

AFCAN REVIEW

Volume 4, 2023/24



Association of Former Career Ambassadors of Nepal
(AFCAN)



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2023/24

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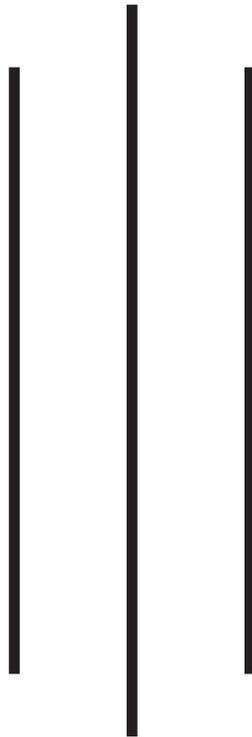
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**Association of Former Career Ambassadors of Nepal
(AFCAN)**

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the fourth issue of the AFCAN Review, the official yearly publication of the Association of Career Ambassadors of Nepal. This issue covers articles by academicians, practitioners and thematic experts in various aspects of diplomacy, foreign policy and international relations. I hope that articles contained in this issue can be enjoyed by a broad spectrum of readers, even those who are not involved directly in the subject area.

Over the last two years, AFCAN has organized a number of events on its own and in close cooperation and collaboration with like-minded organizations and associations, opening up new possibilities in advancing the field of Nepal's international relations. We have successfully conducted two seminars: one focusing on the challenges and opportunities of Foreign Direct Investment in Nepal, and the other exploring the strategic importance of dynamic, effective and development-oriented foreign policy. Additionally, our activities included insightful talk programs on topics such as the teachings of the Bhagvat Gita and the 'Art of Living' philosophy.

In collaboration with FIPMO (Former International Professionals of Multilateral Organizations) and AFNA (Association of Former Ambassadors of Nepal), we organized a seminar specifically on the pivotal Nepal-India relations. We also hosted monthly programs covering a range of subjects. These discussions featured esteemed intellectuals and experts, enriching our dialogue.

This issue of the AFCAN Review contains brief reports from our seminars and talk programs. The outcomes of these sessions, which have been shared with the Foreign Minister and Foreign Secretary, aim to contribute to policy-making processes. The insights gained from our examination of Foreign Direct Investment challenges and Nepal-India relations are particularly noteworthy.

Furthermore, this edition features articles contributed by current and former Ambassadors, security experts, and distinguished intellectuals. We trust that our readers will find these contributions both informative and engaging.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the editorial board for its dedicated efforts in bringing this volume to publication.

December, 2024

Bhagirath Basnet
President, AFCAN.

Note by the Editors

Abiding features of the foreign policy of Nepal have been clearly spelt out by the Constitution. The Constitution provides specific content and direction for protection and promotion of core values. It highlights in unequivocal terms the importance of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and peace and security as integral components of a robust, forward-looking State. On top of that, it lays out good foundation for integrated promotion of the socio-economic and environmental interests of the nation by extending hands of cooperation with all friendly countries of the world through institutions and mechanisms that are working at bilateral, regional and international levels.

Nonalignment remains an ideal, moral pillar for interface of Nepal with external world as necessitated by its geo-strategically sensitive location and relatively lower power position. Without it, Nepal would be rendered faceless and position-less in several issues of inter-state relations. Lasting solutions to many burning issues of today can be sought by following the principles of NAM, which directly relate to universal principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. After all, NAM as an umbrella association carries common values still upheld by around two-thirds of the sovereign nations of the world.

External environment for conduct of foreign policy has become further complicated following the hard lessons learned from extreme events like COVID-19 and climate change catastrophe. Liberal global order characterized by globalization and regionalization has faced setbacks to the disadvantage of poorer economies waiting their turns in the process. The dream of an egalitarian global society free from hunger, poverty and fear as encapsulated by the UN call for 'leaving no one behind' remains a formidable challenge to be fulfilled. With liberal world order weakening, benefits of globalization are unreachable for many. The 21st century world as it unfolds before us today is a mix of hope and frustration.

Geopolitical interests of more powerful countries and their potential meddling through the sovereign choice and independence of less fortunate nations are likely to invite alienation, conflict and suffering. Emergence of such situations will enfeeble the energy needed for peaceful resolution of disputes and forging common platforms for sustainable and resilient development.

Under these circumstances, diplomacy alone stands a chance for ensuring win-win solution to the existing and emerging problems and seizing opportunity for common benefits of mankind.

After the promulgation of most liberal and federal democratic constitution in 2015, Nepal looks forward to exiting from transitional mindset and achieving political stability to implement its provisions in good spirit. This entails strengthening all the pillars of good governance to shoulder added responsibilities for effective service delivery and ensuring accountability at each and every point where the power of State is exercised.

Simultaneously, Nepal should also be fully aware of what is developing in the neighborhood and beyond in terms of geopolitical and geo-economic interests of countries who hold proportionately greater power. The phenomenon of great-power competition and/or rivalry is becoming more pervasive throughout the world, and rising Asia in particular. There is a need to balance relationships in order to safeguard national interests against the vagaries of such external power plays and sustain the development trajectory by attracting optimum international cooperation. Strengthened and enlarged partnership and committed international support measures in areas of aid, export trade, FDI inflows, technology transfer, foreign employment and other defined sectors are necessary to ensure sustainable and smooth graduation of Nepal from LDC status in the first place. Secondly, the momentum of socio-economic development process has to be carried forward to achieve higher goals.

Achieving these objectives would be possible if the nation's diplomatic machinery is strengthened and fine-tuned with necessary science and art to tackle the challenges of time. Adequate resources – human, financial and physical - at all points of delivery of diplomatic services should be ensured. It also implies providing clear and precise mandates for the chief diplomats and staff members stationed in the country of representation. The mandates should come in consonance with timely defined country or sector-specific tasks and responsibilities. It should be borne in mind that without a strong and effective track-I diplomacy, track-II or public diplomacy cannot flourish for invigorated projection of image and prestige and promotion of interests.

The adage that foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy remains true in the test of time. The capacity of all line agencies, including the technical ministries, where specific knowledge of national interests and concerns is generated, must be strengthened and their institutional memory retained for future use. Economic diplomacy stands for mounting joint efforts of all players of the nation for result and objective-oriented interlocation in changing international context. If the nation's negotiating capacity is enhanced at the technical, diplomatic and political levels in a seamless evidence-based manner, much more can be achieved in terms of timely reforms and execution of foreign policy goals.

Deepak Dhital

Jhabindra P. Aryal

Ramesh P. Khanal

December, 2024

Table of Contents

SN	Title	Author	Pg.
1.	Foreword	AFCAN President	i
2.	Note by the Editors	Editorial Board	iii
3.	Nepal and Her Immediate Neighbors	Prof Dr. Mohan Lohani	1
4.	Foreign Policy in the Making	Bhagirath Basnet	8
5.	Assessing Nepal's National Power-Interest Paradigm	Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada	11
6.	Nepal and Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons	Dr. Niranjan Man Singh Basnyat	16
7.	United Nations Security Council Reform: Stances and Stakes	Ghanashyam Bhandari	22
8.	Non-Aligned Movement and Global South in the Impending Geopolitics	Binoj Basnyat	29
9.	Nepal's Representation in UN, NAM and SAARC: Some Perspectives	Nir Bahadur Karki	39
10.	Climate Change and Small States: Interplaying Interests within Evolving Perceptions of Insecurity	Sweta Karki	49
11.	कूटनीतिज्ञहरूको संस्मरण	सुशील लम्साल	57
12.	Summary of a Seminar on 'Foreign Direct Investment in Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities'	AFCAN	65
13.	Summary of a Seminar on Strategies for Dynamic, Effective and Development-Oriented Foreign Policy	Joint efforts of AFCAN, AFNA and FIPMO	68



Nepal and Her Immediate Neighbors

Prof. Dr. Mohan Lohani¹

Abstract

Nepal, a sovereign independent country since ancient times, is geostrategically situated between two Asian giants, India and China, our immediate neighbors with diametrically opposite political and social systems. Such geostrategic location is both an advantage and challenge for Nepal. While landlockedness is a reality that cannot be wished away, Nepal, categorized by the UN as one of the least developed among developing countries (LDCs), is scheduled to graduate from LDC status by 2026. India and China, two most populous countries of the world, universally recognized as nuclear powers, economically advanced and militarily strong, are geopolitical rivals to each other. Aware of geopolitical tensions between its two neighbors fast emerging as regional and global powers, Nepal is under pressure to readjust and reorient its traditional relations with both. Balancing relations with both, which is in our national interest, precisely speaking, is a challenge for Nepal requiring diplomatic acumen, pragmatic approach, prudent and mature judgment.

Key words: geostrategic location, landlockedness, LDC status, pragmatism, maturity.

Introduction

Prithvinarayan Shah, who ascended the throne of Gorkha in 1742 (BS 1799) at the age of 20, more than 2 centuries ago, knew about the growing influence of the British in neighboring India and was fully aware of conflicts escalating among the tiny principalities of Nepal. While he conquered the three kingdoms of the Kathmandu valley, the process of unification started by him was completed by his successors, who feared that if these small states continued to fight among themselves, the British could easily take them over and annex them. In recognition of his initial contribution, King Prithvinarayan Shah is remembered by all Nepali people as the founder of Modern Nepal.

The imagery used by late King Shah, namely, Nepal is like a yam between two boulders reflects the geo-strategic location of the country and has led policymakers to emphasize the importance of maintaining balanced relations between the two immediate neighbors with diametrically opposite political and social systems. Nepal's external relations

¹ Former Ambassador of Nepal to Bangladesh.

were extremely limited during the Rana regime as its foreign policy was geared towards appeasing the British with several countries of Asia and Africa including India under their colonial domination.

Nepal opened up to the world outside after the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1951. In April 1955, the country attended the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in August the same year and was also admitted to the UN the same year in December. These events marked a significant step forward in Nepal's efforts to diversify its external relations. A few years later, Nepal joined the Movement for Nonalignment, with its principles like Panchsheel enunciated by the Bandung Conference, as a founding member in 1961. It has participated in all Nonaligned Summits at the highest level, including the recently concluded 19th summit in Kampala, Uganda. Despite criticism that nonalignment has lost its relevance with the end of the Cold War in the late eighties of the last century, Nepal continues to adhere to the policy of nonalignment as Pragna Ghimire rightly observes:

“With new geopolitical dynamics in South Asia and Nepal's geographical location between two emerging powers, the principle of nonalignment is highly relevant to Nepal. Nepal can't afford to take sides on military and security issues. In navigating the complex dynamics of the world order, its foreign policy should be adaptive, pragmatic and rooted in its national interests. The key is balancing engagement with the global community and maintaining sovereignty and independence” (Ghimire, 2024).

The basic parameters of Nepal's foreign policy, such as the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, the Panchsheel (five principles of peaceful coexistence), nonalignment, respect for international law and upholding world peace are clearly and consistently set forth in all constitutions, including the latest constitution endorsed and promulgated by the 601- member Constituent Assembly on September 20, 2015.

In its eagerness to forge new links of friendship and cooperation with other countries of the world representing big powers and a large number of developing countries, including the LDCs and LLDCs like Nepal, the latter has established diplomatic relations with more than 150 countries. Friendship with all and enmity towards none is the avowed official policy of Nepal. YN Khanal, the doyen of Nepal's foreign policy observes: ‘Nepal has a distinct foreign policy which takes care of its national interests, and which is in line with its own national aspirations. We are aware that the real questions of war and peace are decided by the Great Powers, and we have little control over them. We are obviously conscious also of the fact that on account of our size and other limitations, we can only play a limited role in the world’ (Khanal, 2000).

The end of the Cold War precipitated a dramatic shift in the balance of power in international relations. Many East European countries, the erstwhile republics of the

former Soviet Union, have already joined NATO and obtained membership of the European Union. Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022 on the ground that it was tilting towards NATO. The issue came up for debate and discussion in the UN General Assembly. While India and China, Nepal's immediate neighbors, abstained from voting, majority of countries including Nepal voted against Russian invasion of Ukraine. Nepal has stated that it has not abandoned the policy of nonalignment and has justified its vote on a principled stand against foreign aggression (Lohani, 2023).

Nepal-India Relations:

Nepal-India relations, dating back to ancient times, are complex and multi-dimensional from political, economic, social, security and cultural perspectives. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', during his state visit to India in June last year, described Nepal-India relations as age-old and multifaceted. To quote him, 'These relations stand on the solid foundation built, on the one hand, by the rich tradition of civilizational, cultural, socio-economic linkages and, on the other, by the two countries' firm understanding and cooperation' (Dahal, 2023).

Appreciating PM Modi's 'neighborhood first policy' PM Prachanda emphasized the need for cooperation in diverse areas including trade, transit, investment, hydropower development, power trade, irrigation, agriculture, connectivity including air entry routes, railways, bridges, transmission lines, expansion of petroleum pipelines, construction of integrated check posts as well as cultural and people-to-people contacts. While a number of agreements and MoUs were signed and exchanged, India does not seem to be keen to resolve some outstanding issues like boundary dispute relating to Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulek. Likewise, the EPG report has yet to be accepted by PM Modi. Indian response to Nepal's request for air entry routes for international flights to and from Pokhara and Bhairawa international airports has remained non-committal. Responsibility for resolution of the boundary issue has been shifted to the established bilateral diplomatic mechanisms. However, a positive development of this visit was PM Modi's commitment to import 10,000 MW of power from Nepal over the next 10 years. Power trade agreement in this respect was signed by the two countries during Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar's recent visit to Nepal to attend a Ministerial meeting of Joint Economic Commission (JEC). A snag still exists as to whether India would buy power from Nepal with Chinese investment and involvement in construction.

Nepal has appreciated India's willingness to facilitate the export of hydropower to Bangladesh from Nepal, 40 MW in the initial phase, through India. The three countries involving India, Nepal and Bangladesh have worked out a trilateral agreement to this effect.

Nepal's trade deficit with India remains an outstanding issue. As India is Nepal's largest trading partner, it is possible to rectify the trade imbalance, now in favor of

India, if the latter liberalizes access to Indian market without reciprocity. Nepal has also requested India to make quarantine procedures for our agricultural products more flexible, including simplification of 'Rules of Origin' for other products. India's cooperation is crucial in trade facilitation and promotion of Nepal's export to its southern neighbor.

Nagarik, a prominent vernacular daily of Nepal commenting on Nepal-India relations in its editorial of January 5 this year, refers to the recently concluded 7th JEC meeting which did not take up outstanding issues such as border and the 1950 Peace and Friendship Treaty in response to Indian reluctance to include them in the agenda. The paper opines that such issues cannot be shoved under the carpet for long. The JEC meeting agreed to increase Indian direct assistance to small development projects known as High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP) from 5 crores to 20 crores, giving rise to controversy. Some civil society leaders objected to such assistance and urged the government to implement it by selecting priority projects without, however, antagonizing India. It may be noted that S. Jaishankar, then India's foreign secretary in 2015, visited Nepal as PM Modi's envoy to ask for postponement of promulgation of the country's new constitution. Nepal did not postpone and went ahead, provoking India to impose blockade for over 5 months. It is true that both Nepal and India should not and cannot allow mutual distrust to sour relations for long. Occasional irritants should be sorted out through dialogue. Cordial bilateral friendship is in the national interest of both Nepal and India.

Nepal-China Relations

Nepal-China relations are as old as history itself. Several centuries ago, monks and pilgrims, scholars and artists from both sides visited each other's country and played a significant role in promoting cultural connectivity. The establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in August 1955 formally strengthened the age-old ties existing between the two close neighbors. The exchange of high level visits, from time to time, followed by people-to-people contacts during the last seven decades has further cemented the bilateral friendship. China, over the years, has been a reliable partner in Nepal's development endeavors. Mention may be made of a number of projects implemented with Chinese assistance, such as roads (Arniko Highway was the first road of strategic significance), bridges, power generation and some useful factories at the initial stage of industrialization in this country (Lohani, 2018).

During his state visit to China in September last year, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' recalled President Xi Jinping's historic visit to Nepal in 2019, during which the bilateral relationship was elevated to a Strategic Partnership of Cooperation featuring everlasting friendship for development and prosperity. The two sides agreed to maintain the momentum of high-level exchanges, deepen political mutual trust, and expand exchanges and cooperation at all levels between the two

countries. The two sides expressed satisfaction over bilateral cooperation in all areas, and agreed to further deepen mutually beneficial cooperation in such fields as economy and trade, investment, agriculture, tourism, production capacity, poverty alleviation, health and education to promote common development.

Nepal and China realizing the importance of multilateralism have agreed to promote greater democracy in international relations, to strengthen cooperation within the framework of the United Nations and other multilateral mechanisms to uphold the common interest of developing countries. Opposed to protectionism, they have agreed to work together to make economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial for all, while promoting global and regional peace, security, development and prosperity. Nepal has appreciated President Xi Jinping's commitment to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

Nepal signed the MoU with China on bilateral cooperation under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on 12 May, 2017. The text on the BRI Implementation Plan has yet to be finalized, leading critics to wonder whether Nepal will ever benefit from this highly publicized Chinese proposal known as the Project of the Century. During PM Dahal's recent visit, Nepal and China have reiterated their commitment to deepen practical cooperation, in particular Belt and Road cooperation to deliver greater benefits to their peoples. Describing BRI as the most visionary and largest ever infrastructural program in human history, Ambassador Sundar Nath Bhattarai, officiating chairperson of China Study Center (CSC) and AFCAN's first President, observes that Nepal, a committed member of BRI, looks forward to the implementation of nine projects proposed by it under BRI and Trans-Himalayan Multidimensional Connectivity Network with railway between Nepal and China already approved by second BRI Summit (Bhattarai, 2022).

Balancing Relations: Challenge for Nepal

The Ambassador of Bangladesh Salahuddin Noman Chowdhury, at a talk program recently organized by Center for Social Inclusion and Federalism (CESIF), stated that Bangladesh enjoyed close and cordial relations with both India and China and described such relations maintained by his country as a 'delicate balancing act'. As stated earlier, India to the south and China to the north are Nepal's immediate neighbors. Nepal, like Bangladesh, enjoys close, cordial and cooperative relations with both India and China which are also the country's largest development partners. It is in the national interest of Nepal to maintain balanced relations with both which are geopolitical rivals to each other but their mutually beneficial bilateral economic cooperation continues unabated and uninterrupted. Former foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey, in an interview with Rudroneel Ghosh, an Indian journalist, on September 4, 2022, commenting on Sino-Indian differences, expects India and China to resolve their differences at the earliest, and further adds: Asian century becomes meaningless if India and China are not able

to bury the past and embrace the future. Dispelling the wrong notion about Nepali people's sentiment, Pandey observes that some major political leaders in Nepal may be pro- or anti-India, but not the Nepali people. He, however, opines that if relations between India and China deteriorate, it creates a lot of anxiety for Nepal which is the only country that is land-linked to both the largest markets in Asia. Given this reality, Nepal's India policy and China policy are geared to promoting its own national interest, rather than provoking one to view the other with suspicion and distrust. Nepal has reassured both India and China that it will not allow its land or territory to be used for hostile operations against its immediate neighbors. While Nepal is committed to address the legitimate security concerns of its neighbors, it expects them to respond positively to Nepal's own sensitivities that include security, fragile economy, political instability and other vulnerabilities such as constraints of landlockedness and climate change crisis.

Conclusion

It has become a cliché to say that a country can choose its friends but not its neighbors. Nepal shares more than 1700 km long open border with India, while it shares 1400 km border with China. In recent years, experts and scholars in Nepal have held in-depth discourse on the necessity and possibility of forging trilateral cooperation between Nepal, China and India. This concept is expected to gather momentum and ultimately become a reality if there is agreement between Chinese and Indian leaders at the highest level. A symposium to this effect was organized by China Study Center in 2016, inviting Chinese and Indian diplomats to attend it. While the Chinese Ambassador whole-heartedly welcomed the idea, Indian diplomat regretted his inability to participate in the symposium. The idea is, however, worth pursuing and, sooner than later, India and China may positively respond to it.

There is growing realization that Nepal's developmental needs are so enormous that economic partnership with its economically advanced and prosperous neighbors with high growth rates will enable this country to achieve long-term economic goals. As stated earlier, Nepal has no option but to maintain the best of relations with its immediate neighbors and benefit from their spectacular growth and development. To conclude this paper YN Khanal, the only diplomat who had the opportunity to serve as Nepal's Ambassador to India and China, while interacting with newly recruited officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in July 1998, made the following observation:

‘The vital interests of India and China in Nepal and the latter's similar expectation from immediate neighbors can neither be minimized nor overemphasized. There is nothing unusual if a small country comes under pressure from a big neighbor. What is important is the strength or ability of a country, however small, to withstand the external pressure... Nepal must skillfully play the game of diplomacy to serve its vital

interests. The reliability and consistency factor in foreign policy is very important' (Khanal, 1998).

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Nepal's Foreign Policy: Bridging Vision and Implementation



Bhagirath Basnet¹

The primary objectives of a nation's foreign policy should encompass the preservation of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the promotion of security, peace, progress, prosperity, and national prestige. Foreign Policy is a critical tool in achieving these objectives and is shaped by a combination of historical, geographical, and cultural factors, as well as internal demands and goals. Furthermore, international law and bilateral treaties are key components that influence foreign policy formulation and implementation, often in response to evolving circumstances. These elements serve as a guiding framework for managing a nation's international relations. Ultimately, a nation's foreign policy must reflect its actions and relationships in a manner that steadfastly upholds national interests when engaging with other countries.

Unfortunately, Nepal's political parties have largely neglected the need for a consensus-driven foreign policy that serves national interests. The prevailing approach has been to adapt foreign policy to align predominantly with the interests of the ruling party or coalition government. Experts warn that such situational policies are at high risk of being influenced by external powers. The only viable solution is the formulation of a non-partisan, national-level foreign policy that addresses the country's strategic agenda and secures the support of all political parties before it is too late.

The discussion underscores the persistent challenges and complexities in the evolution of Nepal's foreign policy. Despite the nation's transition to democracy more than seven decades ago and the adoption of a republican system nearly two decades ago, the formulation and implementation of a coherent and unified foreign policy remain unrealized. Several critical observations emerge from this analysis:

1. Lack of Consensus and Political Commitment

Nepal's foreign policy continues to be shaped by the interests of ruling political parties rather than a collective, bipartisan vision. The absence of a unified approach to critical matters of national interest has hindered the development of a consistent and effective foreign policy framework. This lack of consensus reflects a deeper issue of political will and commitment among the nation's leadership.

¹ Former Acting Foreign Secretary and Nepal's Ambassador to Bangladesh.

2. Policy Instability and Frequent Fluctuations

Since 2006, Nepal's foreign policy has been marked by frequent changes, often dictated by the whims of successive ruling coalitions. Such instability undermines strategic planning and long-term diplomatic goals, leaving the nation vulnerable to external influences and limiting its capacity to project a stable international image.

3. Historical Efforts and Unimplemented Recommendations

After the restoration of democracy in 1990, several governments formed committees to draft foreign policy and these committees submitted their reports to the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs but not a single one has been implemented.

In 1994, a committee headed by former foreign secretary Uddhav Deo Bhatt was formed to submit a report. Then another committee headed by former finance minister and Ambassador Badri Prasad Shrestha, submitted a comprehensive report in **1998-99**. After the political change in **2006**, the then government led by Girija Prasad Koirala formed a committee headed by former foreign secretary and ambassador Murari Raj Sharma in 2006. Again in **2017**, Pushpa Kamal Dahal-led government formed a committee headed by Professor Sridhar Khatri, who submitted a report to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in February 2018.

Also then Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali unveiled Nepal's Foreign Policy document after consulting related experts and stakeholders. Later, the incumbent Foreign Minister Narayan Khadka vowed to come up with a new foreign policy document, but couldn't come up with another foreign policy. Foreign Minister Khadka flagged several flaws and shortcomings in the foreign policy document unveiled by his predecessor Gyawali. The document broadly talks about Nepal's engagement with its neighbours, major powers and Nepal's commitment to multilateral organizations such as the UN and SAARC among others. It has emphasized economic and track-two diplomacy to resolve bilateral disputes, amend bilateral treaties and collaborate with friendly nations to pursue Nepal's interests.

While unveiling the document, Foreign Minister Gyawali had claimed that it was prepared after consulting various parties including the Nepali Congress and stakeholders and a two-day national symposium on foreign policy. It would have been better for the parliament to provide specific inputs in thematic areas like what can be done with our relations with India or China or what kind of strategy that Nepal should adopt while accepting foreign aid. It is the responsibility of the government to prepare and execute a policy and it is better for the specialized committees to provide inputs for specific policies otherwise it will only create confusion," Gyawali had said.

As foreign policy is the documented and codified government's policy on foreign affairs, it is the international mirror of a state in international relations. Diplomatic affairs, diplomatic relations and international relations are oriented towards effective

results based on the state's foreign policy. Protocols of managing state banquets, adherence to diplomatic etiquette, communication of diplomatic statements, management of foreign affairs and foreign relations including bilateral or multilateral agreements or treaties are thematic activities of the foreign ministry.

4. Foundational Framework and Guiding Principles

Nepal's foreign policy is anchored in constitutional provisions, state policies, directive principles, and international law. The nation's adherence to Panchsheel principles and its active engagement in the Non-Aligned Movement demonstrate its commitment to peaceful coexistence and neutrality in international relations. However, these foundational elements alone are insufficient to address modern geopolitical challenges. The lack of a definitive, universally accepted foreign policy document exacerbates the situation, as it fails to provide a stable framework for managing relations with neighboring and global powers.

5. The Need for Strategic Vision and Implementation

Effective foreign policy demands strategic vision and steadfast implementation. While successive governments have demonstrated an inclination to produce reports and frameworks, there has been little progress in institutionalizing these efforts. The establishment of specialized parliamentary committees or sub-committees could play a pivotal role in analyzing existing reports, identifying gaps, and creating actionable plans.

To sum up, Nepal's foreign policy must prioritize national integrity, security, and welfare while aligning with universal principles such as democracy, human rights, and sustainable development. A collective commitment from all political parties to these core objectives is essential to ensure the nation's diplomatic success.

In conclusion, Nepal's foreign policy should reflect its strategic interests and aspirations for progress while maintaining consistency and inclusivity. The nation's leadership must move beyond political divisions to embrace a unified approach that serves broader national interests and strengthens its standing in the global arena.

Assessing Nepal's National Power-Interest Paradigm



Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada¹

Nepal is one of the 20 oldest independent nation-states of the world, eight years older than the United States of America in its establishment. The rest of South Asia obtained freedom from colonialism only after the end of World War II, but Nepal never became a colony. Recently Nepal and Britain celebrated 100 years of formal diplomatic relations.

Mocking this glorious history and its current 'Triumph of Transition' into a Federal Democratic Republic, the 2024 Henley passport index places Nepal on the 103rd position out position of 109, in the same category as Palestine, which is yet to gain statehood, and Libya, a failed State. This ranking is below Haiti, Sudan and Congo, all failed states. Among SAARC members, Maldives in 58th place enjoys visa free access to 96 countries, India in 85th place to 62 countries, Bhutan in 92nd place to 55 countries and Bangladesh in 102nd place to 42 countries. Only Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, boycotted by most of the world including Nepal, in the 109th place, and Pakistan in 105th place, are below Nepal with visa free access to 28 and 34 countries respectively.²

Why does the global passport index place Nepal's passport so low? Is modern Nepal really so weak in other indices of national power as some agencies have concluded? Has Nepal's National Power-Interest Paradigm really shifted so badly over time? If not, has the government protested or tried to correct those rankings? In the context of the far-reaching internal 'Triumph and Trauma of Transition' within the region and the world also undergoing significant changes, this article examines Nepal's domestic politics-foreign policy interface, strength of Nepali passport, national power and international prestige, all vital indicators of a country's strength and ability to protect and promote its national interests.

¹ *Former PR to the UN in Geneva and Ambassador to Switzerland, Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada now teaches and writes on transformative International Relations. He has written a number of books to his credit.*

² *This index is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).*

Geo-Political Context

Nepal's unification came at a unique phase of trans-Himalayan relations and world history. Situated between two competing civilizations and great powers, Nepal's emergence as a unified nation-state took place when China was on the decline due to its internal politics and external pressure exerted from the post-industrial revolution European powers seeking resources and markets. Under this pressure, India became a British colony. Only Nepal remained independent, surviving repeated wars with Tibet-China and British India.

Then came the two world wars, the decline of the European Powers and the rise of the United States as the global superpower. The first World War paved way for the overthrow of Czar Nicholas II and the Bolsheviks' rise to power in Russia. World War two saw the emergence of Communist Russia (Soviet Union) as the other global superpower. Chairman Mao and his revolutionaries captured power in China and India got independence from the British. Today, China has emerged as an economic superpower, while India is also resolutely moving forward to reclaim its rightful place in the global power hierarchy. With the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union and end of communism in Eastern Europe, the world's only superpower, the United States, has expanded its interests into the Indo-Pacific. Its characterization of China as the principal ideological competitor and economic and strategic threat has made the Central Himalayas as one of the global epicenters of competition and rivalry.

Changing Dimensions

Nepal made huge sacrifices in the two world wars in favour of the victorious powers. Although Nepal's sovereign status was recognized by the great power of the time, Britain, and the 1923 Treaty document signed with it was registered in the League of Nations in 1929, Nepal was, however, deprived of the opportunity of being one of signatories of the founding of the United Nations in 1945.

After a long period of isolation and reliance on the British for external relations, active pursuit of internationalism thereafter reflects Nepal's struggle for survival in the region and the world that had started to change significantly. The 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship with independent India came after the Chinese intervention in Tibet. Diplomatic ties with China in 1955, the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1960 and the Border Treaty in 1961 signaled the search for a balanced relations in the immediate neighborhood. Proposal to declare Nepal a Zone of Peace (ZOP) in 1975 reflected the desire not to get drawn into great power rivalry.

Establishment of relations with the US and all permanent members of the UN Security Council; 1967-68 and 1988-89 UNSC membership; active role in Nonaligned movement, initiative for the establishment of SAARC in 1985 and hosting its headquarters in Kathmandu, were all meant to enhance national power through

diplomacy. But how have they helped Nepal internally and in relation to regional and global geo-political imperatives developing externally?

Balance Sheet

On the bright side, Nepal has survived as a sovereign nation and remains active in many regional and global forums, including admirable role in UN peacekeeping, elected to important positions in some UN organs, including chairmanship of one of the three main pillars of the UN, the Human Rights Council, previously known as Human Rights Commission and Chair of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Despite some successes, the overall picture of IR/FP/Diplomacy having made contributions to internal political stability, socio-economic prosperity, policy independence, or national power enhancement, and ultimately serving the supreme national interest, has not been so rosy.

Domestic Politics-Foreign Policy Interface

To start with, foreign policy is often seen as the reflection of domestic political, economic, social, and institutional strength and diplomatic skill. From the early days of active FP, friendship with Israel reflects the first democratically-elected PM B. P. Koirala's personal sympathy for the Jews for the injustices they suffered in World War II. But his bold political and FP initiative in befriending Israel for indirectly seeking the support of the increasingly powerful United States to Nepal's nascent democratic set-up, his own role as its champion, and all of it serving the national interest in the emerging regional and global context could not be ignored. In continuing and expanding active diplomacy, nationalists like King Mahendra and Birendra too must have had national independence as well as survival of monarchy and Panchayat system they introduced, uppermost in mind. But did they produced desired results?

- BP was deposed and died struggling to restore democracy.
- Mahendra's inability to reconcile with BP and democracy, in which FP played a role, is partly responsible for the long internal political instability in which Nepalis suffer to this day.
- The Zone of Peace, the most important FP initiative of the King, who presided over the political system established after the restriction of democracy, became a failure.
- The line of succession from Nepal's founding and long-ruling dynasty got annihilated in the aftermath of a series of events following the June 2001 massacre. Later, the successor king was forced out of power and ultimately dethroned, under domestic and international pressure.
- Defense diplomacy could neither prevent Nepal suffering from decade-long insurgency nor save its traditional institution.

Furthermore,

- Leaders supposed to have presided over great triumphs to Federal Democratic Republic are struggling to institutionalize their achievements and minimize the traumas of transition with the voices of those standing for course-correction and even regression.
- The talk of unique peace process, making one leader “Statesman of Asia” and even a political candidate for the Nobel Peace prize has withered away. The nationally-driven model of transforming violent conflict into a peaceful competition for power remains ignored in international peace building literature, let alone policy and practices.
- Nepal’s candidacy to important UN bodies such as the Security Council, presidency of the GA and, most recently, WHO regional director have not succeeded.

National Power-Interest Paradigm

Foreign policy and defense diplomacy are defined as “application of national power for the protection and promotion of national interests”. The interest of the people is at the core of national interest. International credibility is one of the most important elements of national power, particularly for Nepal, more reliant on soft/smart power. That makes the strength of passport one of the significant bases in evaluating the national power-interest paradigm.³

Despite its relatively small size between China and India, historically Nepal was a powerful player in the Trans-Himalayan region, lending military support in regional and even global levels, significantly expanding territory and gaining back through diplomacy what was lost in war. What has happened to that national power over time?

- One does not need data to suggest that over time Nepal’s national power position relative to its two neighbors, China and India, has not improved.
- In the latest Asian Power Index by Lowy Institute, in comprehensive national power, Nepal ranks 25 out of 26 countries listed. With 4.2 score out of 100, Nepal comes just above Papua New Guinea (PNG), but lower than Mongolia, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and much lower than Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. In economic capability, with 0.5 score Nepal in 24th place, comes only above PNG and Laos. In military capability, Nepal is in 25th place, only above PNG. In economic relationships, Nepal is only above North Korea and in diplomatic influence only above PNG and North Korea.⁴

³ *This is a measure of relative change in national power and its application for national interest over time*

⁴ *Asia Power Index | Lowy Institute*

- Nepali migrant workers are in high demand but often the lowest paid and least protected in major labour markets.
- Looking at Kathmandu as the headquarters, where SAARC is located, what is Nepal's role as its current Chair?

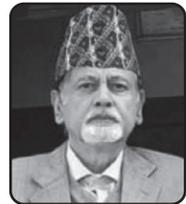
Conclusion

In principle, strength of the passport and indices of national power of a democratic Nepal should have improved. The author does not enjoy citing unfavorable data on the strength of the Nepali passport and sad commentaries on Nepal's national power. Such data and commentaries also need not be taken as *Brahma-Bakya* nor be a cause for panic. But ignoring trends and dismissing facts can lead to further deterioration or make one unaware of the need to work to improve them. Travelling with the privileges of red and blue passports can make one dismissive of the pains of Nepalis travelling with green and now brown passports. With reverse sequencing of interests, individual and institutional interests can also take over vital national interests.⁵

Strength of Nepali passport or the national power ranking are only some among many variables which enable us to realize where we stand internationally as a nation in terms of real national power and international prestige. Critical examination of such data and commentaries helps us rethink our vital domestic politics-FP interface and upgrade our diplomatic skills, essential for changing the worsening national power-interest paradigm. This can ultimately help improve Nepal's ability to better protect our national interests where and when they signal being compromised.

5 For a more detailed explanation of reverse sequencing of interests, see Simkhada, Shambhu Ram "National Interest and Foreign Policy", in *Nepal India China Relations in the 21st Century*, SANRAB Publication, Kathmandu 2021, P103

Nepal and Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons



-Dr. Niranjana Man Singh Basnyat¹

Historical Background

As we all know, the subject of the first ever resolution at the United Nations in 1946 was related to nuclear disarmament, because humanity had suffered the consequences of weapons of mass destruction for the first time. Cruel attacks on the innocent population of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were carried out on 6 August and 9 August 1945 by the American forces. On August 6, 1945, towards the end of World War II, the nuclear device named “Little Boy” was dropped over the Japanese island of Hiroshima by an American air force aircraft B-29. This bomb was loaded at Tinian Island in the Pacific. The aircraft was named after its pilot Lt. Col. Paul W. Tibbets’s mother Enola Gay and took off in the early morning at 02.45 am. Tibbets and his crew flew 15 hundred miles to Japan over Hiroshima. The bomb was dropped from nine thousand six hundred meters above the surface and exploded five hundred eighty meters above the city of Hiroshima.² It was equivalent to 12,500 tons of TNT and the bomb destroyed the headquarters of the 2nd General Army and Fifth Division of Japan, and killed 80,000 innocent people immediately, and later the total deaths count reached around 146,000. The second device codenamed the “Fat Man” was dropped over the Japanese island of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, instantly killing nearly 60% of the population of the city (40,000), and another additional 40,000 deaths had been reported later.

The first resolution of the United Nations called for a total ban on these weapons immediately after the end of World War II, so that they can never be used again. Though on January 24, 1946, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted this resolution No. 1(1) by consensus, thereby establishing a commission of the UN Security Council for the elimination of atomic weapons from national armaments of all countries and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction, no country which possesses these deadly devices has tried to stop their production, rather their stockpiles have increased over the years. The world’s military budget has also increased. “The 6.8 per cent increase in 2023 was the steepest year-on-year rise since 2009 and pushed global spending to the highest level SIPRI has ever recorded. The world

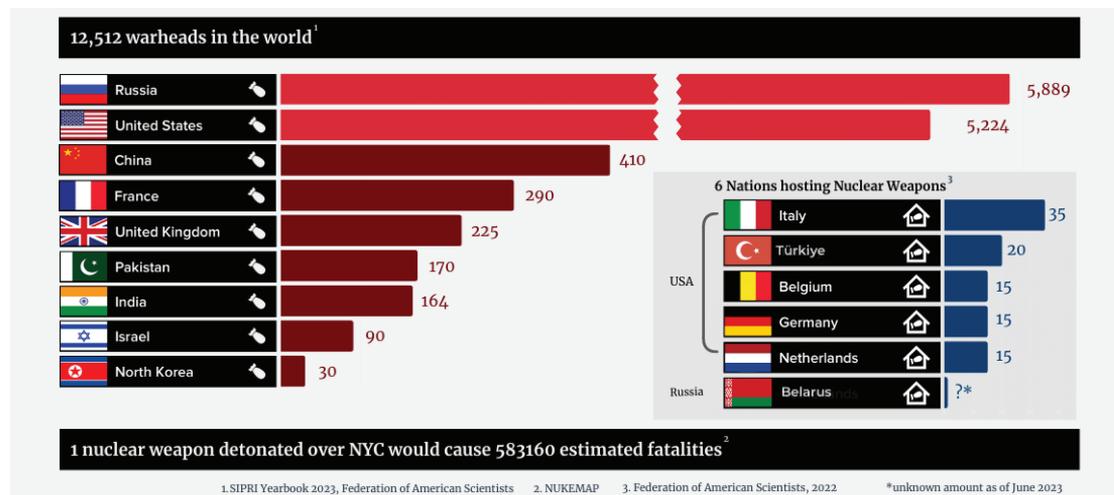
¹ Dr. Niranjana Man Singh Basnyat is a former Ambassador of Nepal to Malaysia.

² Cooke, Stephanie. In *Mortal Hands*, Bloomsbury, First US Edition, 2009, pp.1-2.

military burden—defined as military spending as a percentage of global gross domestic product (GDP)—increased to 2.3 per cent in 2023.”³

The countries which have nuclear weapons comprise the USA (since July 16, 1945), Russia (1949), United Kingdom (1952), France (1960), China (1964), Israel (1967), India (1998), Pakistan (1998) and North Korea (2006). It is a chain reaction of sorts to acquire nuclear weapons to exercise excessive power and prestige in international relations. Now Iran is believed to be preparing for the production of nuclear bombs, thus facing the US and EU sanctions, whereas many other countries such as Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Taiwan, South Korea, Sweden, Japan, and Ukraine have dismantled their nuclear weapons programs. Nuclear plants in Iraq, Libya, Kazakhstan and Belarus were destroyed.

Countries with nuclear weapons⁴



Thus, the world’s number of nuclear weapons has risen over the last decades, reaching a total of 12,592 nuclear bombs in possession of nine countries at present. One hundred nuclear bombs have been deployed in Europe, which are ready for use, according to the table shown above. Nearly ninety percent of nuclear devices are in the stockpiles of the US and Russia.

Global Disarmament Efforts

The explosion of nuclear bombs in the Japanese cities in 1945 and devastation thereafter triggered many organizations and communities to stand against these weapons. The countries that have already acquired capability do not wish to abandon them because it gives the tremendous political power in the world in the pretext of their own security,

³ *SIPRI Report 2023.*

⁴ *Data on nuclear weapons from the website of ICAN (based on SIPRI Report 2023 and Federation of American Scientists), accessed on 17 May 2024.*

and threat of use of this weapon itself is a big advantage in the situation of war. The peace activists who are against the use of this weapon are of the opinion that the dangers of keeping such weapons of mass destruction and other such weapons such as chemical and biological weapons not only instill the psychological fear in the minds of the people but also there is always a possibility of its real use by some insane political leaders, mass killing by nuclear accidents like that of Chernobyl in 1986 or retaliatory attacks due to false alarms. India had exploded the bomb in 1998 with the technology it had acquired from a US-assisted technology program. Pakistan's "father of nuclear program" Mr. A.Q. Khan had secretly taken the technology from the nuclear plants of the Netherlands and fled to his country. Similarly, there was a big nuclear accident at the plants located in Three Miles Island in the US.

The permanent members of the UN Security Council, namely China, France, Russia, UK and the USA have the power of veto which they use very often to advance their interests, including nuclear tech business in the world. The President of Russia Mr. Putin issued a threat against Ukraine at one point of time that he might use nuclear weapons during the ongoing war with Ukraine. Similarly, the recent Israel and Iran war has also manifested the dangerous possibility of use of this weapon.

The United Nations General Assembly and the UN Security Council have passed several resolutions aiming at complete elimination of this weapon since 1946. In this connection, Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) were the major treaties to restrict the use of nuclear weapons. Though two former treaties have entered into force, the latter two remain to be ratified by the required number of UN member countries to come into effect.

A writer on nuclear issues, Ms. Stephanie Cooke, observes and describes the inside story of negotiations being conducted at the United Nations on NPT review conferences. Ms. Cooke said, "Well before the review conferences take place, the have-nots send out dire warnings of the treaty's imminent collapse. But these are really vain pleas for more attention by the superpowers. The have-nots want further progress on disarmament and easier access to nuclear technology. More recently some have complained about a special deal the United States made with India allowing it access to the fuel and technology it needs, even though it is considered as an "illegitimate" nuclear weapons state and never signed the treaty. Why had they signed the treaty, asked other countries, when India could get all the benefits without bothering?"⁵ About the NPT, Mr. Anver Cohen, in his book, has commented that "the treaty, with its lopsided, inherently controversial features, did not erase presumption that non-nuclear-weapons states had the right to have the nuclear weapons. It only said that right would not be exercised. Nor, more immediately, did it stop the United States continuing its nuclear deployments

5 Cooke, Stephanie. *In Mortal Hands, op.cit.*, p. 215.

in Europe. That was taken care of under a separate deal with the Soviet Union.”⁶ It means that if nuclear weapons can be deployed in other non-nuclear-states through an agreement, in the same way, there is no reason why its technology cannot be transferred to other states. Thus there is a lot of breach of the Non-Proliferation Treaty from the very beginning, primarily by the nuclear-weapon states themselves after its coming into force in 1970.

Situation in South Asia

In the context of South Asia, when we think of India and Pakistan acquiring nuclear weapons, three arguments fit well in their quest for nuclear weapons capability. For India, the primary reason was the imminent threat from China, which became more prominent from its victory over India in 1962 war and China’s acquisition of nuclear weapons in 1964. The border dispute resulting from the war in 1962 between the two countries has not been resolved yet. The secondary reason was the threat from Pakistan with whom India has already fought three major wars. Even though India won all three wars, Kashmir had always remained the bone of contention between India and Pakistan from where a major war could break out at any point of time.⁷ Another concern about Pakistan could be that it had been ruled by military dictators in the recent history and that military establishment is believed to have a major say in the affairs of the State. The day it acquired the nuclear weapons in 1998, Pakistan has become more powerful and it believes that it equals India with these weapons in the military sense of the term.

After India exploded the nuclear bombs in the Rajasthan desert in May 1998, Prime Minister Vajpayee launched a diplomatic counter-offensive by sending letters to 177 heads of state. The communication to Clinton pointed to India’s two neighbors as reasons for the test: ‘China, an overt nuclear weapons state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962’ and ‘Pakistan, a covert nuclear weapons state’ that had committed aggression against India three times and continued to sponsor terrorism in Kashmir.⁸

An analyst, Mr. Timothy D. Hoyt has given following reasons for Pakistan’s acquiring of nuclear weapons: “Since the Pakistani state emerged through partition in 1947, South Asia has been the site of one Soviet invasion, four Indo-Pakistani wars (including Kargil in 1999), one Sino-Indian war, several extended border clashes, and many

6 Cohen, Avner. *Israel and the Bomb*, Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 89. (Quoted by Stephanie Cooke in her book cited above in note 4).

7 Dr. Basnyat, Niranjana Man Singh. *Implementing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Future of Global Nuclear Disarmament*, Ed. Mohan Prasad Lohani et al, United Nations Association of Nepal,, Kathmandu, 2021, p. 179.

8 Talbott, Strobe. *Engaging India, Diplomacy, Democracy and the Bomb*, Penguin Books India, 2004, p. 33.

insurgencies. Pursuit of nuclear capability represents, in theory, a rational response to a highly threatening security environment.”⁹

India and Pakistan are not the parties to the NPT, thus they are “illegitimate” nuclear-weapon-states as per its provisions. They have also not ratified Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Other “illegitimate” countries are Israel and North Korea.

The Treaty on the Prohibitions of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW, 2021)

A US-based NGO with its long history of opposing the production and explosion of nuclear weapons, namely, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), took initiative to draft and submit the resolution to the United Nations with support of peace-loving member-states and its associate organizations in 2017. The General Assembly of the United Nations voted this draft resolution on 7 July 2017 with 122 countries in favor, one against (Netherlands) and one abstention (Singapore). Nepal voted in favor of the resolution and signed this Treaty on 22nd September 2017. The required number of ratifications of the Treaty by member-states to bring it into force is fifty. As of date, seventy member-states of the UN have ratified the treaty. ICAN and its associates have urged all the member-states of the United Nations, which have not ratified yet, to move forward urgently to initiate the ratification process of this important Treaty as soon as possible for the sake of world peace.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is the first legally binding international instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, with an objective of total elimination of nuclear weapons from the world. As of May 2024, seventy member states have already ratified the Treaty. The Treaty has already entered into force from 22nd January 2021. It prohibits the development, testing, production, stockpiling, stationing, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons. The countries with nuclear weapons at their disposal at present must adhere to a time-bound framework for negotiations with the United Nations to eliminate their nuclear stockpiles and all future nuclear weapons programs as per the Treaty’s provisions. However, they can have a non-nuclear-weapon-grade program for peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Among the South Asian countries, Nepal signed the Treaty in 2017 but has not ratified it yet, though more than three years have passed after coming into force as per international law. From this region, Bangladesh and the Maldives have ratified the Treaty. Nepal should ratify this important Treaty as early as possible so as to manifest Nepal’s unflinching support and commitment to international peace and security. The international community and generations of peace-loving people of the world would appreciate this move. We should not miss this great opportunity. Nepal has been pursuing the policy of non-alignment, and expressing support for enduring peace in

9 Hoyt, Timothy D. *Strategic Myopia, Pakistan’s Nuclear Doctrine and Crisis Stability in South Asia*, in Dittmer, Lowell (ed.), *South Asia’s Nuclear Security Dilemma*, Pentagon Press, New Delhi, 2005, p.113.

the world for decades. Nepal is also universally known as the birthplace of Lord Buddha. More recently in November 2023, Nepal became number one among troops contributing countries to the United Nations peace-keeping operations to maintain international peace and security.

Conclusion

Before concluding, it would be appropriate to quote J. Robert Oppenheimer, Manhattan Project Scientist, about the nuclear bomb, which is as under:

“We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried. Most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita; Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty, and to impress him, takes on his multi-armed form and says, ‘Now I (am) become Death, the destroyer of worlds.’ I suppose we all thought that, one way or another.”

(J. Robert Oppenheimer, while looking at the erupting fireball from the atomic bomb explosion in Los Alamos, New Mexico, on July 16, 1945)

Now, in light of this quotation, it can be concluded that TPNW has provided unique opportunity and a ray of hope for all mankind to get rid of nuclear weapons. This golden opportunity is available after 78 years of establishment of the United Nations. Nepal, as a peace-loving nation, should take initiative to ratify the treaty as early as possible. We know that there are some procedures to follow for the ratification process. It is not due to the delay in ratification process. It is the lack of zeal and dedication for taking swift action to the cause of world peace. The question arises as to why it took a long time to ratify and Nepal is lagging behind other member-states in this important endeavor. In this writer’s opinion, the following might be the reasons in the delay of ratification of TPNW: a) continued political instability, b) lethargic bureaucracy, c) pressures not to ratify TPNW by the nuclear power/s (in 2020 Trump Administration had written identical letters to all signatories including Nepal with a request to not ratify TPNW), d) negligence by the political parties, and/or e) failure in pursuing independent foreign policy as enshrined in the Constitution.

In view of the above, Nepal was far behind to ratify this important treaty. Nepal’s geopolitical situation also demands that TPNW be ratified, rather than indulging in rhetoric that Nepal is the birthplace of Lord Buddha and reiterating the importance of world peace in international forums.

United Nations Security Council Reform: Stances and Stakes



Ghanashyam Bhandari¹

UNSC Reform: A Historical Overview

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is a premier UN organ with a responsibility to maintain international peace and security. Created against the backdrop of World War II, the Council has long been criticized for its inadequate representation of contemporary geo-political realities. And, the call for its reform to address the constant shifts in the economic and political order and to make it more representative, inclusive, and democratic has been on the agenda for decades. This agenda constitutes both structural and substantive issues with emphasis on making the Council more capable of responding to the global challenges to international peace and security.

Given this context, this article reflects on the UNSC reform agenda with a brief historical overview of the past efforts, analysis of the state of play at the ongoing Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN), and an assessment of Nepal's stances with a suggested way forward. In doing this, it focuses more on formal or structural reform of the Council than on its substantive engagements and working methods.

The need for UNSC reforms has been agreed in principle by wider UN membership and continued efforts have been made thereof. Such efforts have focused not only on the expansion of the Council membership but also on equitable regional representation, question of veto, working methods, and relationship between the General Assembly and the Council, among others. While agreement on the broader package of the reform looks quite distant, Member States have attested to the reform initiative with a hope of making the Council more effective and efficient.

The Council's initial composition (five permanent – China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, and United States of America, and six non-permanent members), was restructured in 1963, expanding the number of non-permanent seats to ten through an amendment to article 23 of the UN Charter. The amendment allocated five non-permanent seats to African and Asian countries, one to Eastern European countries, two to Latin American countries, and two to Western European countries. This adjustment entered into force in 1965. It slightly improved representation in the

¹ Mr. Bhandari is the incumbent Ambassador of Nepal to the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Council but still remained inadequate to decentralize power from the permanent members. After 1965, the Council's structure has remained unchanged, though 76 more members have been admitted to the UN since then.

It is not least due to this that discontent has persisted ever since, while the call for a broader and more equitable Council has grown stronger and wider. In fact, issue of equitable representation in the Security Council was included on the General Assembly agenda in 1979 at the request of the ten countries including Nepal. The General Assembly decided to establish an 'Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on the question of equitable representation and an increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council' in 1993. However, the OEWG fell short of producing any conclusive outcomes.

In 2000, the Heads of State and Government of UN Member States resolved to "intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council" in the UN Millennium Declaration. They expressed similar commitment to achieving an early reform of the Council once again in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. Despite these resolves and commitments, the reform efforts failed to address the long-standing issues and reflect voices and powers shaping the contemporary world.

As a result, the Intergovernmental Negotiation Process (IGN) was launched in 2008 by the General Assembly decision 62/557 with an objective to undertake a "comprehensive reform of the Council in all its aspects". But with almost 15 years on the clock, the IGN has not been able to produce any concrete outcome. So, the aspirations of Member States for the overall reform of the UNSC remain yet to be realized.

State of Play at the IGN Process

Mandated by the UN General Assembly to deliberate on the 'Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters', Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) Process on Security Council reform officially began in early 2009. Since then, the UN Member States have been continuously negotiating on the question of reform in the informal plenary format of the General Assembly.

The IGN deliberations have focused on five key issues of the Council reform. They are: categories of membership, question of veto, regional representation, size of an enlarged Security Council and working methods of the Council, and relationship between the Council and the General Assembly. While all UN member states and regional groups have been participating in the deliberations, major groups and blocs like Group of Four (G4) involving India, Japan, Brazil and Germany, Uniting for Consensus (UfC) Group, L69 – a loosely organized group of over 40 countries, African Group, Arab Group, and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are more active and vocal than others. The viewpoints of the five permanent members (P5) are equally important. The negotiations at the IGN are generally 'informal' in nature and the process lacks a single text, webcast, and institutional memory.

Though there are some convergences among the positions and stances of these negotiating groups and delegations vis-à-vis the thematic clusters of the reform agenda, equally evident are the divergences. The G4 countries seek permanent membership of the Council for themselves. They align with the L.69 Group and support the African position. These nations, with substantial populations and economies, seek reform by forgoing their veto rights for fifteen years or possibly even longer.

On the other hand, the UfC, a group of over 35 countries nicknamed the ‘Coffee Club’, advocates for the expansion of the Council membership in non-permanent category only. It proposes to increase the non-permanent members from 10 to 21, wherein the Council’s total membership would be 26. The Group has proposed three new non-permanent seats for Africa, three for Asia and the Pacific, two for Latin America, one for Eastern Europe, one for Western Europe and other States, and one rotating seat for SIDS. Of late, the Group has introduced the proposal to increase in non-permanent membership to be classified into two categories- nine longer-term non-permanent seats with possibility of immediate re-election, and two additional two-year seats.

Similarly, the L.69 Group advocates for the overall expansion of the Council membership. The Group proposes adding six new permanent members- two from Africa, two from Asia, one from Latin America and the Caribbean, and one from Western Europe. Additionally, it advocates for six new non-permanent members including a rotating seat for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). It also calls for the total abolition of veto.

The African Group continues to advocate for expansion with a better representation of Africa “to correct the historical injustice done to them”. It proposes to increase the membership from 15 to 26 through an expansion in both categories, with Africa gaining two permanent seats and a total of five non-permanent seats. The Group also supports taking away the veto entirely over the course of time. Africa’s position is stipulated in the Ezulwini Consensus, adopted by the Heads of State/Government of the African Union in 2005.

The Arab Group, a group of 22 Arab States, calls for the reform to address the “historical injustice done to the African and Arab States”. It has been lobbying for a permanent seat with all powers as well as a minimum of two non-permanent seats for the Arab Group. Likewise, a group of 15 countries in the Caribbean, the CARICOM underlines the need to address the deficiency of representation of developing countries and small states. The CARICOM advocates for a dedicated rotating seat for the Small Island Developing States.

It is not difficult to infer an incentive the P5 have in ensuring that the UNSC continues to remain the center of international decision-making exercise. Though the overall appetite of the P5 is towards a modest expansion, they back up the cautious approach and stress the need for broader consensus. They also emphasize the importance of assessing the potential candidates’ contributions and capacity to contribute to the

international peace and security architecture. On the question of veto, while most of them are in the favour of ‘progressive restraint’, they do not appear to be that much prepared for speedy compromise.

As an active G4 member from the South Asian countries, India has been strongly lobbying for a permanent seat for itself. Pakistan, a UfC member, supports the expansion of membership only in the non-permanent category. Rest of the countries in South Asia - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka - support the expansion in both categories of membership and call for abolition of veto.

Due to these diverse positions and stances, none of the written contributions/proposals submitted to the IGN thus far have gathered sufficient support as a basis for launching ‘real intergovernmental negotiations’. Positions of major interest groups have not moved significantly, despite generally stated expression that the UNSC reform would necessarily require a bigger compromise.

One of the debatable issues has been the modalities of the Process as a whole. Member States have not yet agreed about starting text-based negotiations as per UN rules of procedures. The Framework Document, agreed in 2015 as ‘the basis for future talks’ has been the only document produced as of now, which lists the positions of major groups and delegations.

Almost all Member States agree on the expansion of the category of non-permanent members with two-year term. They also agree that an enlarged Council should consist of total members in the mid-20s, within an overall range of 21-27 seats. However, the expansion in other categories (permanent, longer-term seats, transitional or intermediate options) as well as the questions of veto and regional representation continue to remain thorny in negotiations.

In recognition of this, the Political Declaration adopted at the high-level event in September 2020 to commemorate the UN’s 75th anniversary, the Heads of State/Government pledged to ‘instill new life’ into the IGN Process. This was one of the several occasions when the urgency to expedite negotiations was reiterated. Reform rhetoric was once again used at the highest political level to stoke up needful courage. Similarly, in June 2023, the Member States agreed to enhance transparency and inclusivity of the Process by introducing webcast for the IGN’s first debate of every UNGA session as well as by establishing a specific website to act as a repository of the recordings of the Process.

However, the IGN has been unable to deliver any definitive dividends as of today, let alone reach a decisive outcome. Every year negotiating groups and delegations come together with a hope to achieve some tangible results. But each meeting unfolds like a déjà-vu for participating delegations. They read their well-crafted speeches, reiterate their own position, express again the urgency to achieve some headways, and end up expressing frustration over the lack of progress.

Nepal and UNSC Reform: Stance and Way Forward

Nepal attaches significant importance to the UNSC reform process as it believes that only an inclusive, democratic, and revitalized Security Council can respond to the increasing global security challenges. Nepal was one of the ten countries at the request of which the reform agenda was included in the business of the General Assembly in 1979. Other nine countries were Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Guyana, India, Maldives, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka. Since then, Nepal has been closely following the negotiations and made interventions in crucial debates; but refrained from taking the lead, submitting proposals and/or actively pursuing the proposals submitted by others.

Nepal's position on UNSC reform has been principled and consistent. Without fully aligning with any particular group/bloc, it has been expressing its independent views. In its call for a truly representative, accountable, and transparent Council, Nepal has backed up the proposal for an expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership with the total number of members not exceeding the mid-20s.

Contending that the Council must reflect the contemporary geo-political realities, Nepal has been underlining the urgency to correct 'the historical error' and ensure a broader representation of Asia and Africa, among others. It has consistently highlighted the need to promote fair and equitable representation of all developing countries, particularly those which contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. Nepal has stressed that due recognition must be given during the nomination and election process especially when the contributing countries are LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and other small countries.

It has also acknowledged the merit of the aspirations of G4 countries for permanent membership of the Council. History shows that Nepal continued for some time a lobby for the representation of LLDCs and SIDS as special constituencies in the Council as an acknowledgement of their special permanent feature of hardship with serious security and economic implications. Continuation of this lobby seems to be subject to further consultations within and beyond the group of LLDCs.

Nepal advocates for the total elimination of veto conforming to the principle of sovereign equality of all Member States. It underlines the need to exercise restraint until the stage of absolute abolition is reached. It is of the view that the working methods of the Council must be more democratic, transparent, and accountable. Nepal has also maintained that the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly should be mutually-reinforcing and complementary.

Going forward, it is critical to acknowledge that some questions at the IGN Process merit close and careful consideration. Nepal must decide whether to join/align with a major negotiating group, whether to continue pushing for a non-permanent seat for LLDCs, and whether to support the SIDS' proposal of a rotating seat for themselves.

It must also chart out a clear position with regard to multiple proposals and counter-proposals introduced during the process.

Nepal needs to engage more proactively in the IGN process. It is said that important breakthroughs are achieved during informal meetings and consultations, not during the formal and ceremonial gathering of diplomats. So, only way countries like Nepal can influence the reform process and resist resolutely the ‘unfair’ reform formulas that will further skew imbalance in the Council is by engaging constructively.

Such an engagement needs a fresh look at the UNSC reform issues with possible adjustments in our position with regard to both substantive and procedural matters. More clarity may be needed on the question of inadequate representation, use of veto power, structural reform to address the contemporary geo-political realities, and working methods of the Council. Nepal needs to continue its lobby for an inclusive, accountable, and just Council with a fair representation of the countries in special situation such as LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS as well as the countries that have been contributing significantly to the maintenance of international peace and security.

In multilateral forums, ‘group diplomacy’ is a key to achieving the desired outcomes, when it comes to the important processes such as the IGN or any other norm-setting exercises. Nepal has been able to champion the interests of different groups of ‘like-minded countries’ including through its affiliation with Group of 77 and China, Groups of LDCs and LLDCs, Asia Pacific Group of Countries and various groups of friends on thematic issues. On UNSC reform, however, it has opted not to join any group. Joining or aligning with a group does not mean a member state forgoes its national interest but it recognizes that there are shared benefits. Therefore, it may be important for Nepal to develop a more nuanced position vis-à-vis stakes and stances of various negotiating groups and blocs.

In conclusion, the Council’s existing design and structure built largely in 1945 is not reflective of the current global realities. Although it underwent some incremental reforms over the years, the call for an overall reform has remained unfulfilled. This has been exacerbated with a deadlock stemming from divergences of various negotiating groups and blocs within the IGN. In this context, it is safe to surmise that substantive progress on the Council reform is contingent upon the ‘political will’ of major powers and of all those groups to move forward from the present status quo.

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Non-Aligned Movement and Global South in the Impending Geopolitics



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In the course of the Cold War, countries in global South which were reluctant to join either of the power blocks formed Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), in the form of the third power block.¹ The number of member states with NAM stands at 120 at present. The middle powers – India in South Asia, Indonesia in Southeast Asia, Egypt in the Middle East or the Persian Gulf and Yugoslavia in Europe were behind the success of keeping NAM nations independent and formally not aligned during the Soviet Union and the US rivalry, the two power blocs. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was established in 1949 with 12 nations -Britain, Canada, France, US and eight other west European countries. It came into existence after the Treaty of Brussels on 17 March 1948 as an expansion of the preceding year's defence pledge, the Dunkirk Treaty signed between Britain and France. Soviet Union acted in response by creating the Warsaw Pact in 1955.² Thirty six years were engrossed on strategic policies aimed at containment of each other in Europe while working and fighting for influence in the wider international stage with no directly waged war. The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis³ was well managed. Warsaw Pact collapsed, but NATO exists alongside the shift in interests in the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR). China and the US, the two largest economies, are rivals crafting a geostrategic environment of Cold War 2.0.

The rivalry between China and the US and their political headways for global influence is centered in the IPR, impacting the principles, concepts and objectives of NAM⁴. The Group of 77⁵ and China – the largest grouping of the global South, representing 80 percent of the planet's population – convened in Kampala, Uganda, between 21-22 January 2024 to articulate and promote its collective interests and to enhance its joint negotiating capacity in the UN system.⁶ This was followed by the 19th Non-Alignment Summit⁷ of 120-member states who seek more influence on global affairs and multilateralism. The global South seems to be a formidable force behind the new power competitors – China and the US. Resources matter and leading the technology order decides economic order and security order. Alliances, alignment and partnership

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have played a significant part in the formation of a new block but now with North-South cooperation⁸ and South-South Cooperation⁹. The North-South coxswained by India and the Group of 7 (G7) and the South-South led and steered by China through Group of 77 (G77) South cooperation.

Nepal's understanding of foreign relations must have foundational frameworks in order to gain clarity of contemporary international affairs and spill over strategy building in order to have the updated policies on foreign relations. For this, there is a need to look at the academics of international or foreign relations from the perspective of three partnerships. The first one is smart partnership, integrated or multilateral partnership and third is fast partnership.

The fundamental argument is whether or not NAM functions in Cold War 2.0?

Present Cannot Dismiss Past

The post-Cold War era that began in 1990 with global peace has brought in light to the new Cold War¹⁰. Three decades later the world once again is talking about the risks of another global war. Europe is once again witnessing the most devastating military conflict; the Middle East is in the risk of a wider conflict with Iran and Israel's entry into confrontation. East Asia is another potential theater with China's claim of Taiwan, and isn't peaceful either. The US house approved USD 61 billion in military aid to Ukraine¹¹ worth five fiscal years national budget of Nepal (USD 14.7 billion – 2022/23). China has announced a significant 7.2 percent increase in its defence budget, surpassing \$230 billion, which is more than three times India's.¹² This raises an argument if an Axis power¹³ and Allied power¹⁴ are in the forming with dissimilar coalitions analogous to World War-II, a conflict that involved virtually every part of the world during the years 1939–45. The China-Russia new Axis, world ravaged by ferocious, interlocking conflicts and overlooking how the last global war came about could challenge the American led world order.

China and US Tensions in IPR

As of 2023, US spends USD 916 billion in military spending, more than that of nine countries combined, including China which is the second largest spender of USD 296 billion¹⁵. The reorganization of the People's Liberation Army units is underway. Now it consists of four branches - ground, navy, air and rocket as well as four arms - information, aerospace, cyber and joint logistics support¹⁶. The shake up was needed for reinforcing national cyber border defenses, detecting and countering network intrusions and maintaining information security. The aerospace force will improve China's access to and ability to use outer space, said Chinese Defense Ministry Spokesman Wu Qian¹⁷. The previous major military reorganization under President Xi Jinping in 2015 sought to modernize the People's Liberation Army (PLA) by reducing its roughly 2.3 million-strong force by 300,000. It reshuffled the seven military regions

into five theater commands and created the rocket branch and the Strategic Support Force.

Admiral John Aquilino, commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command said, “Despite a failing economy, there is a conscious decision to fund military capability, adding that he believes China will continue to spend significant resources on the military even in the face of greater economic headwinds and aims to have the capability to invade Taiwan by 2027.”¹⁸ The Admiral’s statement has come just before US Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s 25-26 April visit to China to caution that the US and its European allies are no longer prepared to tolerate China’s sale of weapon components and dual-use products to Russia, which are helping President Vladimir Putin rebuild and modernise his arms factories, enabling him to intensify his onslaught on Ukraine when relations were being better with deep disagreements¹⁹.

Blinken’s second visit to China after President Joe Biden took office and second high level this month established their first joint conversation on artificial intelligence and increased cultural exchanges, and in addition agreed to continue to stabilise relations and improve bilateral communication between their militaries. The five-and-a-half hour meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was characterised as “substantive and constructive”. Wang said China and the US face a choice between stability and a “downward spiral” stating that tensions still exists between the world’s two superpowers. “Should China and the US keep to the right direction of moving forward with stability or return to a downward spiral? This is a major question before our two countries, and tests our sincerity and ability.” This came after narrating that US-China ties were “beginning to stabilize.”²⁰

On 26th April 2024 in a meeting with Blinken, Xi said that, “China would like to see a confident, open and prosperous US. We hope that the US will view China’s development in a positive light, once this fundamental problem is solved ... Sino-US relations will truly get better and move forward, China and the US should be partners rather than adversaries; help each other succeed rather than harm each other.”²¹

The US and Alliances are facing challenges due to the rise of China for democracy and liberal values threatening US’s democratic partners and allies, alliances, liberal economic order as well as political identity. The argument is if China’s growth and determination around the world meant stagnation to the era of democracy.

China and India Confrontation in South Asia

China, an authoritarian state and India, a democracy are the two giants along the Himalayas. The Himalaya is an area where the largest border dispute in the world lies between China and India. This was more visible after the release of the new map of China on 28 August 2023, which continues to show the entire State of Arunachal Pradesh and the Aksai Chin region within China’s borders. With expanding influence

around the globe, China at heart still is in its neighborhood that share borders. South of the Himalayas are five nations and Nepal is bordering Tibet of China. Part of the Chinese foreign policy is interlinking under the umbrella of ‘periphery diplomacy’. Safeguarding the security of Sino-Nepal borders, expanding trade and investment networks, and preventing a geopolitical balancing coalition as a preferred option.

For the US, India, a contemporary or present-day competitor of China across an array of military capabilities, is one of the key partners in the strategic competition with China. This partnership started since early 2000s. It started with strategic partnership in civilian nuclear tech, space, missile defence and high-tech areas under the documentation of ‘Next Steps in Strategic Partnership in 2004’. Other than that India has signed four foundational agreements with the US – the Logistics-Exchange Memorandum of Agreement in 2016 (LEMOA), Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement in 2018 (COMCASA), Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement in 2020 (BECA) and General Security of Military Information Agreement in 2002 (GESOMIA).²²

India’s strategic strides in China’s periphery both in the continental and maritime is anticipating that India can secure friends and partners through effective engagement when Beijing and Delhi have long accused each other of “mutual strategic encirclement.”²³ India views the five principles of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)²⁴ with geopolitical suspicion, while China looks at India’s close strategic partnership with Australia, Japan and the US in Quadrilateral Security Dialogue also known as QUAD and Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor²⁵ as hindrance for its geopolitical advances. As in the manner that India’s neighbors are ready to cosy up with Beijing, so would many China’s neighbors from Mongolia to Vietnam and Myanmar to the Philippines — like to deepen ties with Delhi. China is doing the same in South Asia. Xi visited Sri Lanka, and the Maldives after visiting India in September 2015 and Pakistan just before coming to India. Xi visited Bangladesh in 2016 and Nepal in 2019 after a second informal meeting with PM Narendra Modi. These visits are resounding as a response to the US Indo-Pacific Strategy. China has long questioned India’s claim to an exclusive sphere of influence in the subcontinent. China’s outreach to Bhutan, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka has generated much concern in Delhi.

Regional rivalry brings along Beijing’s endeavor to encourage India’s neighbors and Delhi’s attempts to do the same in China’s backyard replicate a significant trait of international relations. All major powers want to consolidate their primacy in their immediate neighborhood and challenge the dominance of a rival power. This law of international politics has a corollary. Small countries next to big powers seek a measure of strategic autonomy by reaching out to distant powers.

When tensions continue to rise in East and Southeast Asia, Japan-Philippines-US are strengthening ties, while creating a strategic triangle complementing the Japan-South

Korea-US framework with plans to extend the network of cooperation in Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia against China. India is also part of QUAD with Australia, Japan and the US. The reviving of old alliances and creating new ones is taking its pace.

Non-Alignment Elapses, Multi-Alignment Rises

Theorists such as Stephen Walt and Stephen David, define ‘alignment’ as ‘a relationship between two or more states that involves mutual expectations of some degree of policy coordination on security issues under certain conditions in the future’.

The nation states with dependencies amongst rising and emerging powers feel that NAM still is relevant like the Central Asian nations and South Asian nations that border in the mini-lateral competition between China and India in South Asia and China and US in Central Asia.

The Non-Aligned Movement is the largest grouping of states, about two-thirds of the UN members and 55 percent of the world population, mostly developing nations. NAM stands for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, recognition of the movement for national independence, recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations, large and small, as well as abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country. Currently, every African country except South Sudan, 26 from the Americas, 36 from Asia, two from Europe, three from the Oceania are members of the NAM. Now it includes 11 observers including China, 11 organisations including the UN. It succeeded in the late 1950s and early 1960s in decolonisation, disarmament, formation of new independent states, democratization, opposition of racism, and persisted throughout the entire Cold War. The policy of non-alignment is still ongoing to balance bipolarity with the potentiality of gaining momentum in view of the impending power bloc pro-China communist/socialist bloc and the pro-American capitalist/democratic group. The movement is seen focused on developing multilateral ties and connections as well as unity amongst the developing nations of the world, in particular the global South²⁶. An example is the Russian Aggression on Ukraine when 141 nation states voted against the intervention on March 2020. The resolution was sponsored by 96 nations. Five supported and 35 abstained.

Multi-Alignment is a series of parallel relationships that strengthen multilateral partnerships and seek a common approach among the grouping towards security, economic equity and the elimination of existential risks like terrorism. An example is India’s participation in the QUAD, Shanghai Corporation Organisation (SCO), Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) summit, G7 meeting, and Commonwealth Summit.²⁷ India is engaged with Australia, Europe, Japan, Russia and the US, manages ties with China in addition, forges ties with the global South, and expands its neighborhood policies, exhibiting internationalist foreign policy.²⁸ During GLOBESEC 2022 at Bratislava, Slovakia India’s Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar’s responded to a question stating, “I don’t accept that India has to join

either the U.S. axis or China axis. We are one-fifth of the world's population, fifth or sixth-largest economy in the world...we are entitled to weigh our own side." This perspective—an Indo-centric specific multi-alignment—underscores India's participation in multiple summits.²⁹ Jaishankar's comments in forums like these also illustrate India's attempts to remain outside bloc politics and resolute in its intent to practice strategic autonomy.

Global South in an Uneasy Partnership and Status

It may be recalled that India had hosted the inaugural second Voice of Global South Summit (VOGSS) on 12-13 January 2023 with the theme 'Global South: Together for Everyone's Growth, Everyone's Trust'.³⁰ The 18th G20 Leaders' Summit was held in New Delhi between September 9-10, 2023 under India's presidency. The Summit witnessed the participation of its 20 member states, nine invitee nations, and 14 international organizations.³¹ G77, comprising 134 developing nations, concluded a two-day summit in Havana, Cuba, on September 16, culminating in a call for a revamped global order.³² All the three summits were held in the month of September 2023. 2024 started with the 19th NAM³³ followed by the Third South Summit³⁴. Global South comprising Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia (excluding Israel, Japan and South Korea) and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) in the 21st century is for small nations growth, credibility lies and rely on diplomacy assurances, political conviction and economic cooperation. With regard to socio-economics and politics they are developing countries and least developed countries or also termed as eastern world. Global North, which the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) describes as broadly comprising Northern America and Europe, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand are developed countries correlated with the Western world.

If the majority of the Global South countries pursued non-alignment; who will lead the NAM 2.0 when China – a rival of the US is so engaged with the G77 and China and South-South cooperation to meet the UN mandated 17 Sustainable Development Goals. It is more about bringing along the Global South to your sides actively or passively.

On the other hand, India and the West are communicating to persuade the activities from Global North to Global South with North-South cooperation. G20 concluded by expanding to the African Union and with India-Middle East-Europe Economic Cooperation (IMEC) as the global initiative. It is also designed to counter the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Two contemporaneous issues are at hand in the imminent bipolarity. Both the rivals, China and US are in pursuance to bringing along in their block, particularly the immediate neighborhood and regional powers to shorten the reach. Second is the continuation of neutrality.

For Nepal, both the immediate neighbors are competitors. China is on the northern borders, unlike in the Cold War during which the key players were in different continents. India, a democracy with special relationship is facing competition and confrontation with China and departing from NAM. Both neighbors' geopolitical strides contradict.

It isn't the 1960s for Nepal

During the January 19th summit of the NAM in Kampala with "Deepening Cooperation for Shared Global Affluence" Nepal stressed on the principles and values of non-alignment and its balanced and non-alignment foreign policy with rightful global order through reform of the UN and the international financial architecture. It was aimed at addressing the global challenges of inequality, poverty, pandemics, climate change, sustainable development, conflict, geopolitical tensions and terrorism.

Mr. Jaishankar, firm on India's role in conveying and drawing strength from the Global South than the strength of NAM as the voice of Global South, argued that NAM is not the platform with the rise of China and India and other emerging countries as world powers. In his book "The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World", he claims that India should engage in its specific interests by leveraging the competition among rival great powers to obtain utmost benefit for itself.

China was not part of the NAM and is actively engaged with the Global South through G77 and China.

Participated by ninety three countries, the 6th NAM summit held on 3-9 Sept 1979 was marked by political and ideological divisions after Castro's speech with strong resistance to the proposal of 'natural alliance' between the movement and the Eastern bloc. The Chinese and the American representatives left the conference room and the Indian delegation described it as completely irresponsible and could not be aligned with one foot and non-aligned with another.³⁵

Europe was at the focus during the Cold War with the fear of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and the threat of Soviet influenced communist parties coming to power in the democracies of Western Europe.

Cold War 2.0 or the New Cold war is focused in the IPR with the fear of Chinese domination of the region with initial priority to South Asia and Southeast Asia.

For Nepal China and India are immediate neighbors and the US as an indispensable third neighbor. India and the US tend to see Nepal from Chinese eyes, while China tends to see Nepal from the American eyes.

Conclusion

Looking at the two proponents of NAM, India and Yugoslavia, India has emerged as great power with political aspirations at a global stage, while Yugoslavia disintegrated.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the presence of American order with US as a single superpower demonstrates a unipolar system, whereas the rivalry between China and the US indicates a forthcoming bipolarism.

Global governance³⁶ is being exercised with global initiatives, and minilateral³⁷ and multilateral³⁸ initiatives and partnerships are underway. China has come up with Global Common Shared Future with BRI, Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilisational Initiative, while the US and Allies are coming up with Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)³⁹ and IMEC⁴⁰. Intergovernmental organisations like Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) has Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement (BBIN-MVA) as sub-regional partnership.

To ponder and assess, there are assumptions that the American led world order or unipolarity is coming to a culmination with multiple world orders or multipolarity; prominently three - Security Order led by the US, Economic order by strong economies of the world including China, EU, India, US. Digital order, which will play an important and vital role to shape the new world order. At the same time, Digital Order is not just about nation states it is also about non-state actors, agencies and private entities and companies. These are indicative of multipolarity influence in the imminent bipolar world.

Nepal's foreign policy will be incomplete until it embraces and builds the foundational framework for contemporary and imminent global trends to contemplate and understand foreign relations. Then only Nepal can formulate strategies and come up with right policy required to be active and engaging partner in the world. Smart partnership framework should study the security or geopolitical security aspect of international relations, integrated or multilateral partnership should study or understand the economic aspects of global relations and fast partnership should underline the technological aspect of international relations, which is a new school of thought in contemporary studies of international relations.

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine is a test for European Union's strategic autonomy. In April 2023, President Macron called the EU to stand as the 'third superpower', to reduce its dependencies on the US and to attain strategic autonomy away from Washington and avoid being drawn into a confrontation between the US and China over Taiwan.

While Nepal is in search of Non-Aligned Policy 2.0, 'Strategic Autonomy' strategy doctrine with the pursuance of national interests, foreign policy exclusive of dependency on other supremacies is the way forward.

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Nepal's Representation in UN, NAM and SAARC: Some Perspectives



Nir Bahadur Karki¹

Abstract

Maintaining law and order, protecting rights of the citizen, ensuring justice to the indigent and deprived, and delivering goods and services by means of required economic and social development constitute core duty and responsibility of any country's government on the domestic front. So equally important is also the formulation, execution and promotion of foreign policy with a view of safeguarding national territories and promoting relations with other countries, especially with border-sharing countries and beyond. Enhancing national image abroad, garnering support for any scheme of national interest by way of developing strategic foreign policy and implementing it with diplomatic dexterity in response to the changing context are other requirements. A proper maintenance of friendly relations with other states is essentially an integral part of any country's governance. Each country has its own way to manage foreign relation as the changes in international affairs go on occurring with the passage of time.

As one of the oldest countries of the world, Nepal has been adopting her foreign policy in line with the vision of the nation builder King Prithvi Narayan Shah the great, who foresaw the geopolitical implication, challenges, opportunity and emphasized the need for a carefully formulated strategy in running foreign affairs with farsightedness. As the world has been witnessing changes in such a fast speed, far quicker than what was during the founding father's tenure some three hundred years ago, Nepal, on her part has been responding to the changes by initiating steps for time-demanded foreign policy under different regimes. Compared to the challenges, the current performances appear less result-oriented in relation to the past ones.

An attempt is being made in this article to shed light on Nepal's representation in the United Nations, Nonaligned Movement and the South Asian Association For Regional Cooperation as these forums are considered suitable venues for pleading and presenting Nepal's perspectives to the cause of the nation, region and world as a whole. The Government of Nepal to this end badly needs more concerted efforts through these

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forums. This not to undermine the importance of bilateral diplomatic dialogues with neighboring countries and globally influential powers.

Background / Introduction

Both rich and poor countries have been adhering to the principle of mutuality among themselves. The interdependence between the states in exchange of trade, sense of security, be it due to fear or anticipation for assistance in case of need, seen and unseen attitude and anticipation of expanding influence of one to the other country or countries in terms of taking or sharing benefit in natural resources, development cooperation, ability of security forces in both quality and quantity in case of dire need and even political interest of one country.

Depending on the need and interests as per the demand of time and geopolitical location, all the countries have been responding to the globally changing dynamism in managing their relations with the other countries as witnessed in international affairs.

Nepal's Move in the Changing Context

Nepal's response to the pattern of happenings in international affairs as per her national interest and need in the changing situation basically goes on spreading from the neighborhood affairs to the regional and global affairs that have direct or indirect impact on the domestic front. Recognizing the importance of the United Kingdom in the First World War (1914-1918) and usefulness of Britain's expected victory for Nepal, the then Rana prime minister Chandra Sumsher JBR extended Nepal's hands of cooperation by sending the Gorkha Army contingent to Great Britain as his predecessor first Rana premier Junga Bahadur Rana had also assisted Britain to suppress the sepoy mutiny against the East India Company Government under the UK in 1857. Similarly, another Rana premier Juddha Sumsher helped Great Britain by deploying thousands of Nepalese soldiers in the World War Second (1939-1944).

Following the end of the 2nd World War and viewing the trends of decolonization, Rana premier Padam Sumsher JBR established diplomatic relations with the United States of America and France, expanding relations that was prior limited to the UK and India only. It was also the same hereditary Rana rule that initiated for Nepal's membership to the United Nations in the late forties of the past century by submitting a formal application. What this vividly discloses that the Rana regime was also responsive to the globally changing pattern while handling the country's foreign affairs.

The ousting of 104-year-old Rana rule, influence of independence of many colonized countries mainly under the British empire, accession of the late king Mahendra to the throne, Nepal's representation in the first Afro-Asian summit in Bangdung, admission of Nepal to the United Nations, establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and the People's Republic of China, followed by many other countries, are some of the

key factors how Nepal went on gaining her height in the international scene with proper representation abroad.

Prithvi Narayan Shah's strategic foreign policy was based on the geopolitical ground reality as voiced by him that Nepal was like a yam between the two builders. The southern and northern neighbors continue to stand as of now as a basis in maneuvering Nepal's foreign affairs with other countries. However, the effectiveness in managing foreign affairs has been varying in different ways. King Mahendra spearheaded the execution of external relation policy in the right direction coupled with political vision and required diplomatic acumen to the desired extent. Some political parties, too, have been displaying their intended foreign policy at least in their party manifesto. But in the latter period Nepal is lagging behind in implementing result-oriented strategies in the domain of foreign affairs. Efficient representation in the bilateral, regional and global forums like in the past constitute the key components in the making of foreign policy effective in achieving national interest. The current need, therefore, is for revitalization of her role in the global and regional bodies by forcefully penetrating Nepal's policy view points in politer manner as in the past.

Nepal and the United Nations

The establishment of the erstwhile League of Nations (LON) was attributed to the end of the World war First (1914-1918) though it could not continue its longevity for more than two decades owing to the fact that the LoN was limited to the world power only i.e. amongst the "High Power Nations", as the very preamble had it. While the incumbent United Nations is about to touch 8 decades with opening preamble as the organization of the "Peoples of the World" that came into existence after the termination of the World War Second (1939-1944) with a view to avert a possible third war, like the two great devastations of the past first half of the 20th century (the UN Charter, 1945).

However, some sense of feeling of the need for unitedness among the nations had existed in the minds of the rulers and leaders while managing their foreign affairs with the other countries (Khanal, Y. 1965) even before the coming up of this world body. The advent of the UN since its formation to date stands as an instrument in bringing many countries together in one common forum for deliberation on the world peace and security, socioeconomic development, humanitarian issues at the global level. Though its effectiveness is often debated since the keys are in the hands of the five dominant nations equipped with veto power. Despite all of the barriers and limitations, the UN, most importantly, has been a center for discussion and finding solution to the issues related to national, regional and international peace and security by averting conflict, securing human rights and overall socioeconomic development. Every country, irrespective of its strength, attaches high importance to the United Nations including the superpower – the United States (Kissinger, A, Henry 1973). To this end the UN has

been an appropriate forum wherein all the member states underline their policy point of view on the changing global scenario reflecting their stand. Nepal had her entry into this organization as the 75th member nation on 14 December 1955.

Membership of Nepal in the UN

Nepal's membership of the United Nations in 1955 was received as a great national victory because of the fact that her earlier effort was defeated due to the veto imposed by the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1949 in the UN headquarters in New York. On the domestic front, too, some political parties shamelessly had appealed to the UN not to admit Nepal in the absence of elected government of their parties. They were against their own country in being a UN member under the Rana regime owing to their lopsided party interest at the cost of national interest.

Nepal had submitted her application first time on 22 July 1949 through a 27-page letter signed by major general Bijaya Shumsher Rana, the director general on foreign affairs. That news was aired by The New York times that read "The Himalaya Kingdom of Nepal was kept out of the United Nations today by the thirty first veto registered by the Soviet Union." (The Himalayan Times, 9 November 2021, page 4).

The USSR did not oppose Nepal's admittance to the UN in 1955. A formal diplomatic relationship between the USSR and Nepal was established only in 1958.

Nepal's membership was a result of the incredible vision, mission and diplomatic acumen of the King Mahendra that led to such glorious victory boosting up Nepal's image abroad through an independent foreign policy.

Government of Nepal expresses its policy viewpoints through different UN forums, mainly in the UN General Assembly sessions in September every year in the UN headquarters in New York, in Geneva and in other UN Regional Commissions like the United Nations Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Asian Development Bank, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Health Organization and so on depending on the subject matter that enables other nations understand what opinion Nepal holds on various issues in international relations. Such UN venues play instrumental role to penetrate the country's policy reflections which is a process of ongoing endeavor in strengthening friendly relations with other countries via the international forums.

The statements made by Nepal's representatives, high ranking leaders including the head of the state and the government in the UN since many years to date has positive bearing in enhancing bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries. The nonstop support of Nepal and appeal to the international community for China's re-entry to the UN right from Nepal's first participation in 1956 to the PRC's readmission in 1971 has been remaining as one of the key factors for one of the China's friendly gestures towards Nepal. Likewise Nepal and her immediate southern neighbor India

share many things in common on most of the agenda that have bearings on maintaining international relations among the nations at bilateral, regional or global levels.

Nepal had made a captivating maiden statement before the UN General Assembly first time in 1956 just after 10 months of her admittance to this world body. Foreign Minister Chuda Prasad Sharma had underlined Nepal's stand on all the global affairs as the leader of the Nepalese delegation to the regular UN session. His general statement had put forth strong emphasis for re-entry of the People's Republic of China and also Japan into the UN which was again reiterated by Nepal's premier B. P. Koirala at the 15th UN General Assembly in 1960. Likewise, late King Mahendra had reinforced Nepal's plead for rightful re-entry of the PRC while addressing the UN General Assembly's Special Session in 1967. King Mahendra's remark that "Only the alternative to the United Nations is the stronger United Nations" was well hailed both in the UN corridor and beyond.

As series of the permanent representatives of the member states to the UN mission went on taking floor to congratulate the PRC, Nepal's then Permanent Representative to the UN was the fourth one to welcome back China to the UN that marked 50th reentry anniversary recently. Nepal's first statement in the UN GA had also underlined great an emphasis on her Nonaligned Foreign Policy, which was in line with the declaration of the first Afro-Asian summit based on the five principles coined as the Panchasheel.

Those trends in representing Nepal in the UN are continuing even today apparently with the same spirits but followed by some ups and downs.

Some General Discussions

Though Nepal stands at 93rd position in geographical territories, 49th in population and 103rd in the global economy status as of now (Shrestha, M. 2022). Nepal's victory as a non-permanent UN Security Council membership twice in 1969-71 and 1989-91, respectively exemplifies the remarkable role played by Nepal in the United Nations garnering most cordial support of the UN member countries, including the permanent five countries. That was a great pride for Nepal which availed her with opportunities to chair the SC meetings in an alphabetical order that was handled for the first time by Nepal's then PR major general Padam Bahadur Khatri and later by another PR Jaya Pratap Rana to whom the UN recognized as the Diplomat of the year, reportedly in 1986. Those recognitions in the UN were also followed by Nepal's winning many other UN Committee elections. The nomination of permanent representatives of Nepal in different UN missions by the incumbent UN Secretaries-General from time to time were other examples of Nepal's reputation.

The selection of the first Nepalese representative to the UN Rishikesh Shah as chairman of the Investigation Commission constituted by the UN to find out possible causes and

circumstances leading to the air crash in which the second UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld had lost his life including other 15 officials and crew on the board was a significant recognition of Nepal in the UN.

From 1969 onwards, Nepal became a nonpermanent UNSC member. Prior to this, one ambassador would look after both the UN and the US affairs. That event led to continuation of major general Padam Bahadur Khatri as Nepal's PR and new appointment of Kul Shekhar Sharma to the US as Nepal's ambassador.

On the UN part, the official visits of the 7 UN Secretaries-General except Trygve Lie and Boutros Ghali indicates the interest and support of the UN for Nepal.

As Nepal has been engaged in the UN peacekeeping mission by sending her army and police personnel in different conflict-striven countries since many years to date currently ranking as the first largest contributor to the UN endeavor for peace. Nepal occupies the place of a provider and also as a recipient from the UN for her overall socio-economic development through various UN organs and agencies.

Contrary to the past glories, however, Nepal's effectiveness in her performance in the UN over recent years appears questionable in comparison with the achievements that preceded early, especially in the UN elections of major importance. Nepal's two stints namely for the presidency of UN General Assembly and for a non-permanent UN Security Council seat went in vain, appeared quite a humiliating one as a result of diplomatic inefficiencies under weak political leadership. However, Nepal did not return empty in the other two elections which included the election for a seat each in the UN Social and Economic Council and the UN Human Rights Council.

The world is confronted with the effects of climate change, degrading environment, war-like mentality of quite a few nations, the multiple ill-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, unhealthy competitions, politically and economically, especially by the stronger over the weaker ones, border disputes between the territory sharing countries and so on.

Nepal and Non-aligned Movement

Since the early 50s of past century the voice of non-alignment went on being pronounced by the leaders, diplomats and defend strategists of those countries who preferred to remain neutral in political ideology-based conflict amongst the countries concerning any defense pact with and of any power block. From the summit of the first Afro-Asian countries held in Bandung of Indonesia which was participated in by many of the newly independent nations of these two continents from the colonial power and also those never colonized independent countries throughout the recorded history like Nepal NAM started to take shape. However, it was since the first summit of its kind held in the then Yugoslavian capital Belgrade in September 1961 with high

level representation of 25 countries the Nonaligned group of nations formally came into existence.

The Belgrade Conference was such an international event for Nepal in which the late King Mahendra had led Nepal's delegation for the first time abroad, previously limited to only bilateral visits to other friendly countries. Since that time onwards, Nepal went on occupying a pivotal role in the nonaligned movement as one of its founding members. This movement is second only to the United Nations in terms of largest global organization.

The Egyptian president Naser, Indonesian president Sukarno, Indian premier Nehru and the Yugoslavian president Tito had vigorously engineered at the pioneering stage of the nonaligned movement that latter in the successive years went on gearing up its speed as a well-talked about movement. The nonaligned countries constitute 55 percent of the world population though its strength and effectiveness is not out of debate currently from what was in the earlier periods.

Need of Restrengthening NAM

Since its inception NAM has been passing through different phases in the global affairs from the cold war period to date. The dilemma that has been seen in the successive years has created a debate on the strength and effectiveness of the NAM. The scenario of the NAM appears somehow quite different from the vision and mission as thought-out by the main founders like president Naser, President Suharto, premier Nehru, president Tito and many others top leaders of those time, including King Mahendra. The tragedy is that the successors of those founding countries of the NAM are not putting their required efforts in enhancing the strength of the NAM that is of vital importance. Possible reason could be that some influential leaders of NAM are reluctant in pleading for the casue to NAM just to please the world military power. But the point in-case is a need of more effective and dynamic NAM in response to the present development in international scenario and its possible future consequences, both at global and the regional levels.

The present trends show that world's mighty countries like the United States and the People's Republic of China are not directly against the principles, spirit and need of the NAM. In the current situation, if NAM launches agreeable agenda non-offensive to the big powers, this movement can garner at least a moral support from both the US and the PRC that would help to revitalize the NAM. The other possibility is creation of a situation in which both the US and the PCR could compete each other to get confidence from the NAM countries, provided they maintain unity and solidarity.

The trends and Hopes on Nepal's Part

Nepal has been advocating and campaigning the rationale of a stronger and result oriented nonalignment since the inception of this body. As of now Nepal has participated in all the NAM conferences.

Since Nepal's involvement in the NAM from Belgrade to Kampala through 19 summits, nine summits were led by the two kings, namely King Mahendra (Belgrade, Cairo and Lusaka) and by King Birendra (Algiers, Colombo, Havana, New Delhi, Harare and Belgrade), and the rest 10 by the premiers, starting from G.P. Koirala in Jakarta in 1992 and Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' in Campala in 2024 respectively.

All the NAM summits have been very appropriate platforms for Nepal to ventilate the country's response by highlighting her policy stands on the prevailing global and regional situation, steps to be taken by the member states, the government's commitment on its part to the cause of the NAM aimed at enhancing better cooperation amongst the member states, promoting the spirit of disarmament, strengthening and bettering peace and security at the global level.

In his first participation leading the Nepalese delegation to the Fourth NAM summit held in Algiers in September 1973, King Birendra had underlined Nepal's unflinching commitment to the NAM simultaneously reflecting Nepal's view on the global situation that had prevailed at that time. In his speech King Birendra had expressed hope on the border issue between the erstwhile Soviet Union and China that a peaceful resolution would prevail on the long border between the two largest countries of the world. Within less than three decades, the hostility-like situation turned into amicable understanding, what king Birendra had hoped in 1973 (Thapa, C, 2022).

Nepal and SAARC

From its inception on 8 December 1985 in Bangladeshi capital city of Dhaka, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation has been a common jargon in the South Asian Region, especially in Bangladesh and Nepal. It is lagging behind in meeting the expectation of the peoples of the member countries compared to the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), the European Union, Gulf Cooperation Council, to name a few. SAARC was dreamed and visualized by president Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh. Nepal had sent the incumbent foreign secretary to New Delhi, Islamabad, Dhaka, Colombo, Male and Bhutan subsequently for brainstorming discussions with his diplomatic counterparts and leaders on the thematic importance and positive consequences of this organization that would benefit all the countries of the region in future. It is in this context that president Rahman and King Birendra had played most pivotal role in founding the South Asian Regional body at the formative phase.

Nepal already has successfully hosted three summits of the SAARC in a grand manner, the third in 1987, the eleventh in 2002 and the eighteenth in 2014, respectively. Nepal now looks forward to nineteenth one to handover the chairmanship to Pakistan as per the tradition of the SAARC. The reason for the SAARC Summit being postponed was due to India's denial to attend the already scheduled event on the stipulated date in Pakistan following a dispute between the two countries over border issue. Nepal has been chairing longest tenure in the SAARC history of nearly four decades. Though the ball is in the court of India and Pakistan, it should also be Nepal's part to mediate as the chair country to bring SAARC back in track.

Frequent interactions of Nepal's incumbent and former diplomats, academicians, intellectuals and non-political senior media persons with their respective counterparts of India and Pakistan would also be helpful in this direction.

Conclusion

Nepal needs to build on the efforts and expertise it has had demonstrated at the forums of both UN and NAM. This is specially important when things in the international arena are witnessing both drastic and fast-speed changes that demands more strategic vision and mission equipped with more diplomatic acumen, expertise, experienced calculation on the part of the leaders and diplomats. Only through revitalization and commitment, they will be able in adjusting national interest in the changing context.

Nepal requires to play better role in in the UN, NAM, SAARC and many other global and regional bodies. China is soon to reach the rank of the world's number one economic power, India occupies the 5th position. Interestingly, among the top world five economic powers, three are situated in the Asian continent, namely China, Japan and India. Nepal has an advantage, provided a worthy diplomacy pursues its interests.

The above narratives present some reflections on Nepal's endeavor in responding her position, stands, opinions, proposal for resolution on national, regional and global issues. Looking at the changing trends in international affairs as a tool in managing external relations, the challenge and task before Nepal, most importantly, lies in strengthening her diplomatic capacity for more effectively deal with her immediate neighbors, economically developed countries and, above all, striking a triangular balance between India, China and the United States.

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Climate Change and Small States: Interplaying Interests within Evolving Perceptions of Insecurity



Sweta Karki¹

Impacts of climate change are transboundary, triggering diverse security concerns for safeguard of mutual interests and determining the degrees of responsibilities conferred to states and non-state actors. Considerations have been given to the linkages between climate change and conflict and peace, emphasizing on the competition over resources and human movement, which exacerbate existent anxieties and inequalities (UNDP Climate Promise, 2023; Schubert et al., 2008, pp. 2-3). More than 3 billion individuals are estimated to be living in climate hotspots across South Asia, Africa, within SIDS and South/Central America (UN Climate Change, 2022). Past decades have, thenceforth, witnessed diverse voices vying for attention towards the variability of climate change and different capabilities of nations in dealing with any consequent disasters. There have been apprehensions on the interspersed nature of the perceived threats and lines of responsibilities that are drawn in both theory and practice.

Small island developing states (SIDS), for instance, have frequently moved in coalitions within international platforms to underscore the existential threat that a warming planet poses as borders recede, livelihoods are impacted and novel crises emerge from heatwaves, ocean acidification and climate-induced disasters (Thomas et al., 2020). They lay importance on their limited capacities to deal with such catastrophes, and outlining the margins of climate justice, they press on several issues, one of which is financial assistance for nations least responsible for the developing crisis (UNFCCC, 2023; Gonzalez, 2015, p. 158; Adelman, 2016, p. 38), thus creating a nexus between security and justice. It becomes a medium to both understand and convey the historical lines of accountability and the rising trends of insecurities for these countries and others that find it difficult to balance their interests and external sensitivities. What it also points towards is the changing nature of the security discourse with the climate debate.

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Additionally, the indirect correlation between a climate-induced crisis and conflict within an unequal society has been a matter of concern that has occupied significant focus in contemporary climate discourse. Therefore, climate in modern geopolitics presents a unique dimension to redefine the idea of security and insecurity for states and individuals alike, connecting to the emerging trends of justice and development.

The Junction Between Rights and Insecurity

Security for small states in the interconnected global networks represents a complexity in its basic comprehension, whereby studies have oftentimes focused on strategies that such entities employ in maintaining their interests (Wiberg, 1987) by either utilizing their own space or relying on other states that may carry similar normative or strategic interests. Within the scope of climate change, there is greater emphasis on multilateral institutions, and sometimes on the principles of international law, but vulnerabilities for small actors are diverse, and not solely based on the climate-induced geographical uncertainties but also added on by the regional and global interest groupings that dictate threat perceptions. Whether one were to simply rely on the traditional aspects where defence claims utmost priority across sensitive territories where valuable resources are shared, or focus on non-traditional security centering on incipient threats like food and water insecurity, small states face a unique conundrum wherein anxieties are reflections of their limited capabilities. That is not to say that smaller actors have not assumed an active role in climate decision-making.

The Conference of Parties or COP28 convened in November 2023 witnessed an emphasis upon notions of security, and the risks compounded by the climate crises on already vulnerable nations (Owens et al., 2023). Longstanding criticisms of actual implementation of grand promises and skepticism regarding commitments to vital issues persisted following the event (Nevitt, 2023; Powell, 2023). One of the prominent voices that raised an alarm was the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) that claimed the commitments were “incremental and not transformational” (Reuters, 2023). This presents insight into both how the small state conversation has been shaped within the climate security discourse and influence has been exerted by some actors within it. This section discusses the idea of small-ness in climate debates, focusing on some of the initiatives undertaken by SIDS in their campaign for climate security and justice and the variations in realities for other smaller states like Nepal that occupy regionally sensitive spaces.

Identifying Small States: Relative Parameters

It remains pertinent for the purpose of this paper to define small states, beyond geographical size and quantitative measures within the climate discourse. Small states are innately vulnerable, as they are called so partly due to the asymmetric power relations within interstate networks that requires them to inordinately focus on external dynamics (Keohane, 1969, p. 291; Vital, 1971, p. 38; Bjøl, 1971, p. 18), and partly

because of their internal capabilities regarding geographical, economic and political structures – that dictate their opportunities and limitations – in dealing with external shocks. Some are relatively limited in their influence on international systems (East, 1973, p. 557), occasionally relying on “discursive power resources” adopting ideas of morality and legitimacy towards furthering their aims (Deitelhoff & Wallbott, 2012, p. 346; Rasheed, 2019, p. 224).

So, small-ness factors is a sense of limitation within defined crevasses of power in global and regional spaces, where states stand limited either in terms of wider influence to secure critical interests or garner and exert influence. Climate-induced disasters and shortages create ripples in the fabric of the state and society, and so beyond just hampering growth and development within such states, sometimes behave as a catalyst to impact insecurities hitting on pre-existent inequalities and spaces of probable conflict. And while sometimes there is a tendency to box small states into definite categories when discussing security and influence patterns, all small actors have distinctive characteristics that define relative insecurities and this has held truer in the case of climate stressors impacting those very concerns. For small states to define threats and build it in a manner that gains comprehensive assertion for cooperative action is intricate in its imagination as well as execution, as it has often been the norm that it must balance its own interests with that of others in the recognized regional or global systems.

Anomaly of SIDS: Building Narratives and Perception of Justice

Threats in international associations have been perceived in relation to power dynamics (Rousseau, 2007), and to a large degree in association with the response to them, perceptions frequently are central. This has largely been applied by scholars who look into traditional frameworks of inter-state conflict, and as Cohen (1978) argues threat perception has been 'the decisive intervening variable between action and reaction in international crisis' (p. 93).

In case of actually establishing the need for accelerating action, small islands have occupied a central position to develop narratives of national and human insecurity regarding receding territories, mass migration and marginalized communities, and have been vocal critics of inaction. “Vulnerability has long had numerous theories and interpretations, with SIDS frequently iconized in climate change venues as being particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts due to their island characteristics” (Kelman, 2018, p. 151). They have acted to secure several benchmarks on policy papers, including that of the 1.5°C in the Paris Agreement and moved towards leadership roles during pivotal negotiations by prompting strategic alliances as well as framing ambitious targets (Keo & Jo, 2023). The group, alongside indigenous communities and activists has been key in constructing linkages between justice and security (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014), merging “standards of human rights with issues

of sustainable development and responsibility for climate change” (Robinson, 2018, p. 19).

Additionally, by bringing the discussion into normative grounds and adopting a rights-based approach, there have been instances where international and national courts, tribunals and the like have been made approachable for climate change issues. In a court hearing held under the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), small island states, under the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS) formed by Antigua and Barbuda and Tuvalu in 2023 put forth an appeal to craft and iterate the legal terms for the maritime impacts of climate-induced changes in the environment (Kaminski, 2023). As noted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2023) climate related litigation cases have increased in the past decade within several legal establishments, doubling within five years from 884 in 2017 to 2,190. These have focus on the emerging trends centered on the issue of climate justice – where SIDS have been important actors and almost 17% of cases have been recorded in SIDS and other developing nations. The states, though small have carved a space and magnified their voice in dialogues, but one size rarely fits all and it is a challenging template to efficiently replicate in terms of projecting vulnerabilities.

Mountains, Rivers and Perilous Borders: Brief Case of South Asian Small States

Whether a product of internalization of vulnerabilities or being susceptible to external shocks, South Asian small states are highly prone to climate-induced disasters in relation both to their geographical position and dependence on the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) range and its border sensitivities. The HKH region is occupied by major river basins, often termed “water towers,” that provide freshwater to millions across 16 countries relying on them for food, water and energy needs. When the snow and ice melts into these cradles, soon enough the situations could be dire (Rasul, 2014; ICIMOD, 2023). The alterations in ice melt would see water availability rising for some time, and then gradually decreasing. South Asia is intrinsically vulnerable to the impacts of climate change as “heat waves, cyclones, droughts, and floods are testing the limits of government, businesses, and citizens to adapt” (World Bank).

These insecurities play out within the precarious border relations of South Asia, as wariness persists in bilateral associations – signifying that a more state-centric approach is seen in the space as opposed to a normative one even in case of non-traditional security threats like climate change. Scenarios of scarcity, especially water, have prompted narratives to paint situations of escalating conflict in the future (Bhattacharya, 2023). Smaller states in South Asia like Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Bhutan have relatively less capacity to effectively traverse the lines of pre-existing tensions that would be exacerbated by climate-induced crisis. This is reflective in the growing climate-conflict nexus that has been tracked across several perceptions of water

sharing, existing social inequalities and climate-induced mass movement (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2023).

The threats are as imminent in the low-lying deltas of the region as it is for the states cradling the mountainous regions, considered to be the foremost in experiencing climate-induced disasters like landslides and glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF) simultaneously risking the agriculture and tourism that such spaces tend to depend upon (Madsen, 2014). South Asian small states have independently been active in voicing such concerns in global stages, but a concerted effort in regional dialogues are wanting – which arguably is imperative since most states in the region are a part of an asymmetric power association. Securing interests for smaller states then becomes a matter in South Asia of constructing tangible narratives of interconnected insecurities in relation to individual threats, strengthening not just global channels of negotiation, but also regional and bilateral.

Conclusion

Realities for small states differ when actualizing common threats within unstable and unintegrated spaces. Threats may be objective, but threat perceptions are constructed when devising policy options and ascertaining the degree of sensitivity allocated to a particular issue. SIDS provide a strategy that works for their pre-existing conditions of vulnerability. Smaller states, operating in a less integrated regional space, face constraints even as they project their vulnerabilities in cogent narratives in global discussions. While island nations have been pivotal in the advocacy and interest-building within climate platforms, there is a need to identify small states within parameters that can further include distinctions between small vulnerable states on measures of resource dependence and their ability to exert sway over decision-making processes. The idea of vulnerability is crafted in diverse mindsets, and the way in which threats are packaged and internalized is indicative of the same.

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सुशील लम्साला^१

कूटनीतिज्ञहरूका संस्मरण

सार्वजनिक जीवनमा सक्रिय रहिसकेका व्यक्तिहरूका संस्मरणात्मक कृतिहरू अक्सर चर्चित हुनपुग्छन् - विभिन्न कारणले । कति कृतिहरूको प्रचार त्यति धेरै हुँदैन तर तिनमा लेखिएका कुराले सम्बन्धित मुलुक र कहिलेकाँही त विश्वकै इतिहासमा महत्त्व राख्ने घटना र पात्रबारे पहिले नखुलेका कुराको जानकारी प्राप्त हुन सक्छ । कूटनीतिक क्षेत्रका व्यक्तिहरूले लेखेका प्रशस्तै कृतिहरू चर्चित भएका छन् संसारमा । अमेरिकाका परराष्ट्रमन्त्री तथा राष्ट्रिय सुरक्षा सल्लाहकार भएका हेनरी किसिञ्जरका डिप्लोमेसी, अन चाइना, वर्ल्ड अर्डर आदि, अमेरिकामै सोभियत राजदूतको भूमिका निर्वाह गरेका अनातोली दोब्रिनिनको इन कन्फिडेन्स, चीनमा भारतीय राजदूतका रूपमा सेवा गरेका के एम पानिकरको इन टु चाइनाज र नेपालका पूर्व परराष्ट्रमन्त्री तथा पूर्व राजदूत भेषबहादुर थापाको हालै प्रकाशित राष्ट्र परराष्ट्र लाई केही उदाहरणका रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ । मुख्यालयमा होस् वा विदेशस्थित नियोगमा सेवा गर्दा, आफ्ना विशिष्ट अनुभवबारे कूटनीतिज्ञहरूले लेखेका कृतिले तत्कालीन राष्ट्रिय अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय राजनीतिक परिवेश बुझ्न सहायता गर्छन् । इतिहास लेखनका लागि त ती संस्मरण प्राथमिक स्रोतसामग्री नै पनि हुन् ।

यस लेखमा कूटनीतिक पेशाका केही स्वनामधन्य व्यक्तित्वले लेखेका पुस्तकमा वर्णित तीनवटा कथाप्रसङ्गको चर्चा गरिएको छ ।

प्रशान्त महासागरमा जलक्रीडा

अमेरिकाका लागि सोभियत संघका राजदूत अनातोली फयोदोरोभिच दोब्रिनिन एक कुशल कूटनीतिज्ञका रूपमा चर्चित थिए । सन् १९६२ देखि २४ दिव्य वर्षसम्म संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिकाका लागि सोभियत संघको राजदूतका रूपमा कार्यरत रहँदा उनले सर्वश्री जोन एफ केनेडी, लिण्डन बि जोन्सन, रिचर्ड निक्सन, जेराल्ड फोर्ड, जिम्मी कार्टर र रोनाल्ड रेगन गरी कुल ६ जना अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति देखे । शीतयुद्धको उत्कर्ष र सोभियत-अमेरिका द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्धका उतारचढावका बीच दोब्रिनिनले भोगेका अनुभव बडो चाखलाग्दो गरी उतारेका छन् आफ्नो संस्मरणात्मक पुस्तक इन कन्फिडेन्समा । साठीको दशकमा सोभियत संघ र अमेरिकाबीचको सम्बन्धमा केही होलोपन देखिनथालेको थियो भने सत्तरीको दशकको पूर्वार्द्धमा सम्बन्ध सुधारले थप गति लिँदै गयो । दुबै

१ श्री लम्साल अरब गणतन्त्र इजिप्टका लागि हाल नेपालको बहालवाला राजदूत हुनुहुन्छ ।

देशबीच केही महत्त्वपूर्ण सम्झौता पनि सम्पन्न भए । सन् १९७२ को मे महिनामा सोभियत नेता लिओनिद ब्रेझनेभ र अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति रिचर्ड निक्सनबीचको मस्को शिखरसम्मेलनका अवसरमा द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्ध सुधारबारेका आधारभूत सिद्धान्त तथा शस्त्र नियन्त्रण सम्बन्धी संयुक्त दस्तावेजमा हस्ताक्षर भएपश्चात् आपसी सम्बन्ध सहजीकरणको प्रक्रिया अर्थात् देताँले राम्रै गति लिएको थियो ।

मस्को शिखरसम्मेलनको सफलतामा हेनरी किसिञ्जर र सोभियत विदेशमन्त्री आन्द्रेइ ग्रोमिकोको विशेष भूमिका थियो । गरमागरम विश्व राजनीतिलाई शीतल बनाउन ठूलै भूमिका खेलेको उक्त सम्मेलनले सोभियत नेताहरु ब्रेझनेभ र कोसिजिन एवम् निक्सनलाई एकअर्कासँग निकट हुने अवसर प्रदान गरेको थियो । सम्मेलनबाट अमेरिका फर्किएपछि अमेरिकी राष्ट्रिय सुरक्षा सल्लाहकार हेनरी किसिञ्जरले राजदूत दोब्रिनिनलाई राम्रैसँग स्वागत सत्कार र खातिरदारी गरेको प्रसङ्ग दोब्रिनिनले आफ्नो संस्मरणमा सविस्तार वर्णन गरेका छन् ।

जुलाईको महिना । सान फ्रान्सिस्कोस्थित कन्सुलेटको निरीक्षणमा राजदूत दोब्रिनिन क्यालिफोर्निया गएका थिए । राष्ट्रपति निक्सन पनि क्यालिफोर्नियाको सान क्लेमेन्ट पुगेका रहेछन् छुट्टी मनाउन । सान क्लेमेन्टको समुद्री तटमा निक्सनले एक भव्य महल खरिद गरी नाम राखेका थिए - ला कासा प्यासिफिका अर्थात् प्रशान्त महल । निक्सन निवासलाई पत्रपत्रिकाले 'पश्चिमी हाइट हाउस' नामाकरण गरिदिए । निक्सनले पनि आपत्ति जनाएनन् । सोभियत राजदूत क्यालिफोर्निया आएको चाल पाएर राष्ट्रपति निक्सनले सोभियत राजदूतलाई आफ्नो निवासमा आउन निमन्त्रणा दिएछन् - दुई चार दिन आराम गर्न । किसिञ्जर निक्सनसँगै गएका रहेछन् — राष्ट्रपति र राष्ट्रिय सुरक्षा सल्लाहकारबीच व्यक्तिगत सम्बन्ध राम्रो थियो । मेक्सिकन स्टाइलको शुभ्र शान्त प्रशान्त महलको भव्यतामा कुनै कमी थिएन । निक्सनले आफैँ अघि लागेर महलको कोठाचोटा देखाए । अनौपचारिक वातावरणको लाभ उठाउँदै दोब्रिनिनले अमेरिकी नेताहरूसँग द्विपक्षीय मामिलामा खुलस्त भलाकुसारी गर्ने अवसर मात्र पाएनन्, निक्सन र किसिञ्जरले कुन विषय र पात्रका बारे के सोच्ता रहेछन् भन्ने कुरा भलिभाँती थाहा पाउँदै गए । सोभियत संघ र अमेरिकाबीच वार्षिक रुपमा शिखर सम्मेलन र नियमित अन्तर्क्रिया र छलफल तथा भेटघाट आयोजना गर्ने एवम् एकअर्काको आशाअपेक्षा बुझेर द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्ध सुधार गर्ने चाहना रहेछ निक्सनको । सम्बन्ध सुधार बारे तह-तहमा औपचारिक/अनौपचारिक कुराकानी गर्दैगर्दा बिदा मनाउने क्रममा समुद्रतटमा गरिएको रमाइलोको रोचक वर्णन गरेका छन् दोब्रिनिनले । एक-आपसमा भिडिरहेका शीतयुद्धका महाशक्ति राष्ट्रका उच्चाधिकारीहरु । सँगै बिदा मनाउन गएका छन् समुद्री किनारमा । दृश्य कम रोमाञ्चपूर्ण थिएन । हुन पनि समुद्रतटको त्यो दिनको दृश्य वास्तवमै विलक्षण थियो - महाशक्ति राष्ट्र अमेरिकाका राष्ट्रिय सुरक्षा सल्लाहकार किसिञ्जर अनि शत्रुतापूर्ण सम्बन्ध रहेको अर्को वैचारिक ध्रुवको महाशक्ति राष्ट्रका राजदूत उत्तानो परेर समुद्र किनारमा पडिरहेका, अति सम्बेदनशील

कागजात र उपकरण त्यसै असरल्ल बालुवामा एकजना अर्दलीको भरमा छाडेर । औपचारिक अदबमा अभ्यस्त वाशिङ्टनको कूटनीतिक वृत्तले यस्तो दृश्यको कल्पना गर्न सक्ने थिएन ।

अनौपचारिक वातावरणमा कुराकानी गर्दै जाँदा अमेरिका-सोभियत द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्ध बारे कसका खास चाहना के हुन् भन्ने कुरा पत्रपत्र खुल्दै गए । सार्वजनिक खपतका लागि कुरा कडाकडै गरेपनि शान्तिपूर्ण सहअस्तित्व र द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्ध सुधार नै थियो दुबै देशको चाहना - असलमा । नियमित शिखरसम्मेलनबारे निक्सनको योजना थाहा पाएर दोब्रिनिन खुशी भए । तथापि वाटरगेट काण्ड पछि - र अझ त्यो भन्दा पनि सोभियत संघ प्रति अमेरिकी नीति कस्तो हुनुपर्दछ भन्ने बारे रिपब्लिकन पार्टीभित्र मतैक्य नहुँदा —यथार्थमा निक्सनको सपना साकार भने हुन सकेन । तर यस्ता खास कुरा थाहा पाउन खास वातावरण पनि चाहिने रहेछ भन्ने कुरा राम्रैसँग महसुस गरेका थिए राजदूत दोब्रिनिनले त्यसबेला । अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपतिसँग उनकै घरमा आमोदप्रमोद मनोरञ्जनका साथसाथै खास कुरा गर्ने मौका सोभियत राजदूतले पाउनु अद्भूत संयोग मान्नुपर्छ - त्यो पनि शीतयुद्धका बेला ।

किसिञ्जरको दोहोरो शतक

सत्तरीको दशकको कुरा हो, चिनियाँ नेता माओत्सेतुङ र अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति रिचार्ड निक्सन चीन-अमेरिका द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्ध सुधारका लागि पाइला चाल्दै थिए - सुस्तरी सुस्तरी । हतार हतारको कदमले बित्यास निम्त्याउन सक्ने खतरा उत्तिकै थियो । चीन र अमेरिका दुबै भयङ्कर आन्तरिक उथलपुथलबाट गुज्रिरहेको बेला थियो त्यो । साँस्कृतिक क्रान्तिले चीनलाई खड्ग्रयाङ्कुङ्ग्रुङ्ग बनाएको थियो भने अमेरिका पनि भियतनाम युद्धका कारण बिलखबन्धमा थियो - भित्रभित्रै । त्यस्तो विषम परिस्थितिमा चीन र अमेरिकाबीच कसरी सम्बन्ध पुनःस्थापना प्रयास अघि बढेको थियो भन्ने कुरा अमेरिकाका राष्ट्रिय सुरक्षा सल्लाहकार र विदेशमन्त्री हेनरी किसिञ्जरले आफ्नो अन चाइना भन्ने पुस्तकमा बेलिबिस्तार लगाएका छन् । एकअर्कालाई शत्रुराष्ट्र भनेर मानिरहेका मुलुकबीचको सम्बन्ध गहिरो भड्खालोमा डुबेको थियो - बीस वर्षदिखि । त्यस्तो सम्बन्धलाई खाडलबाट उकासेर जमीनमा ल्याउन के कस्तो उपाय गर्नुपर्यो भन्ने कुराको बलो बाइ बलो वर्णन गरेका छन् किसिञ्जरले । उनले फत्ते गरेको काम चानचुने थिएन । खासमा, विश्व राजनीतिको दिशा मोडेको थियो त्यस घटनाले ।

त्यस अघि पनि थुप्रै प्रयास नभएका होइनन् दुबै पक्षबाट । निक्सनले राष्ट्रपतिका रूपमा जनवरी २०, १९६९ मा दिएको उद्घाटन भाषणमा चीनको नाम नलिइकनै सबै मुलुकहरूसँग सम्पर्क र सम्बन्धको ढोका खुला रहेको संकेत दिइसकेका थिए । माओले पनि त्यो अवसरको उपयोग गरेर अघि बढ्न चाहेको संकेत दिए । चौधौँ शताब्दीको द रोमान्स अफ द श्री किडडम नामक चिनियाँ उपन्यासमा उल्लिखित वेइ, शु र वु नामक तीनवटा राज्यले कसरी शक्ति सन्तुलनको रणनीतिलाई उपयोग गरेका थिए भन्ने प्रसङ्ग माओलाई कण्ठै थियो । सोभियत संघसँग सम्बन्ध

बिग्रीएका बेला अमेरिकासँगको सम्बन्ध सपानुपने खाँचो थियो त्यतिखेर चीनलाई । अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय सम्बन्धका पण्डित किसिञ्जर त्रिपक्षीय शक्ति सन्तुलनलाई सूक्ष्म रूपले नियालिरहेका थिए । त्यस बेला चीन र सोभियत संघबीचको सम्बन्ध यति बिग्रीएको थियो कि सोभियत आक्रमणको भयले १९६९ मा चाओ एनलाई बाहेक चिनियाँ शीर्ष नेतृत्वपंक्ति बेइजिङ छाडेर अन्यत्र शहरमा छरिन पुगेका थिए - सुरक्षाका लागि ।

चीन-अमेरिका सम्बन्ध सुधारकै सन्दर्भमा बहुचर्चित पिङपङ कूटनीतिको उदय पनि त्यतिबेलै भएको हो । जापानमा आयोजित एक टेबुलटेनिस प्रतियोगितामा चीन र अमेरिका दुबै देशका खेलाडी टोलीले भाग लिइरहेका रहेछन् । साँस्कृतिक क्रान्तिको शुरुवातपछि चीन पहिलोपटक कुनै अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय प्रतियोगितामा भाग लिँदै थियो त्यहाँ । किसिञ्जरका अनुसार पिङपङ कूटनीतिको पहिलो चाल उनैले चालेका हुन् । संकेत पछि अर्को संकेत, संकेतै संकेतको आदानप्रदान हुँदै गयो । अन्ततोगत्वा चिनियाँ टेबल टेनिस टोलीले अमेरिकी टेबल टेनिस खेलाडीको टोलीलाई चीन भ्रमणको लागि निमन्त्रणा दिएछ - आदेशानुसार । नभन्दै अमेरिकी खेलाडी टोली चीन पुग्यो पिङपङ खेलन । दुई मुलुकबीचको सम्बन्धमा रक्तसञ्चार हुन थाल्यो । यद्यपि, खेलाडीको भ्रमणले द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्ध पुनःस्थापना गर्नसक्ने कुरो थिएन - राजनीतिक भेटघाट नभई सम्बन्धको गाडी जहाँको तहाँ अडिँदै नै रहने थियो ।

उच्चस्तरीय भ्रमणको तयारीका लागि परम गोपनीयता र सतर्कताको खाँचो पर्थ्यो । तसर्थ, हाइट हाउस बाहेक अन्य राज्य संयन्त्रलाई सूईको सम्म नदिई गरिएको पूर्वतयारीको वर्णन किसिञ्जर गर्दछन् आफ्नो पुस्तकमा । राष्ट्रपति निक्सनको विशेष दूतका रूपमा किसिञ्जरको चीन भ्रमणलाई महागोप्य राख्न के के मात्र गरिएनछ — किसिञ्जरको टोली वाशिङ्टनबाट भियतनामको साइगन, साइगनबाट बैंकक, बैंककबाट नयाँ दिल्ली र नयाँ दिल्लीबाट रावलपिण्डि हुँदै बेइजिङ जाने योजना बन्यो । एक त भ्रमण गर्ने ठाउँ नै बग्नेली त्यसमाथि प्रत्येक ठाउँमा कार्यक्रमै कार्यक्रमको उरुड राखिएपछि पत्रकारले झर्को मानेर उस्तो सोधिखोजी गर्ने छाडिदिए । गोप्य भ्रमण गोप्य रूपमै सम्पन्न होस् भनेर गोप्य रूपमा कार्यक्रम तय गरिएको थियो । रावलपिण्डी पुगेपछि किसिञ्जर 'विरामी' परे - पूर्वयोजना अनुसारै । गोप्य योजनाको जानकारी राष्ट्रपति निक्सन र किसिञ्जरका सहायक कर्नेल अलेक्सान्द्र हाइगलाई मात्र दिइएको थियो । सञ्चारमाध्यमको ध्यान अरु कुरातिर मोडियो । 'विरामी' भएर पाकिस्तानमै आराम गरिरहेका ठानिएकाले किसिञ्जरको चीन भ्रमण कार्यक्रममा कुनै विघ्नबाधा आइलागेन । चीन पुगेर पाकिस्तान फर्किँदाको ४८ घण्टा भित्र-चीन अमेरिका द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्धको इतिहास नयाँ मोडमा पुगिसकेको थियो ।

भ्रमणका क्रममा शास्त्रीय चिनियाँ कूटनीतिका विशेषताहरू — भव्य अतिथि सत्कार, रङ्गारङ्ग समारोह आदि — विशिष्टतापूर्वक झल्किएका थिए रे । फरर अङ्ग्रेजी बोल्ने नौजवान कूटनीतिज्ञको टोलीलाई किसिञ्जरको स्वागतार्थ पाकिस्तान नै पठाइएको रहेछ — अतिथिगणलाई सुविधा होस् भनेर ।

कूटनीतिज्ञहरुको समूहको चयन चाउ एनलाईले नै गरेका रहेछन् — दुई वर्ष पहिल्यै । उबेलै चीन र अमेरिकाबीच सम्बन्ध सुधार हुनुपर्दछ भनेर चेन यी लगायत् चार जना मार्शलले सुझाव दिएका थिए माओलाई । अमेरिकी टोलीलाई चीन पुर्याउने जहाज पाकिस्तानी राष्ट्रपतिको हवाइजहाज थियो । पाकिस्तानी राष्ट्रपतिको व्यस्त कार्यतालिकाका कारण जहाज ४८ घण्टाभन्दा बढी रोकिन सक्दैनथ्यो चीनमा । अतएव: चीनसँगको राजनीतिक सम्बन्ध पुनर्जीवित गर्न किसिञ्जरसँग ठीक त्यति नै समय उपलब्ध थियो जति जहाजसँग थियो । राति आराम गर्ने समय कटाउँदा र दरबार संग्रहलायको घुमघाम कार्यक्रम पनि रहेकाले बाँकी बच्ने रहेछ कुल २४ घण्टा । सन् १९४९ देखि विच्छेद भएको सम्बन्धको ढोका खोल्नु थियो त्यही समयसीमाभित्रै । चुनौतीले भरिएको मिशन थियो त्यो । तथापि चाउ एनलाईको परिपक्वता र सुझबुझले छलफललाई फलदायी तुल्याउन ठूलो मद्दत गरेको ठान्छन् किसिञ्जर । चाउ एनलाईप्रति किसिञ्जरमा उच्च सम्मान जागृत भयो— त्यक्तिको सम्मोहक व्यक्तित्व उनले साठी वर्षको आफ्नो सार्वजनिक जीवनमा न पहिले, न पछि, कहिल्यै भेटेनन् रे । सानो कद, मनोहर मुखमुद्रा र तीक्ष्ण बौद्धिकताका ज्वाजल्यमान आँखा भएका चाउ एनलाई मान्छेको मनका कुरा तत्क्षणै बुझिहाल्ने मेधावी व्यक्ति थिए भन्छन् उनी । त्यस वर्ष चाउ एनलाई चिनियाँ प्रधानमन्त्री भएको बाइस वर्ष पुगिसकेको थियो ।

नेपालका पूर्व परराष्ट्रमन्त्री भेषबहादुर थापाले आफ्नो भर्खरै प्रकाशित पुस्तक राष्ट्र परराष्ट्रमा चाउ एनलाईको भावमय स्मरण गरेका छन् । सन् १९६६ मा पहिलो पटक चीन भ्रमण गएका थापा चाउ एनलाईका बारेमा लेख्छन् — त्यस बेलाको मेरो अनुभवमा चाउ एनलाई जत्तिको खारिएको र माझिएको व्यक्ति मैले अरु पाइँन । म उनलाई उच्च तहमा राख्छु । उनको व्यवहार शिष्ट थियो । ससाना कुरामा उनी ध्यान पुर्याउँथे । हामी बेइजिङ पुग्दाको बखत त्यहाँको जाडो थेग्ने कपडा हामीसँग थिएन । उनले ज्याकेटदेखि ओभरकोटसम्म हाम्रा लागि तयार पारिदिएका थिए । उनी बडो शिष्टतापूर्वक कुरा गर्थे ।

जुलाई ९, १९७१ मा शुरु भएर जुलाई ११ मा सम्पन्न किसिञ्जरको त्यो पहिलो चीन भ्रमण धेरै अर्थमा ऐतिहासिक हुनपुग्यो । चाउ एनलाईसँग वार्तामा बस्नासाथ किसिञ्जरले आफ्नो भनाइ राख्न थालेछन् — “यसअघि धेरै यात्रीले यस सुन्दर — र रहस्यमय — भूमिको भ्रमण गरेका छन् ।” चाउ एनलाईले किसिञ्जरलाई तत्कालै रोकेर भनेछन् — “तपाईंले पाउनुहुनेछ यो भूमि त्यति रहस्यमय पनि छैन । यस भूमिसँग परिचय भएपछि पहिले झैं यो रहस्यमयी लाग्ने छैन ।” साँझ ६ बजे चाउ एनलाईको उत्तर कोरियाली नेतासँग भेटघाटको पूर्वनिर्धारित कार्यक्रम भएकाले अमेरिकी टोली दिउँसै संयुक्त वक्तव्यको भाषा टुंग्याउन चाहन्थ्यो । रात रहे अग्राख पलाउनसक्थ्यो । वक्तव्यको बेहोरामा दुबै पक्ष अर्को पक्ष सम्बन्ध सुधारका लागि आतुर रहेको झल्काउन र अर्को पक्षले अनुरोध गरेका कारण आफू पनि सम्बन्ध सुधारका लागि तयारै रहेको देखाउन चाहन्थे । छलफल अघि बढ्यो । समय घर्किँदै गयो — भाषा मिलिरहेको थिएन । अन्त्यमा, वक्तव्यको भाषा यसरी

लेखे सहमति भएछ - राष्ट्रपति निक्सनको चीन भ्रमण गर्ने 'अभिव्यक्त' चाहनाका कारण चिनियाँ प्रधानमन्त्री चाउ एनलाईले राष्ट्रपति निक्सनलाई चीन भ्रमणको निम्तो दिनुभयो र उक्त निमन्त्रणा सहर्ष स्वीकार गरियो । वार्ता टुंगियो । किसिञ्जर र चाउ एनलाई दुबैको कूटनीतिक सीप, चातुर्य र आँटको झल्को पाइन्छ यो घटनामा । भोलिपल्ट किसिञ्जर पाकिस्तान फर्किए अनि त्यहाँबाट सिधै हानिए सान क्लेमेन्ट । अर्थात् प्रशान्त महलतर्फ । गोप्य कामकाजका लागि निक्सनको प्रिय थलो थियो त्यो ठाउँ । सोभियत राजदूत दोब्रिनिन र किसिञ्जरले समुद्र तटमा छुट्टी मनाएको ठाउँ त्यही थियो । निक्सनलाई भेटनासाथ किसिञ्जरले चीन भ्रमणको बयान गरे - रिट्रो नबिराई । अर्को दिन जब देशदुनियाँले किसिञ्जरको गोप्य चीन भ्रमणबारे थाहा पायो, चीन र अमेरिकाबीचको द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्धको इतिहासमा थपिएको नयाँ अध्यायको पहिलो पृष्ठ लेखिसकिएको थियो ।

सन् १९७१ पछि पनि किसिञ्जरले पटकपटक चीन भ्रमण गरे । चीनमा उनको बडो सम्मानपूर्वक स्वागत हुन्थ्यो हरेक पल्ट । १०० वर्षको उमेरमा नोभेम्बर २०२३ मा बितेका किसिञ्जरले १०० पटक नै चीन भ्रमण गरेका थिए भनिन्छ । मृत्युपश्चात् चीनमा उनको उपनाम नै डबल सेन्टेनारियन हुनगयो — दोहोरो शतक हानेका कारण ।

चन्द्रास्वामीको भविष्यवाणी

के. नट्वर सिंह भारतीय परराष्ट्र सेवामा लामो समय काम गरेपछि राजनीतिमा प्रवेश गरेर विदेशमन्त्रीसम्म भएका हुन् । परराष्ट्र सेवामा रहँदा उनले सम्हालेका विभिन्न कूटनीतिक जिम्मेवारी मध्ये एक थियो लण्डनस्थित उच्चायुक्तको कार्यालयमा उपप्रमुखका रूपमा । वाकिड विथ द लायन्स नामक आफ्नो संस्मरणात्मक पुस्तकको एउटा अध्यायमा उनले भारतीय साधु चन्द्रास्वामी र बेलायतकी तत्कालीन प्रतिपक्षी नेतृ मागरिट थ्याचरबीच भएको भेटवार्ताको चाखलाग्दो गरी वर्णन गरेका छन् ।

दुईजनाबीच भेटघाट मिलाउने सिलसिलामा नट्वर सिंहले हाउस अफ कमन्समा गएर थ्याचरसँग समय मागे । 'महामहिम, अलि अफ्ठ्यारो खालको अनुरोध लिएर आएको छु, असजिलो नमान्नु होला । भारतबाट एकजना युवा साधु आउनुभएको छ । हजुरको प्रशंसक भएकाले हजुरलाई भेटेर नै सम्मान प्रकट गर्न चाहनुभएको छ वहाँले ।'

थ्याचरले भेट्न स्वीकृति जनाइन्, दश मिनेटका लागि । भेटघाटको दिन आयो, चन्द्रास्वामी साधु भेषमा सजिएर संसद भवन आइपुगे । निधारमा तिलक र हातमा लौरो थियो । बाटामा हिंडुदा लौरो टक टक बजाउँदै हिंडिरहेका थिए उनी । भेटघाट शुरु भयो थ्याचरसँग । उनले सोधिन् — 'महोदय, केही खास विषय थियो कि छलफलका लागि?' तुम क्या जानो हम क्या जाने शैलीमा चन्द्रास्वामीले जवाफ दिएछन् — 'छिट्टै थाहा पाइहाल्नुहुनेछ ।' साधुको नखरा देखेर नट्वर सिंहलाई खपिनसक्नु भयो । तर गर्ने के? जे होस्, त्यसपछि चन्द्रास्वामीले थ्याचरसँग सादा

कागज मागेछन् । कागजलाई पाँच वटा छुट्टा छुट्टै टुक्रा पारेर थ्याचरलाई दिएर भनेछन् — ‘प्रत्येक टुक्रामा एउटा एउटा प्रश्न लेख्नुहोला ।’ थ्याचरले प्रश्न लेख्न थालिन् अनि पाँचैवटा प्रश्न लेखिसकेपछि साधुले भनेअनुसार पट्याएर राखिन् ।

चन्द्रास्वामीले थ्याचरलाई पहिलो चिर्कटो खोल्न अहाए । थ्याचरले चिर्कटो खोल्न नभ्याउँदै भित्र लेखिएको प्रश्न के थियो चन्द्रास्वामीले परैबाट भनिदिए - हिन्दीमा । नट्वर सिंहले अङ्ग्रेजीमा अनुवाद गरे । सही रहेछ । थ्याचरको अनुहारमा झिँझोपनको साटो उत्सुकता देखापर्न थाल्यो । नभन्दै दोस्रो प्रश्न पनि मिल्यो । अब उत्सुकताको ठाउँ अभिरुचिले लियो । चौथो प्रश्नमा आइपुग्दा थ्याचरको पूरै भावभंगिमा फेरिइसकेको सम्झिन्छन् नट्वर सिंह । चन्द्रास्वामीले पाँचौँ प्रश्न पनि मिलाएपछि चाहिँ ठूलो भारी बिसाएजस्तो लाग्यो रे उनलाई ।

उता थ्याचर भने आफू बसेको सोफाको कुनामै सरिसकेकी रहिछन्, तीन छक्क परेर । अहिलेसम्म चन्द्रास्वामी चप्पल सप्पल फुकालिवरी सोफामा पलेटीं मारेर अर्धमुदित मुद्रामा विराजमान थिए । नट्वर सिंहलाई अफठ्यारो लागेपनि थ्याचरले असहज मानेको देखिएन । उनले समय बितेको पनि वास्ता गरिनन्, बरु थप प्रश्न पो गर्न थालिछन् । चन्द्रास्वामीले दिएका जवाफले थ्याचरलाई निकै प्रभावित पारिसकेको बुझ्न गाह्रो थिएन । सवाल सकिएका थिएनन् तर चन्द्रास्वामी रोकिए । भनेछन् — ‘अहिले घाम अस्ताए, आज अब हुन्न । अर्को चोटि बसौंला फेरि ।’

नट्वर सिंहको मनमा छटपटी चलिरहेको थियो । बाछ्योले नाम्लो छिनालिसकेको थियो - पछुताएर काम थिएन । चन्द्रास्वामीको चौतर्फी प्रभाव देखेर भेटघाट मिलाइदिने अनुरोधलाई नाइँ भन्न नसकेका मात्र हुन् बरा । यसरी सोमतै बिसेलान् भन्ने थिएन । तर चन्द्रास्वामीले सबै सवाल ठ्याक ठ्याक कसरी मिलाए त? मस्तिष्कको कुरा पढ्नसक्ने क्षमता पो रहेछ कि उनको? अथवा साँच्चै सिद्धपुरुष पो हुन् कि यिनी? अहँ, नट्वर सिंहले यसै भन्न सकेनन् । चन्द्रास्वामीसँग थ्याचरका कुरा सकिएका थिएनन् । ‘फेरि भेट्न मिल्ला कि हजुरसँग?’ तिनले सोधिछन् । चन्द्रास्वामीले कृपापूर्वक भनेछन् — ‘ल त भैगो, नट्वर सिंहको घरमा मंगलबार अढाइ बजे भेट्न आउनुहोला ।’ त्यस्रो उचाइकी बेलायती नेतृलाई चन्द्रास्वामीले देखाइरहेको दम्भपूर्ण रबैया नट्वर सिंहलाई सह्य हुने कुरो थिएन । उनी चन्द्रास्वामीसँग केही कुरा गर्न खोज्दैथिए, थ्याचरले बिना संकोच सोधिछन् — ‘मिस्टर सिंह, तपाईंको घर कहाँनैर पर्छ?’ थ्याचरले जसरी पनि चन्द्रास्वामीसँग फेरि पनि भेट्न चाहेको प्रष्ट थियो । अर्को मंगलबार भेटघाट हुने तय भयो । बिदा हुनेबेला चन्द्रास्वामीले थ्याचरलाई एउटा बुटी दिँदै उर्दी गरेछन् — ‘मंगलबार रातो रङ्गको पहिरनमा यो बुटी लगाएर आउनु ।’

हुन त नट्वर सिंहलाई उनी आउँछिन् भन्ने साह्रै पत्यार लागेको त थिएन । तर मंगलबारका दिन रातो पोशाकमा सजिएर बुटी लगाएरै आइछन् थ्याचर उनका घर । त्यो दिन थ्याचरले चन्द्रास्वामीलाई धेरैवटा प्रश्न गरिछन्, जसमध्ये एउटा रहेछ — ‘म प्रधानमन्त्री बन्छु होला त?’

चन्द्रास्वामीले भनेछन् — ‘अवश्य बन्नुहुनेछ — ९, ११ वा १३ वर्षसम्मका लागि ।’ विपक्षी दलका नेता चुनाव जितेर प्रधानमन्त्री हुनसक्ने कुरो स्वाभाविकै हो — बेलायतमा वा जहाँ कहीं पनि । तथापि कोही व्यक्ति त्यत्रो लामो समयसम्म बेलायतमा प्रधानमन्त्री पदमा टिकिरहने सम्भावना धेरै थिएन । अनौठो भविष्यवाणी थियो त्यो । अन्त्यमा थ्याचरले सोधिछन् — ‘कहिलेसम्म भइसक्छु होला म प्रधानमन्त्री?’ चन्द्रास्वामीले भविष्यवाणी गरेछन् — ‘३ वा ४ वर्षभित्र’ । नभन्दै, थ्याचर सन् १९७९ मा बेलायतको पहिलो महिला प्रधानमन्त्रीका रूपमा निर्वाचित भइन् र सन् १९९० सम्म लगातार ११ वर्षसम्म बेलायतको कार्यकारी प्रमुखको पदमा सेवा गरिन् ।

तर कुरो यतिकैमा सकिँदैन ।

सन् १९७९ मा जाम्बियाको राजधानी लुसाकामा कमनवेल्थ मुलुकहरूको शिखर सम्मेलन आयोजना हुनेभयो । नट्वर सिंह पनि भारतीय प्रतिनिधिमण्डलका सदस्य थिए । अरु अधिकारीहरूसँगै नट्वर सिंह बेलायती प्रधानमन्त्रीको स्वागतका लागि विमानस्थलमा लामबद्ध भएर प्रतीक्षा गरिरहेका थिए । मागरिट थ्याचर प्रधानमन्त्री भइसकेकी थिइन् । उनी जहाजबाट उत्रिएर लहरै उभिएका उच्च पदाधिकारी र राजदूतहरूसँग हात मिलाउन थालिन् । चन्द्रास्वामीको एउटा भविष्यवाणी त मिलेको थियो, अर्को पुग्ने वा नपुग्ने हो, थाहा थिएन । तथापि, बेलायती प्रधानमन्त्री आफू नजीक आइपुग्नासाथ नट्वर सिंहले सुस्तरी भनेछन् — ‘महामहिम, हाम्रा मान्छेले भविष्यवाणी गरेको कुरो त पुग्यो त, कसो?’ नट्वर सिंहले त्यो पुरानो कुराको अचानक यसरी सम्झना गर्लान् भन्ने थ्याचरले शायद सोचेकी थिइन् कि? नट्वर सिंहलाई अलि अभिन्तरमा लगेर भनिछन् — ‘उच्चायुक्त महोदय, त्यस्तो कुरा गर्नुहुन्न ।’ नट्वर सिंह पनि के कम? उनले पनि तत्काल प्रत्युत्तर दिएछन् — ‘प्रधानमन्त्री महोदया, हो त, त्यस्तो कुरा गर्नुहुन्न ।’

Seminar on Foreign Direct Investment in Nepal

The Association of Former Career Ambassadors of Nepal (AFCAN) joined hands with Center for Diplomacy and Development (CDD) to organize a seminar on foreign direct investment (FDI) on 12 July 2023. The seminar held under the theme of ‘Foreign Direct Investment in Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities’ was participated by former Ambassadors, former senior bureaucrats, government officials, diplomats, representatives of donor agencies based in Kathmandu, representatives of the private sector, academia, media, think tanks and students.

Hon. N. P. Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and inaugurated the event. Similarly, HE Naveen Srivastava was present as a guest of honour. Presentations were made by Mr. Hari Bhakta Sharma, former president of Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, President of the South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) and senior advisor to the Ministry of Finance, and Mr. Shankar Singh Dhimi, Director at the Department of Industry. Reflecting the different backgrounds of the speakers, those presentations touched upon different aspects of foreign investment, including the government policies, geo-economic context, and constraints in investment promotion.

Ambassador Jhabindra Prasad Aryal, General Secretary of AFCAN made program highlights when he briefed about the AFCAN and presented the objectives of seminar.

This was followed by welcome remarks by Ambassador Bhagirath Basnet, President of AFCAN. In his remarks, Ambassador Basnet mentioned that Nepal was abundantly blessed with natural resources and vibrant young population. Everything was there except capital and technology, he stressed. He also gave a broad overview of constraints in promoting FDI in Nepal, including inadequate single window service, lengthy approval process, hurdles in borrowing foreign currency and cumbersome repatriation of profit. Ambassador Basnet emphasized the need to address these challenges for increasing foreign direct investment.

Ambassador Mohan Krishna Shrestha, Founder President of the CDD made his welcome remarks. Highlighting the importance of an effective and proactive diplomacy, Ambassador Shrestha recalled the period of 1990s when the concept of economic diplomacy, including foreign investment promotion, was mainstreamed in Nepal’s

diplomacy. He emphasized the need of collaboration between the government and private sector for promotion of economic diplomacy. He urged to learn from those countries which have been successful to attract sizable FDI. He also called for action and effective implementation of all policies related to FDI in Nepal.

The welcome remark was followed by a presentation by HE Mr. Naveen Srivastava, Ambassador of India to Nepal. Ambassador Srivastava focused on the role of FDI, emerging trends in post COVID- 19 scenario, and the experience of India in attracting inward investments. Dwelling on the role of FDI, he compared it with ‘good cholesterol’ which could bring benefits such as transfer of technology, wider consumer choice, development of ancillary industries, upgradation of skills and increasing corporate tax which boosts up the exchequer. Regarding the trends, he stated that the world faced a ‘supplier’s market’ and although FDI flow grew up in the past decade, COVID pandemic drastically changed the scenario. “Trends towards economic decoupling are there and FDI flows are getting localized more in the region; geopolitical factors have also led the countries to restrictive policies including ‘reshoring’ of investments. Supply chains are being regionalized”, he added. He also talked of the digital transformation, and further added that environmental considerations and governance system had started to take precedence. Further, he also emphasized that these trends were providing new opportunities.

Ambassador Srivastava then highlighted the scenario of inward foreign direct investment in India. He shared that India had seen an inward flow of 950 billion USD in foreign investment over the last 9 years, while FY 2021/2022 witnessed the highest flow of FDI (84 billion USD) as the COVID-19 was waning. He talked of several initiatives taken up by the government of India, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ‘Make in India’, ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ to make India a global manufacturing hub, shift to ‘red carpet from red tape’, and improvement in ease of doing business, among others. He further touched on economic relations between India and Nepal. He said that major focus recently had been on connectivity –including transmission lines, petroleum pipelines, and the power sector. He also added that Nepal and India had finalized an agreement that allows India to seek to buy 10,000 MW of hydroelectricity from Nepal in next 10 years. He also gave examples of successful Indian investments in Nepal such as Surya Nepal, Dabur, Punjab National Bank, State Bank of India, and Hindustan Unilever. Highlighting the areas of investment opportunities in Nepal, Ambassador Srivastava also emphasized that Nepal and the neighboring Indian states can be looked upon as one integrated market.

Hon’ble Minister for Foreign Affairs, in his remarks, stressed that Nepal is a virgin land for investment, which is still at nascent stage of industrialization, and investment in every sector is profitable. Our tariffs are low, and the tax regime is simplified; full repatriation of income from investment is guaranteed; investment regime is being

reformed; and an automated route for FDI approval is in place. Hon. Minister further highlighted the opportunities for investment across a wide range of areas, including mining, manufacturing, agriculture, energy and tourism infrastructures, information technology and hospitality industry. He also alluded to abundance of natural resources, large pool of human capital, promising market in the neighborhood, as well as sound policy and regulatory framework as key enablers for FDI in Nepal.

Enlightening presentations were made by experts who dealt on various aspects of foreign investment regime in Nepal. On behalf of the private sector Mr. Hari Bhakta Sharma, former President of Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) said that better coordinated and effective measures are needed to promote FDI flows into Nepal. Mr. Shankar Singh Dhimi, Director of the Department of Industries highlighted policies and regulations that are being constantly reformed for realization of increased foreign direct investment. Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, President of the South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) made presentation on Nepal's trade linkages at bilateral, regional and international levels and touched upon the challenges that are likely to come up in realization of concessions and facilities in the changing context of global business environment and Nepal's graduation from LDC status.

Feedback for Foreign Policy Reforms

The Association of Former Career Ambassadors of Nepal (AFCAN), in conjunction with the Association of Former Nepali Ambassadors (AFNA), and the Forum of Former International Professionals of Multilateral Organizations (FIPMO) jointly organized a half-day seminar on *“Strategies for a Dynamic, Effective, and Development-Oriented Foreign Policy”* on May 7th, 2024. The seminar featured Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa as the keynote speaker. Ambassador Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada and Prof. Dr. Meena Vaidhya Malla were commentators.

The programme was moderated by Ambassador Mr. Bhim Udas, who highlighted the seminar’s objectives. He emphasized the necessity of an effective foreign policy with defined strategies to achieve the country’s national interests. Mr. Bhagirath Basnet said that there are numerous foreign policy documents developed in Nepal over the years, but they lack serious follow-up. He stressed the need for cooperation over confrontation in the current era. He further emphasized the need for stability in the domain of foreign policy in Nepal in light of frequent changes of government.

Ambassador Basnet further said that foreign policy of a country should be about sharing perspectives, expressing concerns and expectations and, above all, finding a common ground that will help socio-economic development. He added that modern diplomacy can no longer be conducted by diplomats alone. With widening scope of international relations, many actors such as civil society, business communities, think tanks, media, and even individuals can significantly impact the way the foreign policy is conducted.

Following this, Ambassador Basnet introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, and called upon him to make his keynote presentation.

Keynote Presentation

Dr. Thapa began his speech by expressing his gratitude for being in a seminar filled with key players of foreign policy who have served the nation throughout their lives. He started by emphasizing King Prithvi Narayan Shah’s famous quotation, *“Nepal is a yam between two boulders.”* He noted that during King Prithvi Narayan Shah’s time,

there were only two boulders, but now there are boulders everywhere, highlighting the crucial need for coordination among these major powers.

He mentioned Nepal's longstanding slogan of "*Bacha or Bachana Deu,*" indicating that Nepal has always based its foreign policy on Panchasheel principles of co-existence and harmony. Nepal has advocated for non-interference in others' affairs and expects the same in return. He noted that Nepal was once "*Small and Respected,*" but now there is a sense of "*inferiority complex,*" which is problematic. He summarized the New World Order after World War II and the formation of the United Nations for world peace, citing Nepal's engagement in the world stage starting from the 1950 revolutions for democracy and its adoption of Non-Aligned policies, which made Nepal responsive and a significant contributor to peacekeeping missions globally.

In the course of his lecture, Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa emphasized Nepal's historical approach to diplomacy, which is based on harmony, progress, and survival and is represented by the unifying symbol of a yam and two boulders. He considered how Nepal has continued to survive and preserve its respected standing in the world despite the continuous internal and external changes that have occurred since unification. He drew attention to important post-unification developments that have complicated foreign policy, like the end of colonialism and the rise of new countries. Drawing inspiration from the achievements of peaceful leaders after World War II and the UN's role in promoting peace and growth, Dr. Thapa views foreign policy as a collaborative and exchange process.

According to him, Nepal is regarded as a responsible member of the international community due to its history of survival and non-interference. Important occasions like the 1950 revolution and the Treaty of Sugauli gave Nepal new diplomatic dimensions and emphasized non-alignment in the face of political changes.

He added further that Nepal has developed a reliable diplomatic posture on a worldwide scale, particularly since the outset of democracy. Its non-alignment policy - which has its roots in the Bandung Conference - has improved its diplomatic standing, and made its position on peace over conflicts more clear.

When discussing the current state of the world, Dr. Thapa pointed out that there is a greater chance of conflict, and that major nations are involved. He emphasized how crucial it is that Nepal maintains its neutrality and pursues peace. Nepal has a chance to enhance its international standing as a result of recent governance reforms. He urged deliberate action to resolve domestic political issues and preserve Nepal's great standing in the international community.

To conclude, Dr. Thapa exhorted Nepal to keep its attention on peace and development, positioning itself as a non-aligned country and a global ally, driven by lessons learned from the past and demands of the present.

He highlighted the current precarious situation globally, with powerful countries directly and indirectly involved in conflicts, increasing the possibility of larger conflicts. He connected this to Nepal, stating that internal political dynamics have made the implementation of Nepal's foreign policy challenging. He concluded his presentation by recalling a famous remark by US President Ronald Reagan during Late King Birendra's state visit to the US, where Reagan referred to Nepal as a neighbor on the other side of the globe.

Comments on the Presentation

Dr. Vaidya started by stating, *"It is a lifetime opportunity for me to comment on the paper presented by eminent personalities like Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa."* She further expressed her humility in attempting to do justice to his illustrious work. She clarified that her intention was not to comment on Dr. Thapa's paper but to add insights to his keynote speech.

As an academician, she shared her research on the conduct and theories of foreign policy, acknowledging the key role played by the personalities present in implementing these policies. She noted the positive changes in Nepal's history and its adherence to morality and ethics in foreign policy, as highlighted by Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa. She elaborated on Nepal's foreign policy framework based on the '3C's: Continuity Change and Challenge.

As for Continuity, she emphasized Nepal's adherence to the Non-Aligned Movement as well as the Principles of Panchasheel and respect for international law. Regarding Change, she mentioned world's transition from a bi-polar to a multi-polar world and the shifting economic magnet from West to East. She discussed the geopolitical tensions faced by Nepal due to initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by China and the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) by the US, highlighting the security challenges they pose.

She noted Nepal's strategic location between India and China, transitioning from being land-locked to land-linked, and aspiring to be a vibrant bridge between these two giants. She stressed that foreign policy is intricately linked to geography and history, emphasizing that today's geopolitics is essentially the politics of geography.

She mentioned the lack of implementation and emphasized the need for a cutting-edge strategy to implement foreign policies effectively. She criticized the prevalent mindset in Nepal that prioritizes *"Whom you know?"* over *"What you know?"*, which undermines meritocracy.

Dr. Simkhada touched upon Dr. Thapa's latest book entitled *"Rastra ra Pararastra"* and noted that the book is a work to be, *"read, re-read, and in fact, re-read again"*. He also lauded Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa for his legacy in various roles, which would continue to inspire generations to come.

He added that today's challenges require deeper reflection, contrasting it with a more sensationalist style of journalism. He aligned several key points with Dr. Thapa and Prof. Dr. Malla's presentation and comment, noting Nepal's dynamic foreign policy that has expanded diplomatic relations from 5 countries in the 1950s to almost 183 in 2024. However, he questioned whether this dynamism aligns with the promotion of Nepal's national interests.

While discussing Nepal's influence, he questioned whether Nepalese dignity has increased or decreased, citing the strength of Nepali passports as a basic measure. He highlighted the challenges faced by ordinary passport holders in contrast to diplomatic passport holders, emphasizing the difficulties for ordinary Nepalis to travel abroad.

Dr. Simkhada also referenced famous quotations such as *'Revenge of Geography'* and *'Reward of Geography'*, exploring how Nepal can benefit strategically from its geographical position amidst the interests of major powers like India, China, and the US. He noted the ideological rivalry between the US and China and emphasized the importance of smooth navigation for Nepal, given its proximity to China and its global aspirations.

He further added that Nepal's foreign policy has been quite dynamic. How effectively has this dynamism served our supreme national interest, he questioned. To understand this, one needs to measure it in terms of its contribution to enhancing the dignity of Nepal and the Nepali people, reflections on the interface between Nepal's domestic politics and foreign policy, relative shifts in national power interests and paradigms, and capability to protect vital national interests and respond to evolving geopolitical challenges. He discussed the interface between domestic politics and foreign policy, highlighting how changes on either sphere can impact the other.

Finally, pointing to the fact that a larger number of leaders have taken executive roles in Nepal, he cited the number of leaders who came to power in China (5 leaders), India (15 leaders) and Nepal (48 leaders) from 1947 to 2024. This illustrates how political instability in Nepal has had impacts on effective foreign policy execution.

After a brief but stimulating question-answer session, Mr. Bhairaja Pandey, President of FIPMO, made his closing remarks. He viewed that the world was driven by interests and had less affection for morality. He further added that if a country became irrelevant to the changes of time, diplomacy would become futile. Finally, he thanked all those who supported in organizing the seminar.

AFCAN: a Brief Introduction

The Association of Former Career Ambassadors of Nepal (AFCAN) was established in 2007. It is a non-profit making association, and is registered with the concerned authority of the Government of Nepal. Its objectives are, inter alia, to contribute to the promotion of Nepal's national interests in accordance with the country's foreign policy; conducting studies, researches, interactions and dialogues within the Association and with other bodies and providing independent institutional views and advice to the Government of Nepal on matters of foreign relations, which might be helpful in policy formulation and execution.

AFCAN has been working closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through occasional consultations on matters of importance on foreign relations. It has organised several workshops and seminars on important issues such as Foreign Direct Investment, External Trade, Foreign Employment, Tourism, Water Resources, etc. It also organizes occasional interactions with experts on matters of critical importance for the country.

Another highlight of AFCAN's activities is the "AFCAN Breakfast Roundtable", which is an interaction programme with foreign ambassadors accredited to Nepal, with newly appointed Nepali ambassadors preparing to take up their assignments in foreign countries, and with other experts of specific fields.

In order to provide a common platform to share views, observations and thoughts on national and international issues of common concerns, the AFCAN has also initiated to publish the AFCAN REVIEW as an annual compendium of articles, write-ups and observations from 2020 onwards.