Sharma, 2001).

In effect, the reform enabled a process of elite capture, whereby the dominant class leveraged state structures to reassert their control. This aligns with Gramsci's (1971) concept of passive revolution, wherein dominant groups accommodate limited reform to prevent broader systemic upheaval. The restructuring of land ownership occurred within the boundaries of the existing class structure, serving to pacify peasant unrest without genuinely transforming rural power relations.

### **6.3 Continued Marginalization of Landless and Dalit Communities**

The reform failed to address landlessness and caste-based exclusion in any substantive way. Dalits and other marginalized communities remained disproportionately without land. According to Community Self-Reliance Centre (2005), over 85% of Dalit households remained either landless or near-landless decades after the reform's introduction. The 2001 census data corroborated this, showing that landless households had barely decreased in number since the 1970s (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

In rural hill regions such as Ramechhap and Gorkha, lower-caste tenants reported that even after receiving tenancy certificates, they lacked the financial and legal resources to formalize land titles (Tamang, 2002). Moreover, informal tenancy arrangements, often based on verbal agreements and mediated by local elites, continued to dominate in the absence of institutional follow-up. This reproduced dependency and exploitation, despite formal legal protection.

### **6.4 Inadequate Tenancy Security and Informal Evictions**

Though the Act promised tenancy rights, it lacked effective enforcement mechanisms. Many tenants were evicted before they could be formally recognized, while others received only partial land rights that did not correspond to their actual cultivated area (Upreti, 2004). Landowners preemptively transferred land to relatives or sold it off before registration, leaving tenants legally disenfranchised.

Ramesh (2011) documented widespread cases where tenants were either unaware of their legal rights or unable to navigate complex legal systems to claim them. In these instances, state law proved insufficient in the face of customary and informal power relations that continued to structure rural land tenure. Marx (1976) famously noted that the state under capitalism serves the interests of the dominant class through its control of law and coercion. The same happened, as an observation borne out by Nepal's reform experience.

## **6.5 Gender Exclusion in Land Ownership**

Women's exclusion from the land reform process was systematic and sustained. Until legal amendments in the 2000s, women were not recognized as equal landowners unless explicitly listed in documentation, which was rare. Tamang (2002) reported that less than 5% of land titles were in women's names prior to 2002. Even after reforms to inheritance laws, implementation remained weak, particularly in rural areas where patriarchal norms dominated.

This absence of gender justice in land reform reflects what Hart (1986) describes as structural omissions in reformist policies that prioritize class relations while ignoring intra household dynamics and social reproduction. The continued exclusion of women from land rights impeded their economic autonomy and reinforced traditional gender hierarchies within rural peasant households.

## **6.6 Emergence of a Rural Petty Bourgeoisie and Agrarian Stratification**

While the reform failed to create a classless peasantry, it did give rise to a rural petty bourgeoisie a small class of relatively well-off peasant proprietors who benefited from land titles and used them for credit access and commercialization. These smallholders were often located in mid hill regions, where land values were lower and landlord resistance weaker (Blaikie et al., 2002).

## **6.7 Impact on Peasant Livelihoods**

The Land Reform Act of 1964 had a mixed impact on the livelihoods of Nepal's rural peasantry. While the legal recognition of tenancy rights and limited land redistribution provided some tenants with improved tenure security, many peasants continued to struggle with insufficient landholding sizes that were inadequate for subsistence farming (Adhikari, 2008; Community Self-Reliance Centre, 2005). The persistence of landlessness and informal tenancy forced many smallholders and landless laborers to depend on seasonal wage labor, sharecropping, or migration to urban areas for supplemental income (Tamang, 2002). Consequently, despite formal reforms, rural livelihoods remained precarious, with limited access to credit, agricultural inputs, and markets further constraining productivity and economic stability (Blaikie, Cameron, & Seddon, 2002). These livelihood insecurities highlight the partial nature of reform impacts and the continued vulnerability of the peasantry within Nepal's semi feudal agrarian structure

However, the stratification of the peasantry accelerated as these smallholders began leasing land to even poorer laborers, thereby recreating exploitative relations under different terms. In Marxist terms, this signifies a transformation of relations of production that maintains surplus extraction, albeit in more decentralized or diffuse

forms (Lenin, 1964). The emergence of small capitalist farmers thus coexisted with the persistence of landlessness, reproducing a dual agrarian economy.

### **6.8 Reform as a Tool of State Legitimization**

Finally, the reform served as a political function for the newly emerging state, allowing it to consolidate legitimacy among the rural masses while maintaining its alliance with landed elites. The Panchayat regime (1960–1990), under King Mahendra and later King Birendra, used the language of reform to neutralize class-based opposition and promote a controlled modernization agenda (Whelpton, 2005). This dual strategy emancipatory rhetoric combined with minimalist implementation is emblematic of what Poulantzas (1978) termed authoritarian statism, where the state claims developmental legitimacy while preserving elite interests. In this sense, the 1964 Land Reform Act was not a revolutionary rupture but a hegemonic compromise that absorbed peasant grievances into the framework of bureaucratic governance. It demonstrates how law can function ideologically, appearing to offer change while materially entrenching the status quo.

In summary, the findings indicate that the Land Reform Act of 1964, despite its progressive intentions, achieved only limited redistribution of land and largely failed to dismantle entrenched semi-feudal hierarchies in rural Nepal. Elite capture, administrative subversion, and bureaucratic manipulation enabled landed families to circumvent ceilings and maintain control, while Dalits, women, and other marginalized groups remained systematically excluded from land ownership. Tenancy rights were inconsistently enforced, informal evictions persisted, and the emergence of a small rural petty bourgeoisie further stratified the peasantry, reproducing exploitative relations under new forms. Overall, the reform functioned more as a tool for state legitimization and the pacification of rural unrest than as a transformative mechanism, highlighting the gap between legislative promises and substantive agrarian justice in Nepal.

## **7. Discussion**

The empirical evidence presented in this study substantiates the claim that the Land Reform Act of 1964, though radical in rhetoric, was conservative in its outcomes. From a Marxian perspective, this is unsurprising. Legal reforms within capitalist and semi-feudal societies are often designed to mediate, not abolish, and class antagonisms. Marx (1976) warned that legal changes imposed from above without revolutionary class mobilization tend to reproduce existing property relations in more institutionalized forms. This is precisely what occurred in Nepal, where the reform functioned as a state led containment of rural unrest rather than a transformative redistribution of productive assets.

The dominant pattern was one of passive revolution, a Gramscian concept whereby dominant classes concede limited reform to preempt mass mobilization (Gramsci, 1971). Rather than dismantling the feudal order, Nepal's land reform adapted it to a

bureaucratic and legalistic framework. Landlords retained their power not through overt coercion but through legal manipulation, administrative capture, and kin-based land fragmentation. As Upreti (2004) noted, the reform legitimized elite land control under a democratic guise, thereby displacing class conflict into legal and institutional arenas.

Another key Marxist insight validated by this study is Lenin's (1964) critique of petty bourgeois reformism. The emergence of a smallholder class beneficiaries of partial redistribution created a buffer zone between the elite and the landless. This new class, while materially better off, often reproduced exploitative relations by renting land or hiring labor. Thus, the reform did not eliminate class divisions; it reorganized them into a new hierarchy, fragmenting the peasantry and diluting collective resistance.

The persistence of informal tenancy and landlessness further reinforces the Marxian argument that property relations are not simply legal, but social and political. Even decades after the reform, tenants and landless laborers remained subordinated to local elites through customary power, informal credit systems, and patron-client networks. This reflects Marx's (1867/1976) assertion that bourgeois legal equality conceals material inequality.

Moreover, the exclusion of Dalits, women, and landless migrants from the reform's benefits points to the intersectionality of class with caste and gender. While Marxism traditionally centers class, neo-Marxist scholars such as Hart (1986) and Sugden (2013) have emphasized that class exploitation often intersects with other forms of structural oppression. Nepal's land reform failed in part because it did not account for these intersecting inequalities, instead assuming a homogenous peasant subject.

The reform's symbolic function also deserves attention. As Whelpton (2005) observed, the Panchayat regime utilized land reform discourse to promote national unity and development without challenging landed aristocracy. This reflects Poulantzas's (1978) theory of authoritarian statism, where the state expands its administrative reach under the guise of reform while maintaining capitalist (or semi-feudal) accumulation structures.

In sum, the findings confirm that the 1964 Land Reform Act was a case of class management, not class emancipation. While the legal apparatus promised redistribution, the underlying social relations remained intact. This underscores the Marxian premise that without a rupture in the relations of production, reforms tend to reproduce the very inequalities they claim to resolve.

## **8. Conclusion And Policy Implications**

The 1964 Land Reform Act in Nepal was a historic attempt to break with centuries of feudal land relations and promote equitable rural development. However, as this study has shown, the reform largely failed to deliver on its transformative promise. While it

introduced legal ceilings, tenancy protections, and redistribution mechanisms, its implementation was undermined by elite resistance, administrative collusion, and socio-political inertia. Landlords retained control through legal manipulation and kin-based fragmentation, while tenants, Dalits, women, and landless laborers remained marginalized. The creation of a rural petty bourgeoisie further diluted the egalitarian agenda, reproducing class hierarchy in new forms.

From a Marxian standpoint, the reform exemplifies how legal interventions without revolutionary rupture tend to serve hegemonic interests. The Nepali state, particularly under the Panchayat system, used land reform to legitimize its authority while preserving elite dominance. This contradiction between reformist discourse and class-reinforcing outcomes is central to understanding the reform's limitations.

Policy implications emerge clearly: future land reform must go beyond bureaucratic technicalities and address the material relations of production. Land reform must be coupled with institutional accountability, tenancy rights enforcement, digitization of land records, and targeted redistribution to historically excluded groups, including women, Dalits, and landless peasants. Additionally, genuine land reform should be part of a broader program of rural structural transformation that integrates credit access, agricultural support services, and political empowerment of the rural poor. Without confronting the entrenched structures of rural class domination, any reform no matter how progressive on paper risks becoming yet another chapter in the history of unfulfilled promises.

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