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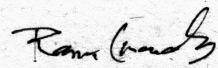
Greetings Message

I am extremely pleased to know that the Nepal Council of World Affairs (NCWA) is celebrating its **76th anniversary**. Since its establishment in 1948, NCWA has been functioning as an independent center of excellence for research and deliberations in the realm of international relations and diplomacy to enhance knowledge and cooperation among national and international stakeholders. Furthermore it gives me pleasure that NCWA membership encompasses top policymakers, diplomats, bureaucrats, security experts, professionals, and academicians among others.

I would like to congratulate NCWA for publishing the NCWA Journal on this occasion. I also thank NCWA for organizing seminars and interactions from time to time on pertinent issues of common concern. The outcomes of promoting such debates and interactions have been extremely useful in guiding Nepal's foreign policy priorities.

I am confident that NCWA will continue to play a leading role in promoting cooperation between Nepal and other friendly countries in the coming days. I wish Nepal Council of World Affairs all success in the future.

Thank you.


Ramchandra Paudel

08 Falgun 2080 B.S.



Kathmandu, Nepal

Prime Minister

Message

I am glad to extend my heartiest greetings to the Nepal Council of World Affairs on the occasion of its **76th anniversary**. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my best wishes to all its members and pay tribute to those who played pioneering roles in the creation and nurturing of NCWA as a premier foreign policy institution. I am pleased to learn that since its establishment in 1948 as the first think-tank of Nepal, NCWA has played a significant role in promoting cooperation between Nepal and other nations as well as deliberating on affairs of national and international importance.

NCWA has also been pivotal in promoting healthy and useful foreign policy dialogues and interactions with concerned stakeholders apart from hosting talk programs for prominent world leaders visiting Nepal. I hope that NCWA will be able to carry forward this great tradition and demonstrate its relevance in the days to come. I believe that institutions like these should be promoted as apolitical and independent think-tanks. They must be able to rise above partisan politics and conduct a fair, balanced and high-quality foreign policy discourse by hosting talk programs, seminars and in-depth research publications.

I came to know that the organization has been publishing the NCWA Journal annually concerning various dimensions of international relations and diplomacy focused on Nepal. I would like to congratulate NCWA office bearers, the editorial team and the authors who have contributed to publishing this journal.

I wish Nepal Council of World Affairs every success of its 76th anniversary.

Thank you.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'

6 Falgun 2080 B.S.

Nepal Samwat 1144 Silla thyo, Nawami.



Hon. Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat
Finance Minister

Government of Nepal MINISTRY OF FINANCE



SINGHADURBAR
KATHMANDU, NEPAL

Congratulations on the 76th Anniversary!

The year 2024 is the 76th Anniversary of Nepal Council of World Affairs (NCWA) and the NCWA also brings this year its flagship journal- "Annual Journal." Big Congratulations and best wishes!

The world is in flux- whether climate change or migration. The global events impact Nepal and the happenings of Nepal impact the world in an interconnected and interdependent world under the wave of globalization, ICT revolution and the AI era. It is, therefore, critically important for an institution like NCWA to play a pivotal part in contextualizing our understanding and formulating cohesive policy responses. The Council's commitment to scholarly inquiry, manifested through seminars, workshops, and rigorous analysis of emerging issues, is commendable and serves to enrich the discourse on foreign policy matters.

Guided by the principles of the UN Charter, principles of the Panchsheel, Non-alignment, and adherence to global peace, Nepal's foreign policy places utmost importance on safeguarding the national interests through its commitment to fostering friendly relations on the foundation of core principles of equality, mutual respect, and cooperation. Apparently, NWCA is an established intellectual forum and aptly well-positioned to contribute meaningfully to the efforts of dialogue, diplomacy and negotiations in pursuit of Nepal's national interests: formulating consensus and fostering constructive engagements.

I am confident that the forthcoming Journal will serve as a valuable resource, reaching a diverse audience encompassing both the public and scholars/practitioners of foreign policy alike. On this auspicious occasion, I extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to NCWA on its 76th Anniversary.

Best wishes,

Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat

Finance Minister of Nepal

February 22, 2024



Government of Nepal

Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu, Nepal**

Message

I am glad to know that Nepal Council of World Affairs is celebrating the 76th Anniversary of its establishment and is publishing its "Annual Journal" for the year 2024.

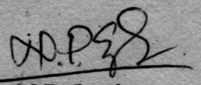
Nepal Council of World Affairs is one of the premier Nepali think-tanks working in the area of foreign policy and the prominent issues of global concern. The Council has been bringing together the leading intellectuals, academicians, policy makers, business leaders, institutions and civil society actors to deliberate on topical themes and contribute to informed conversation.

Today, the world geopolitics is rapidly changing. The scale and magnitude of global challenges are becoming more intractable. Given the situation, an intellectual body like NCWA can play a vital role in assessing the larger environment in which we are to maneuver and help develop coherent policy responses.

I commend NCWA for its active engagements through seminars and workshops, study and analysis on emerging contexts and issues of national and international concerns. I hope such activities would enhance awareness and understanding as well as enrich the foreign policy conversation.

Nepal conducts its foreign policy based on the principles of United Nations, the *Panchsheel*, non-alignment and norms and values of world peace. We continue to pursue friendly relations with countries around the world on the basis of sovereign equality, mutual respect and cooperation. The Council, in its capacity as an established idea-generating platform, can positively contribute to diplomatic discourse in Nepal.

I hope this Journal will have a wider reach-out to the public as well as scholars and practitioners of foreign policy. I wish to extend NCWA congratulations and best wishes on its 76th Anniversary.


N.P. Saud

Message from the President of NCWA

It gives me immense pleasure to be a witness to Nepal Council of World Affairs' (NCWA) new publication to mark its 76th Anniversary. On behalf of NCWA and myself, I wish to extend sincere congratulations and warm greetings to esteemed members of NCWA and good wishers on this happy occasion.

Think tanks generate space for producing ideas and offer advice on policy issues based on their research and informed judgment. There is growing trend towards, competitive knowledge production by think tanks and they are increasingly being used as instruments of public diplomacy.

NCWA with its distinctive history provides unique platform for interactions among subject experts, diplomats, academicians, politicians and professionals. It is my view that NCWA should be transformed into an excellent think tank with in-depth research and delve into policy framework and play important role on strategic side.

The basic theme for the year's publication was focused on "**Changing Dynamics in International Relations with Special Focus on Nepal**". Accordingly, request was made to members of NCWA and other prominent writers for their contribution on subject. I am glad, the contributors have touched many burning issues related to Nepal's foreign policy, dynamics in international relations, foreign assistance, investment, security and so on.

I wish to thank all contributors who took time out from their busy schedule for penning their precious thoughts for the magazine. We, at NCWA, eagerly wait for readers feedback that would encourage us to make this journal better in the years to come.

Hemanta Kharel

President

Nepal Council of World Affairs

From the Editorial Board

Nepal Council of World Affairs (NCWA), the oldest think-tank of Nepal, has been publishing its journal regularly highlighting different dimensions of Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy since its establishment. This year NCWA is celebrating its 76th Anniversary with great enthusiasm. To mark the 76th Anniversary, NCWA Executive Committee invited research article on the theme "Changing Dynamics in International Relations with Special Focus on Nepal" for its annual journal.

The articles in this publication has been included on the theme, content and usefulness of topics. We hope that these articles would help our readers to understand the various dimensions of Nepal's changing dynamics in international relations. From this year the articles published in this journal with Digital Object Identifier (DOI) will also be available at TU Central Library NepJol (<https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/ncwaj>).

The editorial board is thankful to the Rt. Hon'ble President of Nepal Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Hon'ble Minister of Finance Mr. Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat and Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. N.P. Saud for their valuable messages on this occasion.

The editorial board extends sincere thanks to all the contributors of articles.

Editorial board

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Dynamics in International Relations

Dynamics in International Relations and its Implications for Nepal

Hemanta Kharel*

Abstract

It is a well-known fact that international relations has evolved over the years around the interaction between sovereign states. Because of the interconnectedness and complexity of the globalized world, the non-state actors also significantly influence international affairs at present. International organizations such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization are playing significant roles in addressing global issues. Similarly, multinational companies have significant economic leverage which allows them to exercise soft power and influence state policies. As diplomacy is a major tool of foreign policy and international relations, its effectiveness is always desirable. Through the conduct of effective diplomacy, Nepal can receive adequate amount of development assistance and foreign direct investment to meet the country's requirements for development. Unfortunately, foreign investors express their concern about the lack of a foreign investment-friendly environment. Nepal is also unable to absorb foreign assistance received from the development partners on stipulated time. Its development expenditure level, on average, is less than sixty percent since the last decade. Therefore, massive improvement is needed both internally and externally, to improve this situation.

Keywords: Sovereign state, international relations, diplomacy, economic assistance.

Concept of International Relations and its Dynamics

International relations is the study of relations among states as well as with international organizations, multinational companies and certain subnational entities (Lake, 2009). It is also related to several other academic disciplines including political science, geography, history, economics, sociology, law, philosophy and psychology. The discipline of international relations came into prominence at the beginning of the 20th century, largely in the West and in particular, in the United States, as the latter increased its power and influence. The new perspective of international relations was articulated by US President Woodrow Wilson (1913-21) in his program for relations between "Great Powers" following a settlement of

* Mr. Kharel is the President of Nepal Council of World Affairs (NCWA).

World War I (Wilson Center, 2003). The trend of international relations, since then, is gradually changing its dimension.

The sovereign state has been the primary actor in international affairs, influencing policies and shaping the global order, whereas international organizations such as the UN and WTO play a critical role in global governance, conflict resolution, and humanitarian efforts. In fact, they facilitate diplomatic dialogue by providing a forum for collaboration and for addressing transnational issues (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004) (Hughes, 2017). The present global complex situation allows international organizations to offer platforms for collaboration in the resolution of global issues. They grapple with an array of challenges that can impact their ability to fulfill their mission effectively. These organizations, in order to address different challenges, need to make continuous efforts to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability and represent diverse interests within themselves.

The UN stands out as a prominent example of an international organization that plays a significant role in addressing global issues. Its specialized agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have been instrumental in coordinating humanitarian assistance and promoting international development (Weiss and Davis, 2019). However, the UN has also encountered challenges in instances where member state's interests diverge. The UN Security Council's decision-making process, for instance, can be hindered by the Veto power of its permanent members, leading to debate the organization's effectiveness and emphasize the need for reforms (Beasley, 2021). The European Union represents a unique case of regional integration and governance. The EU's evolution from a coal and steel community to a multifaceted organization that pools resources for common goals. The EU's ability to shape policies related to trade, environmental standards and human rights demonstrates the influence of non-state actors in shaping regional agendas (Hill, 2005). Nevertheless, the EU also faces challenges such as the tension between super national authority and national sovereignty, as well as issues relating to democratic accountability in decision-making (Weiss and Davis, 2009).

These facts underline the multifaceted nature of international organizations and their interaction with state actors. They offer insights into the complexities of managing diverse interests, fostering cooperation and addressing global challenges effectively. The UN and the EU serve as valuable benchmarks for understanding how non-state actors navigate to intricate landscape of international relations.

International terrorist organizations differ from traditional state actors and pose unique security challenges to state and international communities requiring

adaptive responses (Jackson, 1990). To counter such challenges, joint efforts, intelligence sharing and counterterrorism measures are needed through agreement among different states. Multinational companies are exploring their role as major economic powers and players in international relations. Multinational companies possess significant economic leverage, which allows them to exercise soft power and influence state policies. (Nye, 2004, Strange, 2018). If we study the role played by multinational companies such as Apple Inc., Shell and Unilever in international relations, their role is significantly visible. Apple inc. stands out as a global technological giant that has transcended national borders to shape international markets and consumer behavior. Apple's role in promoting digital connectivity and its engagement with labour in its supply chain, exemplify the multifaceted influence of non-state actors in international relations. In the same way, Shell's initiative provides an opportunity to understand how corporate decisions can impact both international relations and global environment concerns. Unilever's approach to incorporate social responsibility (CSR) demonstrates how non state actors can actively contribute to social and economic development beyond their core business activities. Recognizing non-state actors as integral players in international relations demands a recalibration of existing paradigms. Encouraging dialogues that bridge the interests of states, non-state actors and civil society is essential for effective global governance.

The specific dimension of international relations in recent years has demonstrated the instability of the world system. There is a lack of trust and a trend towards increasing confrontation between international actors. Undermining the internal political situation in some states of the world influences the regional and global level of security and stability. The vulnerability of international relations in 2020 has also shown the beginning of new geopolitical shifts. The Covid-19 pandemic has altered the behavior of the international order such as reducing the space for building international cooperation and increasing conflict in the sphere of international relations. To improve such a situation, regular interactions at the regional and international levels are required among the concerned actors.

Emerging International Economic Relations and Development Assistance

Dismay over the current state of international economic relations has led some policy makers to return to some imaginary notion of the good old days. But this is a time and situation to look forward and not look back. The old rules failed us in many ways; they fostered domestic inequality in some countries, limited development option in many and did not deal with climate change.

To achieve inclusive development and address the emerging agenda of climate protection, there is a need to transcend the new liberal version of economic efficiency

that animates current trade and investment law. Legal and policy experimentation made by many emerging countries has offered ways forward (Bhalla, 2024). Middle-income countries in the Global South including India, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia are changing their existing rules (World Population Review, 2024). They want to halt the erosion of state capacity to govern economic flows, act as a buffer against frequent crises and protect consumer and worker interests. Some countries are working toward a better investment landscape and offer forums for consultation with private sectors. Some are reforming current rules. India is redrafting its model treaty to define investor and investment more narrowly and limit protections afforded to foreign investors. Indonesia is engaged in a similar redrafting exercise (Sonia, 2021). The Global North also shares these concerns and it paying close attention.

On the trade front, emerging countries have made enormous strides using WTO flexibilities (including opportunistic and efficient breaches), reorienting the negotiation agenda in favor of their interest and seeking trade partnerships outside of the system (WTO, 2022). The promising trade facilitation agreement, which links obligations to capacity and offers funding, is a model of new approaches. Meanwhile, China is making its own rules and moving to export them globally. Neither China nor other middle-income countries will be boxed into the liberal trade and investment consensus designed by Western powers in the 1990s.

The world economy has changed profoundly over the past three decades. It is now broadly accepted that organizationally fragmented and geographically dispersed production systems constitute the dominant architecture of the contemporary global economy. These systems, which have risen to prominence since the 1990s, are tightly controlled and coordinated by powerful large firms that derive their influence from occupying a dominant position in either intermediate or final consumer markets. It is estimated, for instance, that some 80 percent of international trade is now organized in this way. Against this backdrop, over the past 25 years, significant progress has been made in developing global chain/network approaches for theorizing the organizational complexities of the global economy (WTO, 2022).

For the conduct of efficient economic international relations, economic diplomacy plays a very important role. Economic diplomacy, in this century within its framework, should seek to balance commercial openness with strategic foreign policy aims. It should situate a country within the 21st century global economy with its new drivers, promote a rule-based system to mitigate great power tensions and recognize that all foreign economic policy is ultimately driven by domestic considerations. There should be no distinction between foreign and domestic economic policies in terms of assessing the distributional impact on society. free trade agreements, investment

agreements and all foreign economic policies should take into account the wage and employment effects on domestic society. Countries will need to craft a set of foreign and economic policies that are consistent and enhance domestic economic policies and vice-versa. Domestic buy-in and the distributional impact of foreign economic policies are as important as securing support for new domestic taxes or spending decisions.

Dynamics of International Development Assistance

The dynamics of international development assistance can be observed as follows:

Country Space

The country space is the network of country appearances on the websites of aid organizations. The space is connected and the paths linking two or more countries generally imply that the aid community has maintained the same overall unity. There is a strong geographic effect, as countries are more likely to be connected with other countries in their same geographic region (Oniosun, 2022). This is particularly true in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, Latin America. There is also a cluster of large countries such as China, Brazil, India and Mexico.

Organization Space

The international community has organized itself around issues such as refugees, natural disasters, humanitarian assistance, human rights, corruption and democracy. They form a cycle that is weakly connected to the rest of space-based issues. Large organizations such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Development Program and civil society organizations also act together and help each other. Great powers and a few other developed countries orient their development assistance to increase their influence regionally and globally (Savoy, 2022). Some of the initiatives taken by great powers and other developed countries in this respect are discussed below.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Nearly a decade after its launch, BRI is slowly downsizing its investment. But the Chinese narrative about developing the world has not disappeared; it has just mutated towards a new initiative, the Global Development Initiative (IISS, 2023). The BRI has been China's main branding strategy for its foreign policy. While China talks about "advancing high-quality "Belt and Road Co-operation", the BRI is, however, fading away from top Chinese leaders' speeches such as those given at the BOAO Forum, BRICS and the UN. The GDI was launched during Xi Jinping's speech at

the UN General Assembly in September 2021 (China, 2021). The experts' view on GDI is "as vague as the BRI used to be". It talks about promoting development in parallel with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by improving people's lives, helping developing countries, adopting innovation and becoming a link between people and nature (Brinza, 2022). Instead of proposing a new brand or initiative, China would do well not to give up on the BRI brand. It should better articulate its goal and future actions in a way that would not be perceived harmful by other countries and entities such as the US, the EU, Japan, India, etc.

There is growing criticism that the BRI has not been successful in meeting its commitments over the years, but there is still sufficient room for improving its implementation modality and mode of financing. Roughly USD 4 trillion has been invested since 2013 in a wide range of projects under BRI and its associated funding mechanism (including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and Silk Road fund) (James McBride, 2023). Some of the investments were made in grants by Chinese institutions but major portion were to the debt incurred by the projects at rates that are competitive in the global market. In May 2017, Nepal's government signed a BRI framework agreement which included an ambitious plan to build a railway link between China and Nepal through the Himalayas (Giri, 2024). Various other projects were proposed by Nepal to China for discussion but no agreement has been signed, let alone implementation, up to date.

Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)

MCC is a bilateral US foreign aid agency established in 2004. It is an independent agency separate from the US State Department and USAID (Brown, 2022). It provides grants to countries that are determined to have good economic policies and have the potential for economic growth. The country classification process is objective, involving scores provided by third partners in 20 different areas. An eligible country must apply for grants with a specific project in mind.

The MCC has approved a USD 13.3 billion compact and USD 631 million in threshold program worldwide (MCC, 2014). These grants have supported multiple sector projects including agriculture, irrigation, finance and enterprise development, transportation, infrastructure, anticorruption initiatives, access to power, education and health care services. The government of Nepal signed the MCC agreement worth USD 500 million for building an electricity transmission project and a road maintenance project for which preliminary work has already started.

Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII)

At the 48th G7 Summit in Germany in June 2022, the PGII project was announced by seven nations as a new G7 project for the development of infrastructures and Investment. The PGII is a collaborative effort by a "group of seven" to fund

infrastructure projects in developing nations based on the principles of the Blue Dot Network (BDN) (Singh, 2022). It is considered to be the bloc's move to counter China's BRI and a key component of the "Biden Doctrine". The BDN is a multi-stakeholder initiative formed by the US, Japan and Australia to provide assessment and certification of infrastructure projects worldwide on measures of financial transparency, environmental sustainability and impact on economic development to mobilize private capital to invest abroad.

The G7 announced the adoption of the Build Back Better World (B3W) initiative built on the progress and principles of the BDN to address the USD 40 trillion worth of infrastructure needed by developing countries by 2035 (The White House, 2021). The initiative aims to catalyze funding for quality infrastructure for low and middle-income countries from the private sectors and will encourage private sector investment that supports "climate, health and health security, digital technology and gender equity and equality". By the end of the same month, the initiative was relaunched and renamed as PGII. Over the next five years, the G7 governments and their private business sector will invest USD 600 billion. Some experts have shown their concern that with the advent of the G7-led PGII, notions such as economic development and foreign direct investment could be merged with geopolitical and military objectives.

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridors (IMEC)

IMEC is a planned economic corridor that aims to bolster economic development by fostering connectivity and economic integration between Asia, the Persian Gulf and Europe. It was formed in September 2023 and is viewed as a counter to China's BRI. The corridor is envisaged to traverse from India to Europe via the Middle East. Its founding members are India, US, EU, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, France, Germany and Italy. The project is getting delayed due to the Israel-Hamas war (The White House, 2021).

Global Gate Way (GGW)

The GGW is a worldwide strategy of the EU formed in 2021 to invest in infrastructure projects and establish economic partnerships. It is part of the current plans for European strategic autonomy and aims at establishing bigger, more democratic and more sustainable trade networks for Europe and its partners (Hughes, 2017). The prospective budget is EUR 300 billion. The main funding will be contributed mostly by the EU member states and its institutions including the European Investment Bank, European Investment for Reconstruction and Development and other private investments.

Nepal's International Relations and Implications on Investment and Development Assistance

Constitutionally, Nepal's foreign policy is guided by the principles of the United Nations Charter, non-alignment, *Panchsheel*, international law and the values of world peace (MoFA, 2021). Nepal pursues its international relations at multilateral and bilateral levels. Nepal pursues its most substantive international relations, perhaps with intergovernmental institutions and international economic institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the WB and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Nepal has also strong bilateral relations with major providers of economic assistance and support including United States, India, China, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea and Switzerland among others.

Diplomacy is a major tool of foreign policy and international relations. Traditional diplomacy focuses on peace whereas modern diplomacy is a combination of political, economic and cultural diplomacy with a particular focus on economic diplomacy. Under economic diplomacy, preference is given to economic over politics in state-to-state relations. Therefore, the main purpose of economic diplomacy is mobilizing resources for development, promoting export base trade, exploring market for national products, and attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in national priority sectors, promoting cultural tourism, facilitating foreign employment and also mobilizing diaspora resources (Kharel, 2019).

Nepal's Economic Diplomacy is being pursued at different levels to:

- Attract FDI in the national priority sector
- Increase volume of aid
- Promote export base trade and market for national product
- Promote cultural heritage, tourism, and foreign employment
- Mobilize diaspora resources

The main challenges of Nepal's economic diplomacy are:

- Reconciliation of tension between economic priorities and interests of political parties
- Effective involvement and partnership with the private sector
- Insufficient number of highly professional and knowledgeable negotiators in foreign service having an understanding of national interest, global policy and processes

Foreign aid and foreign investment are major factors in meeting the country's development requirement. Nepal has been receiving foreign assistance, grants and

loan but at a decreasing trend. Development cooperation at the bilateral level is also not satisfactory. Foreign investors complain that the investment environment in Nepal is not friendly. Internationally it is recognized that FDI plays a catalytic role in economic growth as it is a source of capital formation, enhances international trade integration, creates a competitive environment and strengthens enterprise development. It also helps technology transfer and supports human capital formation (Nguyen, 2023). Therefore, FDI can serve as not only a principal component of domestic investment but also supports capacity building for growth and sustainable development. The key factors for attracting FDI are political stability, zero corruption, business-friendly regulatory environment as well as infrastructure development. There should also be a low tax rate and a transparent system for the repatriation of investor's profit. Additionally, policy stability and consistency, legal structure, capacity of banking and financial support, responsiveness of bureaucracy, internal security are other important factors for attracting FDI.

These factors encourage the investors to make sure that foreign affiliates can stay and continue to expand or upgrade their business activities. Unfortunately, Nepal has not been able to create an investment-friendly environment on the one hand, and on the other, it has almost failed to receive economic cooperation from the development partners as per its needs and priorities. Whatever amount the country has received from development partners, its absorptive capacity has been less than sixty percent for over a decade. Instead of facilitating direct investment-related projects as well as projects supported by development partners, local and provincial governments are creating problems in the implementation process.

In November 2023, the government of Nepal and 16 development partners, including civil society and private sectors, agreed to consolidate and scale up financing and technical assistance to support and implement a set of high-priority investments and policies in line with the Government of Nepal's Resilient and Inclusive Development (GRID). The GRID identifies a set of ten priority actions including managing land, water and forests in a more productive, sustainable and integrated way for more resilient infrastructure, ecosystems and scaling up renewable energy enhancing the food system, equipping people with new skills and resilient livelihoods, improving social protection and health system (Danyo, 2023). At the meeting, the development partners were positive for support but no commitment was made. Such a type of gathering was organized by the government in the past also, but even committed amounts have not been received. This is high time the government asks itself why Nepal has not been able to receive foreign assistance and foreign direct investment in satisfactory ways.

Conclusion

International relations is the study of relations of states with each other and with international organizations, multinational companies and certain subnational entities like bureaucracies, political parties, other interest groups and academic disciplines. The specific dimension of international relations in recent years has demonstrated the instability of the world system. There is a lack of trust on one hand, and on the other hand, there is an increasing trend towards confrontation between international actors. To improve such unhealthy situations, besides a change in the entire system of international communications, regular interaction at the regional as well as global level is required among the concerned states and non-state actors. In recent times, great powers and some other developed countries have been keenly interested in providing their development assistance with a view to increasing their influence regionally and globally. These initiatives include BRI, MCC, PGII, IMEC, and GGW. Nepal conducts its international relations through diplomacy to boost the country's image, receive development assistance from development partners and create a conducive environment for attracting FDI, but in reality, the trend is decreasing. Foreign investors complain that there is no investment-friendly environment in Nepal. Despite the development assistance provided by the development partners, Nepal's expenditure capacity has been less than sixty percent for the last few decades. Now it is high time for the government to convince donors and investors not only by words but by action that Nepal enjoys political stability with zero corruption, business-friendly regulatory environment, policy stability and consistency, responsiveness of bureaucracy, internal security and a transparent system for repatriation of investors' profit. Beside this local and provincial governments are required to play a positive and supportive role to create inductive investment environment in their respective areas.

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COP 28 and Nepal's Climate Diplomacy

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Abstract

Climate change has become an issue of global concern in recent years. No country is immune to the impact of such change. Unrestricted emission of greenhouse gases resulting in global warming and challenging the earth's ecosystem has threatened the very survival of mankind. Nepal, a mountainous country with rugged geographical terrain of varying altitudes, has become highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change on the living conditions of people and their livelihoods based on natural resources. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, addressing the 28th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP) in Dubai last year, presented the plight of the country and forcefully pleaded for global partnership and international cooperation to cope with the climate change-induced crisis affecting the world, in particular, the Least Developed Countries (LDC) like Nepal with low adaptation.

Keywords: Climate change, COP 28, greenhouse gas, ecosystem, Nepal.

Introduction

The United Nations has been regularly organizing climate change conferences attended by member states or parties of the UN Framework, Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Others participating in such conferences are world leaders, policymakers, activists, representatives of civil society and the business community, climate scientists, academics, professionals, media persons, young people and a large number of experts and stakeholders. The COP is a multilateral decision-making forum that provides an opportunity for each member state and participant to discuss climate change and come up with solutions or practical measures to combat the crisis that has already become a burning issue of serious global concern. The immediate challenge is to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, help vulnerable populations across the globe adapt to the effects of climate change and achieve net-zero emissions preferably by 2050.

The 28th meeting of the COP was held in Dubai, UAE, from November 30 to December 12, 2023. The Global Stocktake (GST), an assessment process designed to evaluate global progress toward achieving the climate goals laid down in the 2015 Paris Agreement was the focal point of COP 28 (UNFCCC, 2023).

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The global community is aware of and concerned about the unrestricted emission of greenhouse gas that has escalated global warming threatening or even endangering the very survival of mankind and challenging the earth's ecosystem. Due to climate change, glacial lakes are melting and exploding. While drought and landslides have adversely affected the hills and the plains, excessive rainfall, low rainfall and partial rainfall are on the increase as erratic manifestations of climate change. Climatologists forecast a 65 percent water shortfall by the end of this century due to melting glaciers and glacial outbursts in the Himalayas (The New York Times, 2023).

Addressing Nepal's Parliament on October 31 last year, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, while praising Nepal as a promoter of peace, champion of multilateralism, staunch supporter of sustainable development and frontrunner on climate action, categorically stated: "Nepal contributes a minimal fraction of a percent, 0.04 percent, to global emissions. But monsoons, storms and landslides are growing in force and ferocity, sweeping away crops, livestock and entire villages, decimating economies and ruining lives. Nepal is now one of the countries that is suffering the most but other South Asian countries might become in the future terrible victims of the receding glaciers of Nepal. What is happening in this country as a result of climate change is an appalling injustice and a searing indictment of the fossil fuel age" (Guterres, 2023).

Later, in Dubai, Mr. Guterres, during the opening of the UN Climate Change Conference or COP 28, referred to his Nepal visit and made the following statement: "Just days ago, I was on the melting ice of Antarctica. Not long before, I was among the melting glaciers of Nepal. These two spots are far in distance but united in crisis. Polar ice and glaciers are vanishing before our eyes, causing havoc the world over: from landslides and floods to rising seas." (Guterres, 2023). The international community noted with appreciation Guterres' frank acknowledgment of Nepal's problems induced by climate change.

Nepal at COP 28

Nepal's delegation to COP 28 in Dubai was led by Prime Minister Dahal. He informed the global community that Nepal was one of the worst victims of climate change despite its negligible role in greenhouse emissions. As he represented a mountainous country, he said emphatically, "Our message is clear: mountains are tortured by rising temperature. Due to an appalling injustice inflicted on us, our people are severely affected by climate-induced disasters such as landslides, floods, wildfires, glacier lakes outbursts, drought, etc." (Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', 2023). He also referred to the findings of the IPCC report that points out climate-induced disasters breaking records in the Himalayas. The Himalayas, he reminded

the august gathering, are “foundations of human civilizations, ecosystems and biodiversity”. Prime Minister Dahal also reiterated Nepal’s commitment to the 2015 Paris Agreement as well as to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, five years earlier than the global target. Describing Nepali people as innocent, he not only pleaded for climate justice but also emphasized the need for doubling the climate finance pledge of 100 billion dollars by 2025 along with easy operationalization of the loss and damage fund (Guterres, 2023).

Implementing Climate Action: Challenge for Nepal

There is no denying that climate finance is of crucial importance in dealing with the climate crisis (Prachanda, 2023). The Paris Agreement and earlier the Kyoto Protocol have called on highly developed and industrialized countries to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries and LDCs like Nepal to enable them to minimize the effects of climate change. These countries lack adequate resources to overcome the climate change crisis. It is, however, sad to note that the commitment of developed countries to provide 100 billion dollars to developing countries and LDCs, exclusively for climate change crisis mitigation remains unfulfilled. COP 28 has agreed to operationalize the loss and damage fund which was appreciated by the conference (World Economic Forum, 2021). Apart from being active in international forums, Nepal needs to do serious homework internally to benefit from the fund and other resources likely to be made available to highly vulnerable countries hardest hit by climate change and climate-induced disasters.

The need for a critical review of policies, strategies and measures hitherto adopted by Nepal on the climate change front cannot be undermined. There is no dearth of documents over the years for climate change mitigation. While some measures have been implemented, Nepal is required to adopt sound policies, frame laws and set up institutional mechanisms including financial provisions as per the UN Climate Convention. Mention may be made of Climate Change Policy 2076, Environment Protection Act 2076, Environment Protection Regulations 2077, Adaptation Plan (National Framework) 2076, Climate Mitigation and Improvement Project and Budget Directive 2077, and Gender and Social Inclusivity Relating to Climate Change 2077-2087 (UN Women, 2022) What is important is the implementation of these laws and regulations. Critics have commented on lacuna in the implementation strategy such as lack of coordination among line agencies, lack of stable and strong institutions, committed manpower and, above all, political will. While political parties and their leaders have realized the gravity of the crisis, they have yet to respond positively through coherent and credible plans and strategies.

In an article, “Changing Climate raises alarm in Nepal”, Arjun Poudel refers to a critical comment of Manjit Dhakal, a climate expert: ‘Nepal’s approach to

adopting pre-emptive measures has been lackadaisical so far. Whatever the policies on mitigation and adaptation we have made, their implementation is poor” (The Kathmandu Post, 2023).

Nagarik Daily in its editorial, “Justification for Climate Parliament” on January 12 this year welcomes the idea of such a parliament in which all MPs, in particular young parliamentarians, could take the initiative to provide political leadership for effective implementation and monitoring of laws and regulations relating to climate change.

Conclusion

It is gratifying to note that Nepal achieved some success in conducting climate diplomacy at the recently concluded COP 28 in Dubai. This is evident from the editorial comment in the Kathmandu Post of December 6 last year. It says, ‘Nepal has gained rare visibility in international climate circuits. It must not fail to capitalize on it.’ No doubt, euphoria over success should not lead us to complacency. Nepal should gear itself up to stem the climate crisis with a catastrophe looming large on the horizon by mobilizing all sections of the population, both government and NGOs, civil society, the business community, media, professionals and experts, including the common people who suffer the most when crisis deepens and adversely affects their livelihood. I would like to conclude this paper with the following extract from the editorial mentioned above.

The Himalayas are indeed crying out for help, and only a timely response can save them. The commitments made at COP 28 should be translated into action, or expedited through short-, mid- and long-term implementation plans. It is up to the country’s leaders to uphold its climate goals credibility through strong and credible negotiations. This entails asking for compensation for loss and damage, regular follow-up on pledges made by polluting countries and seriousness in its climate commitments. This is the only way to ensure that we leave behind a habitable Nepal for future generations.

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History of Yemen's Crisis and its Global Implications

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Abstract

Yemen's story, from becoming one country in 1990 to the rise of the Houthi rebels and how they affect global trade, is full of changes. First, when North and South Yemen joined in 1990, people hoped for stability and progress. But inside Yemen, there were fights, tribal issues, and struggles to modernize. The fights for power and bad governance made things worse. Then came the Houthi movement. It started because some Shia Muslims in Yemen felt left out politically and economically. Originally just a religious group, it became a strong political and fighting force. Iran helped them, and they took over important sea routes like the Bab el Mandeb strait. The world's response to the Houthi blockades shows how tricky Yemen's situation is. Countries tried diplomacy, asked for breaks in fighting, and secretly tried to influence things. Big countries like the United States, China, Iran, and Russia got involved too, making things even more complicated. With sea routes disrupted, shipping costs go up, and it takes longer for goods to reach their destination thus affecting global politics, trade and business. In short, Yemen's story from unification to the Houthi rebels shows how history, politics, and money all mix together. Yemen's problems show that the world needs to work together to fix things and bring peace, happiness, and cooperation to everyone.

Keywords: Yemen, houthis, zaydi, red sea, bab-el mandab strait

Background

The emergence of Islam in Yemen during the 7th century marked a significant transformation for the region. While initially a crucial contributor to the caliphate's military expansion, Yemen's history unfolded through various dynasties, Ottoman rule, and British occupation. The Zaydi branch of Shia Islam gained prominence in North Yemen in the late 9th century, shaping the country's religious landscape. The eventual independence of the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen under the Zaydi

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rule saw internal challenges, including opposition from the Shafi Sunni majority, territorial losses to Saudi Arabia, and British control in the South (Orkaby, 2014). Yemen's brief union with the United Arab Republic in 1958 was short-lived as the larger entity collapsed soon after, reflecting the volatile political landscape in the region during that period (Kaufman, 1997).

Civil War and Creation of Two Yemens

The political landscape in Yemen during the 1960s was marked by internal conflicts, external interventions, and ideological divisions that eventually led to the creation of two distinct states with contrasting governance systems. The Free Yemeni Movement, supported by Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, initiated a rebellion favoring secular Arab nationalism, sparking the North Yemen Civil War. The royalists, led by Imam Muhammad al-Badr and backed by Britain, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel, faced off against the republicans supported by the Soviet Union. Economic strain and military defeats compelled Nasser to withdraw from Yemen in 1967. Despite internal strife among the republicans, Soviet support and the withdrawal of Saudi assistance tilted the balance in their favor. The siege of Sanaa in 1967, initially successful for the royalists, eventually failed, leading to the republicans' victory and the establishment of the Yemen Arab Republic (Feierstein, 2019).

Simultaneously, anti-British sentiments in the Aden Protectorate culminated in the Aden Emergency. The National Liberation Front, with backing from Egypt and the Soviet Union, waged guerrilla warfare, ultimately leading to British withdrawal in 1967. The National Liberation Front took control, and two years later, a Marxist faction staged a bloodless coup, transforming South Yemen into the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, a socialist state aligned with the USSR. The division of Yemen into two independent states, each with its distinct political and societal development, further widened the gap between them (Brocklesby, 2020).

Yemen Before the Unification

The political evolution in North Yemen, particularly after the civil war, reveals a complex interplay between the Republican forces, tribal dominance, and attempts at modernization. Despite the Republicans' victory, tribal considerations in Zaydi areas persisted, highlighting the challenge of integrating diverse elements within the newly formed Yemen Arab Republic. The 1970 Constitution attempted to establish a new political order, but the absence of political parties allowed old elites to maintain significant power, especially within the Consultative Council (Haggard and Kaufman, 1997).

The ascension of Lt. Colonel Ali Abdullah Saleh marked a turning point in Yemen's history. Initially facing challenges, Saleh consolidated power (1990- 2017) by

suppressing internal threats and implementing the National Dialog Committee's town hall meetings. This process resulted in the National Pact, effectively constituting a new political order. The General People's Congress (GPC) emerged as the ruling party, incorporating diverse political groups, including former leaders of rebellions against Saleh. Saleh's strategy in the 1980s showcased a solidified grip on the Yemen Arab Republic. By controlling the political process through the GPC, co-opting various groups, and allowing limited expression within his established system, Saleh effectively navigated the complex political landscape from 1990 to 2017 (Omairan, 2023).

Oil Discovery

The discovery of large oil reserves in the Yemen Arab Republic in 1984 marked a significant turning point, leading to its oil sales in 1987 (Carapico, 1988). This coincided with intensified talks of unification with South Yemen. It cultivated close ties with socialist nations, particularly the USSR. Other socialist countries like China, Bulgaria, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia contributed to South Yemen's development. Additionally, South Yemen fostered friendly relations with left-leaning African nations like Libya and Ethiopia (CIA, 2011). However, political instability marred South Yemen's short existence, including accusations against President Salim Rubaya Ali for orchestrating the assassination of the Yemen Arab Republic president in 1978. This led to internal turmoil, Ali's resignation, and subsequent execution following a failed coup attempt. (Feierstein, 2019).

In October 1978, the transformation of the National Front into the Yemen Socialist Party marked a significant shift towards a unified democratic Yemen with a socialist outlook. Abdul Fattah Ismail assumed the role of Secretary General, wielding considerable influence in South Yemen's political elite. Ismail's support for extensive nationalization and collectivization led to the formation of Marxist paramilitary groups targeting North Yemen and Oman. However, Ismail's aggressive policies faced internal opposition and disapproval from the Soviet Union. Eventually, with tacit approval from the USSR, Ismail resigned due to purported health issues and relocated to the Soviet Union. The moderate Ali Nasir Muhammad succeeded him as the leader of South Yemen, attempting economic reforms by allowing a limited private sector and attracting emigre capital (Dunbar, 1992). The events on January 13, 1986 marked a violent and chaotic turning point in South Yemen's political landscape. Ali Naser Muhammad's aggressive actions against the opposition, resulting in a deadly shootout, triggered a civil war that lasted 12 days. The death toll of 4,000 to 10,000 innocent people underscores the severity of the conflict (Day, 2010).

Unification of North and South Yemen

Ali Naser Muhammad's defeat and subsequent flight to North Yemen paved the way for Ali Salem al-Beidh to assume leadership in South Yemen. The changing stance of the new Soviet leadership, marked by *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, led to a significant reduction in funding and assistance to South Yemen (Bugajski, 1991). The unification of North and South Yemen (Fig. 1) in 1990 marked a significant turning point in their tumultuous history. Despite experiencing wars, border skirmishes, and rebellions, the two sides consistently expressed a desire for a unified Yemen (Dostal, 2021). The easing of Cold War tensions and the discovery of oil, fueled motivation on both sides for unification.



Fig. 1. The Republic of Yemen

The period leading up to the formal agreement in April 1990 saw positive developments, including border agreements, discussions on power grid connections, and collaboration on oil processing. The signing of the two-page formal agreement in April 1990 united the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) into the Republic of Yemen (Endres, 2002). The unification of the nation and the discovery of oil reserves initially fueled hopes for peace and progress. However, these aspirations were ultimately undermined by factors such as the pursuit of power, an inability to overcome differences, and ineffective governance (BBC, 2023).

The Emergence of Houthis

After the unification, the Houthi movement started in Yemen attributed to the dissatisfaction with the political and economic marginalization of the Zaidi Shia community, to which the Houthis belong. Perceived discrimination by the central government, coupled with economic challenges and a sense of exclusion, fueled their discontent. Regional and sectarian dynamics, along with geopolitical influences, further contributed to the rise of the Houthi movement (Trevor Johnston, 2020).

The Houthi rebels initiated a moderate theological movement among the Zaidi Shia minority in the late 1990s. Originally focused on combating corruption and opposing President Ali Abdullah Saleh's government, they later received military, training, and financial support from Iran, strengthening the Zaidi sect of Shiite Islam. This support significantly contributed to their capacity to engage in conflicts within Yemen and resist the government backed by Saudi Arabia and the US. The Houthi rebels adamantly oppose Israel, the US, and Western allies (Trevor Johnston, 2020).

The conflict in Yemen, involving the Houthi rebels, has intensified with attacks on ships in the Red Sea near the Bab-el Mandab (Fig. 1). Despite the Houthi leadership denying direct involvement in some attacks and asserting their fight against a corrupt system, the US-designated them as global terrorists during the Trump administration. The Biden administration later removed this terrorist label, but it now faces significant challenges in dealing with the Houthis (Reuters, 2024).

Houthis control the Bab el Mandeb strait, a key chokepoint at the southern entrance of the Red Sea enabling them to influence maritime traffic, potentially disrupting global trade and impacting the economy. They initially opposed Israel by claiming to support Palestinians in key Yemeni waterways, targeting cargo ships, and asserting connections to Israel. However, their focus shifted to attacking ships from various nations using drones and missiles, believed to be provided by Iran. This broader assault disrupted global trade, prompting Western retaliation from the US, UK, Canada, and other countries that deemed the Houthi actions destabilizing (Salhani, 2024).

Tension in the Red Sea, Bab-el Mandab Strait and the Gulf of Aden

The Red Sea, a critical global trade route, faces escalating geopolitical tensions involving Houthi rebels. These conflicts pose a direct threat to Indian trade routes, especially for exports like basmati rice, potentially increasing costs by 15 to 20% because the ships carrying goods have to travel through the Cape of Good Hope (Fig. 2). Further escalation could lead to heightened oil prices, inflation, and economic distress globally, emphasizing the need for careful strategic decisions (Sharma, 2023).



Fig. 2: Red Sea, Bab-el Mandab Strait and the Gulf of Aden

If Houthis block the Suez Canal, ships have to pass through the Cape of Good Hope that will add another 15-17 days duration to travel from Europe to Asia.

Yemen's complex conflict involves various factions, including Houthi rebels, pro-Hadi forces, Southern Transitional Council (STC) secessionists, and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Secret deals between AQAP and Saudi Arabia add complexity to the conflict. The situation, marked by Houthi control in the north, pro-Hadi dominance in the east, and STC control in Aden and Mukalla, remains in a stalemate with ongoing peace talks (Day, 2010).

The geopolitical implications, especially in the Red Sea region, involve the Houthi attacks and their impact on maritime trade routes, leading to disruptions, increased insurance costs, altered shipping routes, and a decline in Red Sea traffic. These events have far-reaching consequences, affecting international relations, energy markets, and the overall global economy. The involvement of designated global terrorists and their actions adds a layer of security concerns, raising questions about regional stability and broader global repercussions.

International Responses

The international response to the Houthi blockage of the Red Sea, Bab-el Mandab Strait, and the Gulf of Aden has been a multifaceted and complex situation. Diplomatic initiatives and calls for ceasefires have been part of these efforts, but the international response is significantly influenced by the broader implications of instability in the region. The Yemen conflict is characterized by a complicated web of external actors with divergent interests. The Houthi rebels' involvement,

supported by Iran, has turned the conflict into a proxy war, with regional powers such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates backing the internationally recognized government. China's covert role in bridging relations between Iran and its regional rivals adds another layer of complexity (Pierson, 2023).

The airstrikes conducted by the US and Britain in response to Houthi attacks on ships in the Red Sea have broader political ramifications. The involvement of external powers, including the U.S. and Britain, underscores the geopolitical dynamics involving Houthi rebels, Iran, and their perceived opposition to Israel and the West. The alignment of the Houthi leadership with the 'axis of resistance' alongside Hezbollah and Hamas, further complicates the regional dynamics and intensifies the risk of conflict. The broader implications involve the potential destabilization of the Middle East and the intricate interplay of various actors, both regional and international, with interests in the Yemeni conflict (Salhani, 2024).

The situation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is complex and potentially volatile, with the US acting against Houthi rebels and the potential involvement of Iran and Russia. The global impact is significant due to geopolitical implications and the potential for a broader conflict. The unpredictability of international events adds an element of uncertainty, highlighting the interconnectedness of geopolitical events and their potential to reverberate globally, affecting political landscapes, business, and economic interests (BBC, 2024).

Nepal's Perspectives and its Commitment to Peace

The Hamas terrorists carried out attacks in Israel on October 7, 2023, killing more than a thousand innocents. The Houthi rebels are one of their supporters. Ten Nepali students were killed in the attacks and some including Bipin Joshi have been made captives for months (The Kathmandu Post, 2023). This has directly impacted Nepal and the Nepali life. The attacks happened thousands of miles away from Nepal, yet it does not go unaffected as no development can be viewed in isolation in this increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. In addition to this, key oil shipping routes particularly the location of the Bab el-Mandeb strait near Yemen is a matter of concern for global oil markets which could lead to a rise in oil prices globally. Landlocked Nepal remains directly impacted by the price rise of energy.

Nepal has been contributing to the United Nations peacekeeping missions in various trouble spots of the world since 1958 under the aegis of the UN for the maintenance of international peace and security. It currently stands first in the troop-contributing country to the UN peacekeeping operations. Since 1958, a total of 149,890 Nepali peacekeepers have served in UN missions. This number includes 8,615 members of the Nepal Police and 8,785 from the Armed Police Force (The Kathmandu Post, 2024).

According to the Nepali Army, Nepali peacekeepers are deployed in Congo, South Sudan, Abyei Sudan, Western Sahara, Israel, Lebanon, Mali, Syria, Central African Republic, Iraq and Yemen. The participation of the Nepali Army in the UN Peacekeeping Operations spans 64 years and covers 44 UN missions, (The Kathmandu Post, 2024). The Nepali Army has always accepted challenges and participated in the most difficult operations. Nepali peacekeepers have become to be both desirable and reliable. According to the Nepali Army website, throughout the peacekeeping journey, its 73 personnel have made the ultimate sacrifice at the altar of world peace and another 68 have been disabled. The nation also stands first in sending women peacekeepers. As many as 2,554 women peacekeepers have served in various peacekeeping missions and at present 632 female soldiers or 10 percent of the total deployment of Nepal are female (Nepal Army, 2024). Nepal has committed to provide up to 10,000 peacekeepers should the UN request.

Nepal has always condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and at the same time advocated for peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts for ensuring global peace.

Conclusion

This article attempted to present a comprehensive overview of how the Republic of Yemen was created and then discussed the emergence of Houthi rebels covering their origins, motives, and the international response to their actions.

The Houthi movement initially emerged in Yemen in the late 1990s as a moderate theological movement within the Zaidi Shia minority. Gradually, it transformed into a political and militant group. The rebels, backed by Iran, have strategically sought influence over crucial maritime routes, particularly the Bab el Mandeb strait. This geographical advantage allows them to control a vital chokepoint, enabling the disruption or blockage of access to the Red Sea. This not only impacts regional trade but also has global ramifications for international maritime commerce. The conflict has triggered an international response involving diplomatic initiatives and calls for ceasefires. However, resolving the situation is complicated by an intricate interplay of geopolitical dynamics, as external actors with diverse interests are involved.

The economic repercussions of Houthi actions are substantial, particularly in the Red Sea region, a crucial passage for global trade. The disruption of maritime trade routes has led to increased insurance costs, changes in shipping routes, and prolonged shipping times. These factors contribute to a broader surge in shipping costs, posing significant challenges for businesses engaged in international trade and affecting global economic activity and trade efficiency. Given the involvement of major global players in the Middle East and North Africa region, the situation

has the potential to escalate tensions, leading to a broader regional and global crisis. This not only impacts political landscapes but also poses risks to business and economic interests at a larger scale. Houthis' actions in the Red Sea have the potential to exacerbate tensions in the Middle East and beyond. Humanitarian crises in one region have instances of spilling over beyond national borders.

The case of Houthi rebels in Yemen underscores how the deep disunity among the national community within the country, exacerbated by external interference makes the country a focal point of international conspiracies and intrigues. This amply highlights the complexities arising from the collision of various internal and external actors in instability and confusion. Rebels in Yemen not only destabilize the region but also serve as a troubling example of how radical factions in one part of the world can exploit the societal vulnerabilities, radicalizing societies and fueling populism both on the left and right-wing populism. Such actions have far-reaching implications that come with significant threats to national security and stability not only with the national frontiers but also across borders. In this increasingly interconnected world, where nations' destinies have come to be intertwined, any regional developments will impact global security and economic stability and disturb the age-old harmony and tolerance in the social fabric of multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-cultural societies like Nepal.

Nepal as a responsible member of the international community is fully conscious of its responsibilities. It conducts independent foreign policy and decides every issue on its merits without favor or fear and takes a position that is in the best interests of the nation. (Bhattarai, 2023). It wants to stay away from all conflicts and firmly believes in the peaceful settlement of disputes and wants the international community to respect the primacy and power of diplomacy and dialogue to resolve any differences or disputes. Nepal strongly feels that the five principles of peaceful co-existence (*Panchsheel*) that are derived from the teachings of Lord Buddha, the enlightened son of Nepal, provide an honorable exit from this chaotic and messy world.

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Climate Diplomacy: Implications and Prospects for Nepal

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Abstract

Nepal has come a long way from the time of the ‘Kalapathar Declaration’ in 2009 for the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) up to the COP 28 in 2022. With just 0.4% of the total global population and emitting only 0.025 % of total greenhouse gas emissions, Nepal is disproportionately affected by climate change and is listed as the fourth most climate-vulnerable country in the world as per the global climate risk index. The loss of lives due to climate-induced disasters within a decade (2001 – 2010) and in 2023 alone is reported to be more than 4000 and 393 people respectively causing an economic loss of USD 5.34 billion and 2.89 billion respectively. Since Nepal lacks institutional and technical capacity and financial resources to tackle the impacts of climate change, the pursuit of robust climate diplomacy is called for ‘to shape and reframe the core national interest at home and influence deliberations abroad’. Hence, climate diplomacy could be a strategic instrument of Nepal’s foreign policy in terms of energizing relations with friendly nations and mobilizing climate change-affected countries to take up a common stand for getting maximum international assistance and support.

Keywords: Kalapathar declaration, greenhouse gas emission, glacier retreat, fossil fuels, robust climate diplomacy, economic diplomacy.

Background

Holding a cabinet meeting chaired by the then Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal at Kalapathar near the base camp of Mount Sagarmatha (Everest) in the year 2009 was followed by the ‘Kalapathar Declaration” for COP 15 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen, Denmark. It was a wake-up call to the international community with the message that climate change needed to be taken with utmost seriousness being linked to the very survival of the affected countries as part of a climate diplomacy initiative. The ‘Kalapathar Declaration’ was followed by the constitution of the Climate Change Council which oversaw the preparation of the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA)

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to Climate Change (2010) for COP 15. After signing the UNFCCC in 1992, Nepal came up with Climate Change Policy 2011 which was later replaced by National Climate Change Policy 2019 to provide policy guidance to government bodies and also to effectively address national and international issues on climate change (MOE, 2011).

The Paris Agreement was a landmark agreement entered into force on November 4, 2016, which aimed to keep global temperature rise in this century well below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's visit to Nepal's Himalayas in October 2023 helped draw global attention to the climate agenda of Nepal in the world forum. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's address at the global forum highlighted the gross injustice suffered by Nepal having to bear 'the direct, unequal and harmful impacts of climate change', and called on 'the international committee to help reduce the climate change risk' through the adaptation financing with high priority. According to Mr. Birendra Prasad Mahato, Nepal's Minister of Forest and Environment, Nepal's issues were discussed with priority at the UN Climate Summit (THT, 2023).

The South Asian Regional Climate Change Conference, "From Kathmandu to Copenhagen", was also held in the same year. National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), Nepal's national document prepared for the COP 15, Copenhagen, did convey the message to the international community that Nepal with just 0.4% of the total global population and emitting only 0.025 % of total greenhouse gas emissions was being disproportionately affected from climate change (MoE, 2011).

Further, the climate TRACE Data released by Al Gore, former US Vice-President and a climate champion at the UN Climate Summit-COP 28 (Nov.30-Dec.12, 2023) in Dubai, showed that the global greenhouse gas emissions increased by 8.6 % between 2015 and 2022, and just 5 countries-China, USA, India, Indonesia and Russia – accounted for 75% of those emissions (Agence France Presse, 2023). Hence, as the final COP 28 outcomes indicate, Nepal would continue to be affected by the global warming phenomenon due to carbon emissions by the industrialized countries.

In the above context, the paper contends that climate diplomacy, as an integral component of economic diplomacy, ought to play a key role in receiving international assistance to deal with the climate crisis in Nepal. The key questions to be answered are: What were Nepal's past efforts and accomplishments related to climate change? Were there any shortcomings and constraints at the policy and implementation levels while responding to climate change? How effectively did

Nepal put up its climate agenda at COP 28? How can Nepal pursue robust climate diplomacy to get international support in the context of the COP 28 outcomes ?

Climate Change Threats for Nepal

Nepal is listed as the fourth most climate-vulnerable country in the world as per the global climate risk index (MOSTE, 2013). The average maximum annual temperature within the country is estimated to increase at an annual rate of 0.04% - 0.06%, more pronounced in the mountains compared to the Terai and Siwalik regions. Recent climatic trends suggest temperature would increase by 1.7⁰ C and 3⁰ C by the years 2050 and 2100 respectively compared to a pre-2000 baseline.

Several studies related to climate projections indicate that global warming has been contributing to the occurrence of multiple hazards in Nepal. These are water-induced disasters such as floods, landslides, flash floods, debris flow and glacial lake outburst floods – GLOFs (MCCRMD, 2014). Decreasing snow lines indicate warmer and wetter Himalayas; the drought risks, general rise in temperature and high river flows are also on the increase. Crippling cold waves in the Terai region and increasing recurrence of thunderstorms in the hills and mountains could be seen as the manifestations of climate change. The glacial retreat would be changing seasonal snow melt and causing uncertainty in water flows. This would mean grave consequences for food security, the livelihood of the people and the eco-systems (MoE, 2011).

The loss of lives caused by the climate-induced disaster within a decade from 2001 to 2010 was reported to be more than 4000 people, causing an economic loss of USD 5.34 billion. As many as 393 persons lost their lives to disasters, especially landslides and floods in 2023 causing economic loss of Rs. 2.89 billion (MoE, 2010).

Past Climate Initiatives and Accomplishments

1. Constitution of the Climate Change Council

The ‘Kalapathar Declaration’ was followed by the constitution of a 25-member Climate Change Council, consisting of 8 experts, under the chairmanship of the prime minister. It paved the way for climate change to be included in the national development agenda as evidenced by the fact that the Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) and Three Year Interim Plan (2008-2010) addressed the issue of environmental management and climate change. The Climate Change Management Division was also established in the Ministry of Environment in the year 2010. In addition, a multi-stakeholder Climate Change Initiatives Coordination Committee (MCCICC) was also formed. Although those institutional arrangements paved the way for the expansion of climate change-related programs, there was also a realization that more efforts need to be made to mobilize the needed funds (MoE, 2011).

2. The National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA)

The NAPA - Nepal's national document prepared for COP 15 in Copenhagen in 2010, was an important policy and programmatic initiative formulated through wider and extensive consultative processes involving the line ministries, local bodies, academe, NGOs, indigenous communities and civil society representatives. The then Ministry of Environment (MoE) is the focal ministry that adopted the thematic working group approach for the NAPA preparation related to the various themes. The NAPA Project team developed nine combined project profiles which included both "urgent/immediate and long-term adaptation strategies", and the total financial requirement was estimated as USD 350 million (NAPA, 2010).

As per the Local Governance Act 1999, the municipal bodies were expected to come up with the preparation of the 'Periodic Plan' covering the multi-sectors – social, economic, spatial, environmental, financial and institutional. Hence, the Periodic Plan provided a basis for mainstreaming the NAPA, having covered various thematic areas, within the municipal periodic planning process (Malla, 2011).

3. The National Climate Policy Initiatives

Nepal signed the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on June 12, 1992, and became a party to it in 1994. The scientific evidence put forward by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was instrumental in creating such an international legal instrument. After joining the UNFCCC, Nepal came up with Climate Change Policy 2011 with the vision and mission focussed on: sparing the country from the adverse impacts of climate change; improving livelihoods; and achieving climate-friendly physical, economic and social development, adopting a low carbon and keeping up the commitments to national and international agreements related to climate change. The Government of Nepal later came up with a new policy document – National Climate Change Policy 2019, to provide policy guidance to government bodies 'for developing resilient society by reducing the impact of climate change' and also to effectively address national and international issues of climate change (MOE, 2011).

The proposed institutional framework consists of 1) Formation of the Climate Change Council at the national level with the coordination responsibility given to Ministry of Forest & Environment Ministry (MFEM); 2) Constitution of an Inter-Ministrial Coordination Committee; 3) A sectoral ministry looking after the environment entrusted with climate change affairs within the provinces; 4) Creation of the climate change focal points within the sectoral ministries at the center and the local government levels; 5) Establishment of a Climate Change Research Center. The national policy initiative provided a basis for the enactment of the related legislation and strategy documents. Some of those are listed as follows:

1. Environment Conservation Act & Regulations 2076 BS (2019 AD)
2. Local Adaptation Plan of Action 2076 BS (2019)
3. GESI Strategy & Action Plan related to Climate Change (2077-2087 BS)

A Glimpse of the Past COP Events

The Paris Agreement was a landmark agreement as it charted out a new course in the global climate effort. Its central aim was to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius (UNFCCC, 2015).

The COP 26 was held in Glasgow, Scotland in 2021. Nations agreed to work to reduce the gap between existing emissions so that the rise in global temperature could be limited to 1.5⁰ Celsius and they also promised to fulfill ‘the pledge of providing USD 100 billion annually from developed to developing countries’ (Shrestha, 2024). One of the top concerns reported at COP 26 is the need to augment climate finance for low-income countries urging the developed countries to extend the financial support they committed to the least developed countries (LDCs) which are highly vulnerable to climate change (Business 360, 2021).

Nepal raised the issue of ‘Himalayas at Risk’. It was pointed out that the Hindu-Kush Himalaya (HKH) region was serving 1.9 billion people and, hence, the global community ought to be ready to support this region to minimize the risk because of climate change. Nepal highlighted that ‘Himalayas and Mountains were the Pulse of the Planet’ (Business 360, 2021).

The COP 27, convened in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt in 2022, reaffirmed its commitment to contain the global temperature rise within 1.5⁰ Celsius. The creation of the Loss and Damage Fund was ‘a breakthrough agreement’ to provide loss and damage funding for vulnerable countries suffering from natural disasters (Shrestha, 2024). This was an important realization that developing countries including Nepal despite their minimal contribution to global emissions are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Nepal’s Climate Agenda at the COP 28

Nepal’s representation by Prime Minister Dahal at the summit was significant in the sense that he could raise the issue of the country’s high vulnerability to climate change despite its emission of negligible amounts of greenhouse gas. He drew global attention to the the gross injustice suffered by Nepal having to bear ‘the direct, unequal and harmful impacts of climate change’, and called on ‘the international committee to help reduce the climate change risk’. The prime minister’s pledge to

maintain 45% forest cover of Nepal to counter climate change was noteworthy to draw global attention to Nepal's genuine efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to allow the country to benefit financially through the global carbon market mechanism set up through the Article 6 of the Paris Agreement (Pokharel, 2023).

Nepal had its own pavilion at the summit which helped to hold deliberations and interactions on her climate change-related issues effectively. A panel discussion was organized by The National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) titled "Building Blocks of Climate Ambition: People, Nature and Action" which brought about the following pertinent climate-related issues and solutions to be considered by Nepal:

- To develop Nepal's resilience to climate change despite its vulnerabilities, nature-based solutions need to be adopted as strategic actions at the grassroots level which benefit the well-being of both human beings and biodiversity.
- Specific measures include 'allocating resources for nature-based solutions, collaborating with environmental organizations and implementing a robust monitoring and evaluation system.
- There is a need for aligning global interventions with local actions for nature-based solutions, considering challenges and emphasizing external finance for the developing countries.
- To promote the country's ownership of climate projects, the role of 'direct access modality' needs to be emphasized (THT, December 8, 2023).

The COP 28 Outcomes and Implications for Nepal

The world for the first time approved a call to transition away from fossil fuels – the top culprit behind climate change. The agreement calls for 'transitioning away from the fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just orderly and equitable manner'. It asks for greater action 'in this critical decade' and recommits to no net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 in hopes of meeting the increasingly elusive goal of checking warming at 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

The text stopped short of a phase-out of oil, gas and coal, which together account for around 75% of the emissions responsible for the planetary crisis (AFP, 2023). The achievement of COP 28 is that a landmark decision on the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund was adopted in its opening plenary session with a pledge of USD 400 million. (Pokhrel, 2023). It appears that Nepal will continue to face the brunt of the climate crisis, and it will have to deal increasingly with emerging climate-related challenges.

Nepal's Persual of a Robust Climate Diplomacy

Climate change is not a home product of Nepal. It is a global concern and lopsided attempts will hardly meet the challenge. It is beyond the capacity of Nepal to

tackle the impacts of climate change with its efforts since it lacks institutional and technical capacity and financial resources. Hence, the application of climate diplomacy is 'crucial in embedding climate change in the decision-making process to shape and reframe the core national interest at home and influence deliberations abroad' (Shrestha, 2021).

Nepal's climate diplomacy initiatives can be taken up at various levels as follows:

1. At the global level within the UN system, Nepal could play a proactive role in mobilizing the climate-affected countries, both the mountain and island countries, to take up a common stand for getting maximum international assistance and support. This would also help increase the bargaining power for more climate benefits from the developed and industrialized countries.
2. At the regional level, the countries within the Hindu Kush Himalaya region could be mobilized for more concerted climate actions with the help and support of the International Center of Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). The regional groupings (SAARC, BBIN, BIMSTEC) and other international bodies related to climate change could also be mobilized in this endeavor.
3. At the national level, Nepal can take up climate change initiatives with several bilateral agencies and multilateral organizations (World Bank, ADB, UNDP).
4. At the local community level, the Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA) can be undertaken with the support of the local government bodies.

The Way Forward: Measures Aiding Robust Climate Diplomacy for Nepal

While there is a need for a sound policy as well as institutional and legal framework concerning climate change, there is also a need for technical guidelines, manuals and tools for dealing with the scientific and technological applications related to climate actions. The Ministry of Forest and Environment is the lead ministry dealing with climate change issues.

The Climate Change Policy 2011 envisioned establishing a Climate Change Center as an effective technical institution for research and monitoring and for providing technical and policy advice to the Government of Nepal; initiating local adaptation plans of action (LAPA). The Climate Change Policy 2019 proposed the Climate Change Research and Development Center for dealing with scientific & technology-related research activities.

Possibly, two types of bodies might be needed - one catering for policy studies and the other one for scientific & technology (S&T) research. An autonomous body, the Centre for Climate Change Policy Research, could be established as a think tank for climate change and environment-related activities. The center dealing with S&T aspects could be placed within the university system conferring academic

degrees and could also promote scientific research activities in collaboration with the National Academy of Science and Technology (NAST).

Nepal's participation in the global Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR) with support from the Climate Investment Funds in the year 2013 is a glaring example of a need for proper institutional infrastructures as stated above which ensures continuity to the launched projects/programs (MOSTE, 2013). The study conducted on indigenous practices for climate change adaptation, as a knowledge management sub-program of the PPCR, showed that how local knowledge and practices can quickly adjust to the changing dynamics of climate change and its impacts (MOSTE, 2015).

Conclusion

Given the gravity of climate change impacts, will Nepal be able to come up with appropriate response measures in terms of mitigation and adaptation actions? Given the state of the political economy, does Nepal have the capability to pursue effective economic diplomacy for receiving benefits from climate funds and other bilateral and multilateral sources?

The following statement by US Climate Envoy John Kerry would be most reassuring in the Nepali context, "We're not going to get it done alone, that's for sure. No one nation can get this done. This gets done by the best of diplomacy and the best of international engagement coming together".

The best of diplomacy and the best of international engagements could be the answer to Nepal's efforts to deal with the climate crisis. Trade, tourism employment, investment and technology transfer are important aspects of development (economic) diplomacy (NCWA, 2021). Climate diplomacy, as an important component of economic diplomacy, needs to play a key role in receiving international assistance to deal with the climate crisis in Nepal. Hence, climate diplomacy could be a strategic instrument of Nepal's foreign policy in terms of energizing relations with friendly nations and mobilizing climate change-affected countries to take up a common stand for getting maximum international assistance and support.

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Nuclear Aspects of the Russia-Ukraine War and its Implications for Nepal

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Abstract

Nearly two years old Russia-Ukraine war seems to go on for a long period. The United States and European Union are supporting Ukraine's offensive to regain their lost land. The Russian threat to use nuclear bombs at the outset has taken the world by great surprise. The use of a megaton nuclear bomb could lead to unimagined catastrophe killing a billion people, and a nuclear winter could set in leading to a worldwide famine that could kill millions more. The nuclear watchdog of the United Nations - the International Atomic Energy Agency, is keeping track of Europe's largest nuclear power plant in Ukraine. Nuclear-related international treaties are fast becoming ineffective and World War III could be possible. This war is, however, coming to a stalemate. Peace initiatives taken are ineffective so far. This war must end soon and nuclear weapons should remain as deterrence and should not and never be used to save mankind.

Keywords: Russia-Ukraine war, nuclear war, nuclear winter, Nepali mercenaries, peace

Introduction

The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 by Russia can be taken as the harbinger of the ambition of this nuclear-powered country to launch a war in Ukraine. This war is fast approaching its second anniversary. On Aug. 24, 1991, the then still Soviet Ukrainian parliament declared Ukraine's independence (BBC, 2022). Millions of Ukrainians and thousands of Russians have fled their war-torn countries. Refugees from Ukraine have flooded the neighboring countries. Many armed forces men have lost their lives and lots of equipment and infrastructures have been destroyed. Drones have become the current tools of war both for surveillance and destruction. In the meantime, some notable changes in the political landscape

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have taken place. Russia has revoked the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (Reuters, 2022). NATO has frozen the Cold War-era security pact with Russia (Associated Press, 2023). The United States and Russia had earlier pulled out of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty blaming each other. At present, the conflict between Hamas and Israel since October 2023 has taken away the focus and affected the US and even the EU aid to Ukraine. An Israeli minister was suspended from government meetings “until further notice”, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said, after suggesting in an interview dropping a nuclear bomb on Gaza (Maghris, 2023). It is strange to find many Nepali mercenaries recruited both by Russia and Ukraine to fight this war that has led to several deaths and injuries apart from being held as Prisoners of War (The Kathmandu Post, 2023).

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 to have a blitzkrieg, win over and install a puppet government, though President Vladimir Putin said it was only a “special military operation” (Nikolskaya, 2022). The support of NATO led by the US turned this into a proxy war. Strong resistance from Ukraine and an intense offensive since June 2022 too was unexpected by Russia. In the initial stage, Russian shelling of large parts of Zaporizhzhia and then capturing Europe’s largest Nuclear Power Plant was the big concern raised by the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2023). In the beginning, both nations accused each other of the use of the ‘dirty bomb’, which disperses radioactive materials over a large area to create terror and panic.

This war does not seem to come to an end anytime soon as per the current stalemate on the battlefield. US President Joe Biden has affirmed his country’s support to Ukraine for as long as it takes and expressed readiness to commit billions of dollars in the coming years (CNN, 2023). The US has already spent 111 billion dollars defending Ukraine. Attempts for peace talks earlier brokered by China and later by other countries, so far, could not hold water. The whole world was shocked and reacted vehemently to the first utterance of the possibility of the use of a nuclear bomb. The nuclear doctrine of Russia is ‘No First Use’, but it seems to disappear in thin air. In December 2022, Putin claimed that Russia would not be the first to use nuclear weapons or the second, and that “Russian nuclear doctrine is premised on self-defense” (Putin, 2022). Suddenly world peace has been challenged.

Nuclear Winter

The atom bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan during World War II were of less than 20 Kilotons of TNT in strength (Britannica, 2023). The current Russian nuclear arsenal possesses many Megatons of capacity and their destructive power is hundreds if not thousands of times more. The human deaths also could jump

from a million to even tens of millions by the use of megaton nuclear bombs. The enormous mushroom of millions of tons of black soot will be released into the atmosphere for thousands of kilometers with blinding flashes of light and awful shockwaves. The average temperature of the earth will reduce by more than one degree Celsius. A serious decrease in agricultural production would challenge the global grain stock putting food security at peril. Many countries in Asia and Africa that rely on grain imports will be malnourished. The whole world will face severe consequences of a nuclear winter. Man-made disturbances in the global climate will result in a serious reduction in agricultural products.

No country will remain unaffected irrespective of the distance from the war zone. Radioactive plumes of tens of kilometers high will rise in the atmosphere and then the dynamic stratosphere will distribute various radioisotopes throughout the world within a fortnight. The contaminated soil of the conflict area will remain radioactive and unfit to grow any food for many years. In particular, sizable global contributions to the agricultural products of Ukraine will come to an end.

Nuclear weapons are designed and developed to cause maximum devastation (Dalnoki, 2021). The size of the warhead, the height above the ground zero for the detonation to take place and the local environment at that time are the main factors for mass destruction. A megaton nuclear weapon explosion would result in an enormous fireball. The shockwaves would destroy lives and objects within a three-kilometer area; cause severe to heavy damage within three to five kilometers and notable damage beyond eight kilometers. Radiation damage to body cells will lead to instant and delayed deaths as rampant radiation sickness lingers for decades. Electromagnetic pulses and disturbances in the electronic system will be felt several kilometers from the detonation center. IAEA estimates that more than 100 countries have inadequate control and monitoring capacity to deal with radioactive fallout.

The Status of Russia-Ukraine War

The fortifications of layers of tank traps and minefields laid by the Russians hindered the counteroffensive of Ukraine. Ukrainian troops faced constant mortar and artillery shelling as well as aerial bombardments. Drone attacks and counterattacks are rampant. Both Moscow and Kiev have experienced drone attacks. Drone attacks have been launched in some other cities as well as in the battlefields and Black Sea areas. Effective destruction in the midair has been developed by both warring countries. Ukraine started to use cluster bombs supplied by the US to make advances on the battlefield though outlawed in some 120 countries (Natasha, 2023). Russia also used its stockpiles of cluster bombs. Cluster bombs explode in the air over a target dispersing smaller ‘bomlets’ across a wide area. Most NATO

countries are signatories to the Convention on Cluster Munition which ban the use and production but Russia, the US and Ukraine never signed it.

The Russians hoped to make tactical advances of their own on the northern and eastern fronts (Holder, 2022). Ukraine was forced to retain substantial troops that strained the operational levels to the bay in the more than 1000 km long southern and eastern fronts. Both the offensive and defensive strategies of Russia kept Ukraine from making little progress despite the superior armory, firepower and armed forces trained in Poland (The Kathmandu Post, 2023). The sizable destruction of the Russian navy in the Black Sea seemed to force Russia to massive missile and drone attacks in various cities of Ukraine. Discontent among Ukrainian soldiers is now more common and out in the open. The limited momentum of Ukraine's counteroffensive in capturing territory in the northeast and south slowed down as the harsh winter set in. The Russians are well-versed in winter warfare and better equipped in terms of strength and weaponry.

Nuclear-Related International Treaties Defied

President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko claimed that nations who are willing to join the Union State of Russia and Belarus will be provided nuclear weapons soon after confirming the transfer of some tactical nuclear weapons from Moscow to Minsk (Knight, 2023). Russia, however, retained the tactical control of nuclear weapons like the US practice of stationing nuclear weapons in Europe under its command. Defying the latest Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and many other related treaties by Russia and Belarus is seriously threatening world peace.

In the meantime, the US has allotted millions of dollars to manufacture key components for its nuclear arsenal (Helmores, 2023). The US National Nuclear Security Administration announced that the initial cost could amount to USD four billion. Most of the US nuclear stockpile dates back to the 1970s and 1980s, and their life needs to be extended so that their deterrent power is safe, secure and reliable.

Deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council Dmitry Medvedev stated that nuclear weapons could be used in response to aggression that threatens the existence of the Russian State. He further said that Moscow would be forced to use a nuclear weapon if Ukraine's counter-offensive became successful (Osborn, 2023). The possibility of the use of nuclear weapons has now come closest since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis (Borger, 2022).

Peace Initiatives

The Russia-Ukraine war appears to have reached a stalemate with neither side able to gain meaningful territory in recent months. The Russian president indicated that the African or Chinese peace initiatives could be the basis for ending the war in Ukraine (Perkins, 2023). However, he indicated it would be hard to implement a ceasefire as the Ukrainian army is on the offensive. He has not ruled out talks with Ukraine. The African leaders had pressed to forge ahead with their plan to end the conflict during the Russia-Africa summit at St. Petersburg in late July 2023 in which 54 heads of state or government were invited as they represented some 1.3 billion people. Russia is the top supplier of arms to the African nations (Press, 2023). Putin praised Africa as a rising center of power in the world. The fate of millions of people in Asia and Africa in particular depends on undisturbed food security.

Saudi Arabia organized a peace summit in early August 2023 in which Russia was not invited (Lynch, 2023). The US and EU tried to muster international backing for peace favoring Ukraine's terms (DW, 2023). Countries like China, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Turkey and South Africa were among the 30 countries invited. The important points raised by Ukraine for the settlement of the disputes included respect for its territorial integrity and the withdrawal of Russian troops from the occupied territories.

Nepali Mercenaries

Both Russia and Ukraine are encouraging foreign mercenaries to join their armies (Falk, 2022). So, it is not surprising that hundreds of Nepali people are fighting in this war. The Government of Nepal confirmed that twelve Nepalese have lost their lives fighting for Russia so far with hundreds missing (The Kathmandu Post, 2023). Ukraine disclosed that they have four Nepali nationals as POW. The Government of Nepal has at last started to feel the pinch as this precarious situation has been caused mainly by the awful lack of jobs in Nepal. It has taken some initiatives in this regard by requesting the governments of these countries to release the POW, provide compensation for the dead and stop further recruitment. However, so far, Russia has ignored these Nepalese request (Giri, 2023) .

Conclusion

The Russia-Ukraine war, which has been ongoing for nearly two years, has become the longest conflict in Europe since World War II and there is no end in sight. Ukraine's war of attrition against Russia did not result as per the expectations of the West. Putin is obsessed with the annexation of the eastern Ukrainian territory of the Russian-speaking population. The Russian military has largely repulsed Ukraine's

counter-offensive. Currently, Russia occupies nearly one-fifth of Ukraine. The West and Ukraine reject it as a baseless pretext to attack a sovereign country. However, in this protracted war, the US-led NATO wants Ukraine to win. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had said, “The prospect of nuclear conflict, once unthinkable, is now back within the realm of possibility”. It may be argued that the US and its allies are soaring to their highest confrontational levels since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and world peace is at stake all over again (Racker, 2023).

Reportedly, the war fatigue among the Ukrainian fighters and a stalemate in this war is quite apparent (Khromeychuk, 2024). No breakthrough has been reported by either of the warring countries. The winter season is advantageous for the well-equipped Russian army both for the offense and strong defense of the occupied territories. Currently, the funds from the US and NATO are drying up and this could be the game changer in this war. The government of Nepal should make result-oriented efforts to get back its citizens serving in both armies of Russia and Ukraine, demand adequate compensation for the families of the dead and ensure the release of the POW.

The world and humanity have been saved from the catastrophe of a nuclear winter and mass destruction as nuclear weapons have not been used in this war so far. Nuclear weapons should continue to remain as a deterrent. Saving humanity should be the prime concern for all parties involved so that peace shall eventually prevail in the world.

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Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Challenges for the Global South with a Focus on Nepal

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence is a relatively new and contemporary technological tool that also figures significantly in the current discourse of international relations. AI stems from its ability to mimic human cognitive functions, allowing machines to perform tasks that previously required human intelligence. AI systems can analyze massive amounts of data, identify patterns, and make data-driven decisions by utilizing advanced algorithms, machine learning, and data processing capabilities. The primary goal is to improve efficiency, accuracy, and automation across multiple domains, including healthcare, finance, manufacturing, and transportation. Furthermore, AI has the potential to address complex challenges, innovate solutions, and contribute to scientific advancements, making it an effective tool for supplementing human capabilities and driving progress in a variety of fields. However, ethical considerations and responsible development are essential for ensuring the responsible and beneficial integration of AI into society. Concerns regarding AI have also been expressed from the viewpoint of foreign policy, national security, data privacy, and the possible replacement of humans by machines. This is expected to pose additional difficulties for developing nations like Nepal as it may be very expensive to use AI in various development endeavors that aim to address global issues on an equal footing with developed nations. Because most of the countries in the Global South are developing or least developed, AI may therefore present more challenges than opportunities to them.

Hence, this article attempts to incorporate the various dimensions of AI in terms of the different perspectives that are encountered in this changing context of the AI world, as well as the real impacts that may be opportunities or threats to Nepal from the perspective of international relations and diplomacy.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, information and communication technology, Global South, Nepal, national security.

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Introduction

John McCarthy, an American computer and cognitive scientist, invented the term “artificial intelligence” in 1956 and created the programming language LISP which became popular in AI research (Smith, 2006). Arthur Samuel developed the first computer program to play checkers, utilizing machine learning in 1959. AI is classified into four types: artificial narrow intelligence (ANI), artificial general intelligence (AGI), artificial superintelligence (ASI), and strong AI (stronger than humans) (Press, 2021).

According to, Ian Bremmer and Mustafa Suleyman, the authors of “The AI Power Paradox”, AI will be everywhere by 2035. AI systems will run hospitals, operate airlines, and battle each other in the courtroom. Businesses have scaled at blistering speed generating immense advances in well-being, science, and technology. More unpredictable and more fragile is the issue of terrorists finding new ways to menace societies through cyberwarfare and white-collar workers losing their jobs (Mustafa, The AI Power Paradox, 2023).

Policymakers around the world have begun to wake up to the challenges posed by AI. In May 2023, the G-7 launched the “Hiroshima AI process,” a forum devoted to harmonizing AI governance. In June 2023, the European Parliament passed a draft of the EU’s AI Act, the first comprehensive attempt by the European Union to erect safeguards around the AI industry (Parliament, 2023). The United States has not yet formulated AI law, but there are extensive discussions underway to regulate and govern AI. States and cities such as California, New York City and New Jersey are moving forward with the creation of their versions of state legislation (Surden, 2019).

The government of Nepal has not paid any attention to AI and its positive and negative impacts on the society and country. However, academic institutes such as universities and some private organizations have prioritized development regarding the cause and effect of AI. Though there are pros and cons to AI, this article will attempt to deal with the AI effects, particularly in the global south, which also includes the Nepali context.

Two articles on AI are particularly noteworthy-“AI is Already at War” by Michele A. Flournoy and “The AI Power Paradox” by Ian Bremmer and Mustafa Suleyman, both published in Foreign Affairs Journal in September/October 2023) (Mustafa, 2023). The first article raised the question - Can States Learn to Govern Artificial Intelligence- Before It’s Too Late? which indicates that artificial intelligence needs to be governed. If we wait to develop ethical and legal guidelines, it may become uncontrollable by 2035 (Donath, 2020). The European Union has already passed a draft of the EU’s AI Act, which is also known as the first attempt to regulate AI.

The G-7 also established the “Hiroshima AI process, a forum aimed at harmonizing AI governance in May 2023 (G7 Leaders’ Statement on the Hiroshima AI Process).

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres demanded in July 2023 the creation of a global AI regulatory watchdog to oversee the advancement of AI technology (Body, 2023). During his speech to the UN Security Council, Mr. Guterres suggested that the UN is the ideal place to lead the efforts on AI governance which calls for a global approach to either stifle AI to reduce its risks or use it to increase national power. Artificial Intelligence cannot be regulated like any other technology, and it is already changing conventional wisdom regarding geopolitical dominance.

According to Ian Bremmer and Mustafa Suleyman, AI does not just pose policy challenges but its hyper evolutionary nature also makes solving those challenges progressively harder. That is the AI power paradox.

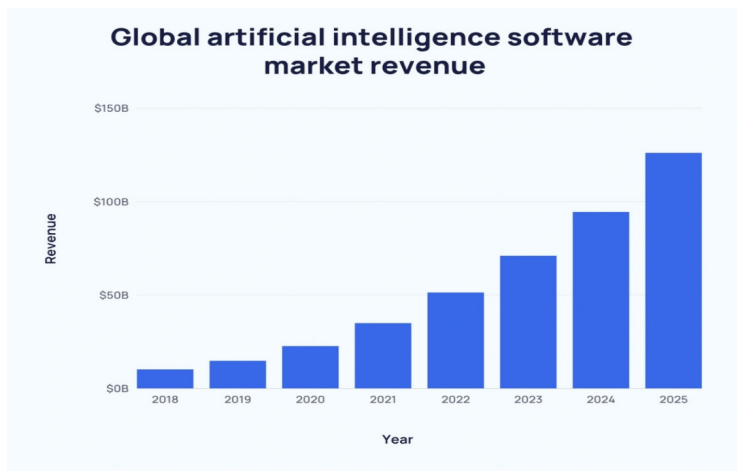
Writing Approach

This article has been prepared based on desk review or secondary data. Since artificial intelligence is still relatively new, particularly in the context of digital transformation, the majority of the data has been included from official websites, research articles of experts in the field (Goodwin, June 2012) as well as policy and legal documents in the context of Nepal. AI, which is viewed as a new opportunity and challenge for the global community, is still being studied and researched in Nepal. However, sufficient information about its market and investment opportunities cannot be obtained.

Global Market of AI

Josh Howarth, a UK based Knowledge Engineer, forecasted the market of AI as follows (Howarth, 2024):

- The global AI market is valued at over USD 136 billion.
- The AI industry value is projected to increase by over 13x over the next 7 years.
- The US AI market is forecast to reach USD 299.64 billion by 2026.
- The AI market is expanding at a CAGR of 38.1% between 2022 to 2030.
- By 2025, as many as 97 million people will work in the AI space.
- AI market size is expected to grow by at least 120% year-over-year.
- 83% of companies claim that AI is a top priority in their business plans.
- Netflix makes USD 1 billion annually from automated personalized recommendations.
- 48% of businesses use some form of AI to utilize big data effectively.
 - 38% of medical providers use computers as part of their diagnosis.

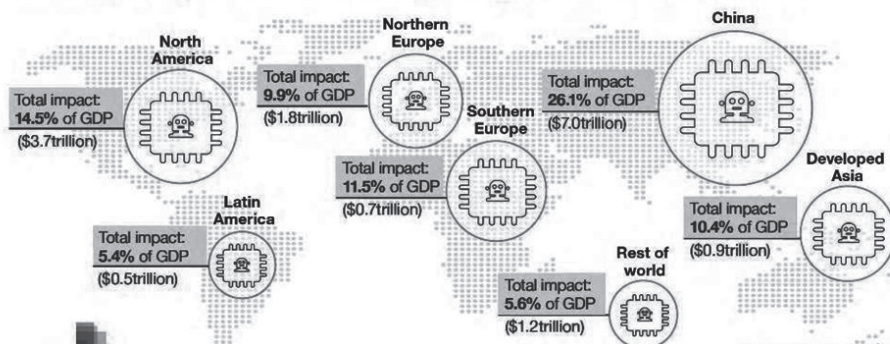


Source: <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/ai-statistics>

Rashi Maheshwari and Aashika Jain, in their article that was published in Forbes “AI Global Market Size and Its Forecast,” critically analyze AI technologies, digital disruption, and competitive advantage in this rapidly expanding global economy. According to them, AI possesses immense potential to boost the world economy. By 2030, AI is predicted to have a greater global economic impact than the combined output of China and India today and boost the world economy by USD 15.7 trillion (Jain, 2024).

China will see the greatest economic gains from AI, with a 26% increase in GDP by 2030, followed by North America (14.5% increase), totaling USD 10.7 trillion.

Sizing the prize – Which regions gain the most from AI?



Source: PWC-Sizing the Price

This data shows that the upcoming competition between economically dominant global powers will be determined by the investment in AI and its competitive

approaches to operating the entire world through its digital regime.

In the Global South, AI has become an useful force that is changing healthcare, education, and the economy. AI technologies have made agricultural advancements possible in parts of the world like Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These advancements have made precision farming techniques possible which increase crop yields and resource efficiency. Additionally, AI-powered healthcare solutions have made treatment and diagnosis more accessible, especially in rural areas with inadequate medical infrastructure. With customized online platforms, AI has significantly increased access to educational resources in the field of education. Nonetheless, issues like the digital divide and the possibility of job loss highlight the necessity of inclusive AI regulations.

Geopolitics and AI

The most powerful governments will vie to control the world's most valuable resource while countries in the global South will be left behind. AI is not just another tool or weapon that can bring prestige, power, or wealth, it has the potential to enable a significant military and economic advantage over adversaries. Rightly or wrongly, the two players that matter most - China and the US both see AI development as a zero-sum game that will give the winner a decisive strategic edge in the decades to come (Lee, 2018).

From the vantage point of Washington and Beijing, the risk that the other side gains an advantage in AI outweighs any theoretical threat the technology may pose to society or their domestic political authority. As a result, both the US and Chinese governments are devoting enormous resources to developing AI capabilities while working to deprive each other of the inputs required for next-generation advances. Because of this zero-sum dynamic and a lack of trust on both sides, Beijing and Washington are more concerned with accelerating than slowing AI development (Ernst, 2020).

If that were not enough, by shifting the structure and balance of global power, AI complicates the very political context in which it is governed. Within countries, AI will empower those who wield it to surveil, deceive, and even control populations supercharging the collection and commercial use of personal data in democracies and sharpening the tools of repression authoritarian governments use to subdue their societies. Across countries, AI will be the focus of intense geopolitical competition.

National Security and Other Threats of AI

In upcoming future, AI supremacy will be a strategic objective of every government

for military power where global power is more focused on technological weapons rather than humans. AI supremacy will be a strategic goal for military power soon, with a focus on technological weapons rather than human ones. This is because a global power's repressive capabilities, economic potential, or military advantage may pose a greater threat to the national security of weaker nations.

AI is accelerating the spread of disinformation; it has been claimed that AI could enable automated cyberattacks at "machine speed". Chemists claimed that AI could create chemical weapons. Biologists have expressed interest in developing new pathogens organisms that cause disease in their hosts and bioweapons. AI could misidentify people or objects as targets, resulting in unintended death and destruction. AI's reasoning, which cannot be fully understood or explained, may lead military planners to make dangerous decisions (Lin, 2023).

Hence, some common AI threats to the global community include cybersecurity, legal issues, algorithmic bias, job displacement, privacy concerns, ethical dilemmas, data privacy, misinformation, disinformation, economic inequality, global catastrophic risk, power asymmetries and trust deficit.

National Security from Nepal's Perspective

Nepal should consider the following conditions from the perspective of national security.

Border Security: AI can be used for surveillance and monitoring, using sensors to detect unauthorized crossings and activities.

Cybersecurity: Weak cyber infrastructure of Nepal is prone to cyberattacks which will raise concerns about national security.

Military Modernization: AI-loaded military tools and weapons upgrade military capabilities, advanced training simulations and improved strategic planning.

Intelligence Gathering and Analysis: AI can help in gathering intelligence and analyzing data to identify potential, including extremist activities and cross-border terrorism threats.

Public Security: Countering deepfakes, hackings and cyberattacks.

National Interest: AI and Nepal

In terms of information and technology and its understanding level, Nepal is not far behind. However, in terms of infrastructure and technology plant development, Nepal is far behind the developed countries.

The Government of Nepal is still not taking the issues and implications of new technologies and the digital world, including AI, seriously, despite some efforts

in the name of ICT that are insufficient to deal with the current world of artificial intelligence.

The National Information Communication and Technology Policy, 2015 included ICT in education, research, health, agriculture, tourism, environment and natural resources, disaster preparedness, and ICT for women and youth (Government, 2015). Other campaign-based efforts aimed at securing the goals of sustainable development and stimulating economic growth in countries around the world include E-Governance, the concept of Digital Nepal, Digital Palikas, and the National Education Policy 2076, which also included technical education and ICT, but the term AI is not explicitly mentioned in any government-endorsed policy.

Even though some efforts have been made at the academic level to incorporate AI courses into the curriculum, Kathmandu University, Tribhuvan University, Pokhara University, and Purbanchal University appear to have AI courses in their respective branches of academia. Some efforts are also underway at the private sector and individual levels. Dr. Sameer Maskey, a US-based Nepali AI scientist, promoter of Fusemachines Inc. and an adjunct associate professor at Columbia University developed the first software robot in Nepal which is being used in e-commerce, trekking, airlines, hotels, hospitals, telecommunications, and government projects (Maskey, 2019).

Threats from AI to Nepal include the nation's reliance on remittances and the possibility of AI replacing skilled Nepali workers in developed nations which would be detrimental to the country's economy. Digital governance includes the ways it affects and influences job markets, digital functions organizations, digital markets, and electoral processes. Because less developed countries cannot invest in machine security mechanisms like other developed countries, AI can increase security threats in developing countries like Nepal.

Securing Nepal's National Interest through AI

Enhanced data analysis: Analyzing international trends, trade data, global economic patterns and such patterns would guide informed decisions.

Digital diplomacy: Through social media analysis, understanding global public opinion, diaspora, epistemology, and international audiences.

Climate change and environment policy: AI could help phenomenally regarding climate change impacts such as glacial retreat in the Himalayas.

Economic diplomacy: Identifying potential markets for exports by analyzing trade patterns.

Consular service: Streamlining visa processing and providing better service for natives and foreign nationals

Peacekeeping security: Providing logistical support, threat assessment and mission

planning to enhance the safety and efficiency of its peacekeepers.

Language translation: Removing language barriers for smooth diplomatic dialogue.

Monitor international commitments: Tracking and reporting the implementation of international treaties and agreements to ensure compliance and identify areas of attention.

Capacity building: Training diplomats in various skills, including negotiation, foreign language, and intercultural communications.

Conclusion

AI seems to pose both challenges and opportunities in this new digital era. From the perspective of international relations, it poses a significant threat to developing countries such as Nepal which have made insufficient investments in AI and technology. The global geopolitical order will change, as will the technological landscape, posing new challenges for non-skilled leaders. So political leaders must stay up to date on AI and new technology. The countries of the Global South should be aware of their technological rights and advocate for them to mitigate the gap between strong and weak countries

AI will be a major factor in terms of national security in the days ahead. Nepal should invest in technological infrastructure and expertise development, consider ethical and legal concerns about cybersecurity, analyze the global AI race, advocate for data sovereignty to minimize the digital divide and draft appropriate IT laws as soon as possible. It should also try to develop its data bank for reducing dependency on foreign data storage which could create more confidence in the IT sector of the country.

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Relevance of International Humanitarian Law in International Relations: National and International Contexts

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Abstract

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) holds significance within the realm of international relations which encompasses various disciplines such as international law, diplomacy, and interactions among national and international entities. The prevalence of over 100 armed conflicts underscores the imperative for parties involved in conflicts and other influential actors to comprehend IHL. In the face of ongoing armed confrontations worldwide, the continued relevance of IHL in shaping international relations becomes apparent. States must prioritize the promotion of respect for IHL to establish a robust international relations system. This article endeavors to explore the interconnectedness of IHL with international relations and assess its importance. The study will delve into the role and significance of IHL in the context of international relations, with a particular focus on Nepal, where the Ministry of Law and Justice assumes a leading and coordinating role in promoting IHL. The study involves an extensive review of pertinent literature on international humanitarian law and international relations, primarily sourced from online publications.

Keywords: International humanitarian law, international relations, united nations, international committee of the red cross, armed conflict, geneva conventions

Introduction

International relations refers to the study of interactions between sovereign states, as well as the roles of other actors, such as international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and individuals, in the global system. It is a multidisciplinary field that draws from political science, history, economics, sociology, law, security and other disciplines to analyze and understand the complex dynamics that shape the behavior of actors on the international stage. In short, the study of international relations is an attempt to explain behavior that occurs across

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the boundaries of states, the broader relationships of which such behavior is a part, and the institutions (private, state, nongovernmental, and intergovernmental) that oversee those interactions (University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2024). Diplomacy is a fundamental tool in international relations, involving negotiations, treaties, and agreements between states. The analysis of foreign policy decisions and strategies is crucial to understanding state behavior.

The structure of global order underwent significant transformations in the post-WWII period. Initially marked by a bipolar dynamic between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the world entered a phase of unipolarity after the collapse of the former in 1989, with the US emerging as the sole superpower. Subsequently, the landscape evolved into a complex multipolarity following the global financial crisis in 2008. Josef Borell, Vice President of the European Commission, describes the transition, “Over the last three decades, we have seen a rapid transformation in the distribution of power around the world. We went from a bipolar configuration between 1945 and 1989 to a unipolar configuration between 1989 and 2008, before entering what we today could call complex multipolarity” (Borrell, 2024).

The primary actors in international relations are sovereign states. The behavior of states, including their foreign policies, diplomacy, and interactions with other states, is a central focus of international relations. The distribution of power among states and the mechanisms through which states seek to influence each other are critical considerations. This includes military power, economic strength, and diplomatic influence. International Organizations like the United Nations and the World Bank play significant roles in international relations. These organizations facilitate cooperation, coordination, and governance on a global scale. Beyond states, INGOs, multinational corporations, international advocacy groups, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement contribute to shaping international relations. They influence global issues and policies alongside states.

The Constitution of Nepal states international law as an element of international relations in pursuing an independent foreign policy. International law includes IHL. The policy relating to international relations 51 (m) is enshrined in The Constitution of Nepal as - to conduct an independent foreign policy based on the Charter of the United Nations, non-alignment, principles of *Panchasheel*, international law and the norms of world peace, taking into consideration of the overall interest of the nation, while remaining active in safeguarding the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, and national interest of Nepal (Commission, 2015).

IHL, also known as the law of war or the law of armed conflict, plays a crucial role in international relations. It is a branch of public international law that consists of rules

that, in times of armed conflict, seek – for humanitarian reasons – to protect persons who are not or are no longer directly participating in the hostilities and to restrict means and methods of warfare. In other words, IHL consists of an international treaty or customary rules (i.e. rules emerging from state practice and followed out of a sense of obligation) that are specifically meant to resolve humanitarian issues arising directly from armed conflict, whether of an international or non-international character (ICRC, 2024).

IHL has two branches: the ‘Law of Geneva’, which is the body of rules that protects victims of armed conflicts, such as military personnel who are hors de combat and civilians who are not or are no longer directly participating in hostilities. The ‘Law of The Hague’, is the body of rules establishing the rights and obligations of belligerents in the conduct of hostilities, and which limits means and methods of warfare (ICRC, 2024).

Despite the aspirations of the people expressed through the 1945 United Nations Charter for a war-free world, it is still beyond reach (United Nations, 2024). Armed conflict is a reality of today. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), there are over 100 ongoing conflicts involving 60 states and over 100 non-state armed groups (ICRC Twitter, 2024). The recent increase in hostilities between Israel and Hamas, as well as the tensions between Russia and Ukraine, have not only affected the citizens of these nations but also had repercussions on other countries. IHL plays a crucial role during armed conflicts, obligating the involved parties to uphold its principles. Entities such as the ICRC and the UN work towards ensuring the proper adherence to IHL to alleviate human suffering in such situations. The ICRC remarked on the situation as “The international humanitarian law is the most complete and practical tool at our disposal to ensure the protection of civilians and to pave the way for de-escalation. ICRC urges the international community to ensure its full implementation. We are confronted with a catastrophic moral failing – one that the world must not tolerate. We cannot accept absolute hostility to the point of dehumanization of the other side” (ICRC, 2024).

Nepal amidst International Actors

Nepal holds geopolitical and strategic importance due to its unique geographical location and historical significance. Nepal is situated between two major powers, India and China. This crucial geostrategic position can influence the dynamics between these two Asian giants. Nepal is endowed with numerous rivers and water resources. The rivers originating in the Himalayas flow into India, contributing significantly to the water supply of northern India. This makes Nepal strategically important in terms of water cooperation and management. A stable Nepal is in the interest of neighboring countries and the broader region. Nepal needs to develop

a balanced foreign policy that addresses the legitimate concerns of both the neighboring countries.

In addition, climate change is recognized as a global challenge with implications for international relations. Countries are increasingly cooperating on climate-related issues, and environmental considerations are influencing diplomatic relations and resource competition. Nepal made a maximum effort to take advantage of the recent COP28 held in the United Arab Emirates. 198 parties have united behind the UAE consensus (COP28, 2024).

International Humanitarian Law and Nepal

IHL is a distinct legal framework, or *lex specialis*, designed to tackle the humanitarian aftermath of armed conflicts. It is utilized in conjunction with pertinent human rights instruments during the transitional justice process. The goals of transitional justice include uncovering the truth, prosecuting perpetrators, providing reparations to victims, and instituting reforms to prevent future abuses. It is a holistic approach that combines legal, social, and political mechanisms. Transitional justice mechanisms may include truth commissions, criminal prosecutions, reparations programs, institutional reforms, and memorialization efforts. These mechanisms aim to address past injustices and promote a more just and stable society during the period of transition.

Compliance with IHL reflects a commitment to certain ethical standards in the conduct of war. IHL contributes to accountability on the international stage. States that violate IHL may face legal consequences, including potential prosecutions by international tribunals. This accountability helps deter violations and reinforces the rule of law in international relations. IHL is closely connected to the broader human rights framework. It reinforces the idea that even in times of armed conflict, certain fundamental human rights must be respected and protected. Adherence to the rules of war can help de-escalate tensions, build trust between conflicting parties, and create conditions for peaceful resolution. IHL fosters international cooperation by providing a common set of rules that states can agree upon. The development and evolution of IHL contribute to the broader evolution of international norms and standards. It reflects the international community's ongoing efforts to adapt to changing circumstances, technologies, and challenges related to armed conflicts (ICRC, 2020).

The 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols form the core of international humanitarian law, which regulates the conduct of armed conflict and seeks to limit its effects. They protect people not taking part in hostilities and those who are no longer doing so. Article 1 common to the 1949 Four Geneva

Conventions obliges the states – “The High Contracting Parties undertake to respect and to ensure respect for the present Convention in all circumstances”. The rules of IHL are equally applicable to non-state armed groups. The growing prevalence and fragmentation of armed groups globally present a challenge to adhering to and complying with these rules (ICRC-War and Law, 2024).

All states, including Nepal, are signatories to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Nepal formally joined the Conventions on February 7, 1964. In addition to the Geneva Conventions, Nepal is a party to various other instruments related to IHL. These instruments include the 1925 Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous, or Other Gases and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, the 1972 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and their Destruction, the 1989 Child Rights Convention, the 1993 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and their Destruction, and the 2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (ICRC, Treaties and States Parties, 2023).

Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) ended its decade-long armed insurgency in 2006 through a comprehensive peace agreement with the government. Despite the cessation of hostilities, the transitional justice process remains incomplete, prompting international concern over the prolonged delay. Nepal, having recently emerged from the insurgency, could enhance its commitment to international humanitarian law principles by considering the ratification of key instruments such as the additional protocols of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Taking this step would not only contribute to concluding the transitional justice process but also bolster Nepal’s credibility in the realm of international relations.

In 2023, the ICRC estimated that 195 million persons live in areas under the full or fluid control of armed groups. There are more than 450 armed groups of humanitarian concern worldwide. Most of these armed groups are located in Africa (36% / 164 groups) whereas it is only 18% (83 groups) in Asia and the Pacific (ICRC, 2024).

The significance of IHL extends to United Nations peacekeepers, as highlighted by the issuance of the Secretary-General’s Bulletin in 1999, outlining the adherence of United Nations forces to IHL (UN Digital Library, 2024). This bulletin clarified the applicability of IHL to UN peacekeeping forces. Nepal ranks first globally in peacekeeping troop contribution. Presently, the Nepali Army deploys more than 6,000 troops worldwide in various peacekeeping missions. A thorough understanding

of IHL and its conscientious application by the troops is crucial. Police forces also require proper orientation on IHL. The UN has acknowledged and commended Nepal's substantial contribution to peacekeeping missions, elevating its standing in the realm of international relations (NA BPOTC, 2024).

To sum up, IHL serves as a critical component of international relations by addressing the humanitarian aspects of armed conflicts, promoting ethical conduct during wars, and contributing to the broader goals of peace, security, and respect for human rights in the international system.

Conclusion and Recommendations

International humanitarian law constitutes a significant factor to take into account in the practice of international relations by sovereign states. As a facet of public international law, IHL is acknowledged as a component of foreign policy and diplomacy. It is crucial to advocate for the understanding of IHL among state authorities, diplomats, and security forces, especially given the numerous conflict situations around the globe today. States should actively endorse fundamental rules of warfare before potential conflicts arise, contributing to a state of readiness that diminishes human suffering during wartime. Additionally, states are obligated to collaborate and cooperate to guarantee adherence to and respect for IHL.

The field of international relations is a diverse study that involves the interactions among states, as well as intergovernmental organizations such as the UN, along with both national and international entities. Within this interdisciplinary context, international humanitarian law plays a significant role. Given the prevalence of various forms of armed conflicts in numerous countries, IHL remains pertinent to international relations. States that are parties to the Geneva Conventions are urged to take a proactive stance in promoting IHL as a preventive measure. This preparedness is essential in minimizing harm and casualties in the event of an actual conflict. Nepal's enhanced ratification of IHL instruments, coupled with the successful conclusion of the transitional justice process, will positively shape Nepal's image in the realm of international relations.

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Historical Analysis of Nepal's International Relations from a Defence Perspective

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Abstract

Nepal has a track record of being one of the oldest ever sovereign and independent nations of the world. Today, Nepal's international relations is going through a critical and vulnerable phase. One of the main reasons for this may be that Nepal abruptly abandoned and stopped learning from the deeds of the founding heroes and has not been able to chart and steer an effective national policy strategy in its international relations. In the past, many of the rulers used to be kings and military generals and they had adopted hard power as their main instruments. Today, Nepal cannot think of hard power but rather soft power and smart power. At this point, it would be pertinent to reflect on Nepal's past international relations policy strategy so it may help to understand the value and role of national security policy strategy as an integral part of successful international relations in the future. This paper has tried to examine the international relations of contemporary Nepal from a defence perspective based on historical references.

Keywords: International relations, war and treaty, defence, small states, geopolitics

Introduction

International relations is a collection of national policy strategies on a wide range of issue mainly focused on diplomacy, defense, and development which are interrelated and interdependent (Center for Global Prosperity, 2010). The fundamental objective of international relations is not to cultivate enemies and hostile forces but to build strong external partnerships around the world and create a network of friends and allies. In this interdependent world, positive and constructive international ties are essential for the pursuit of a nation's interest like national security (safety and survival of a country) along with its political, economic, cultural, environmental and other related concerns (Kishan, 2002).

In the 21st century, Nepal has become a center of gravity because of China inching towards becoming a super-power and rival of the United States and the Western

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powers. Similarly, India has emerged as another great power and partner of the US and the West. A country like Nepal has a very limited alternative and choice as it is a landlocked country situated between two big and powerful neighbors India and China and the US sees its strategic interest as a solid and secure base to deal with China.

Importance of Size and Power

In international relations, the size and power of a nation is connected to its capability and influence. While being big is correlated with power, being small has been viewed as a handicap to state action, and even survival (Purlis, 2010). This bitter truth was articulated in the fifth century BC by Athenian scholar Thucydides who wrote, “The strong do what they have power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept” (Clive, 2016). Some states are left to obey the rules of the game because they are too weak to be taken seriously when the rules are negotiated.

Kenneth Waltz notes that a) power provides the means of maintaining one’s autonomy in the face of force that others wield, b) the more powerful enjoy wider margins of safety in dealing with the less powerful and have more to say about which games will be played and how. (Waltz, 1979). Jared Diamond postulates remarkable examples of Finland and its struggle for survival against its big powerful neighbor Russia and the Meiji Government of Japan on its development and prosperity by adopting advanced technology from the US and the West and, at the same time, preserving its old traditional identity, culture, tradition and civilization (Jared, 2019). All these factors lead to a question - can there be any optimism for small countries to survive against their big powerful neighbors?

Foundation Laid by Prithvi Narayan Shah

After King Prithivi Narayan Shah’s rise as the king of Gorkha in 1743, the principality began to grow as a military and political power which ultimately led to the unification of Nepal in 1769 (Sam, 2019). He showed great acumen in running the domestic and foreign policy. Former Minister for Foreign Affairs Ramesh Nath Pandey claims that contemporary Nepal has come under the radar of the compulsive nature of geopolitics and sharp contestation of world power between India, China and the US (Pandey, 2015).

In international relations, small states have a weaker part in an asymmetric relationship as they are unable to change the nature and functioning of the relationship (Steinmetz, 2010). Today, Nepal’s international relations is in a delicate and sensitive situation. Nepal is shrinking towards a narrow range of choices, actions and alternatives due to social, political and economic imbroglio. Nepal’s

credibility has eroded in the world of diplomacy and development. Nepal is under intense pressure to be used as the mouthpiece and diplomatic tool of big powers under the facade of developmental partnership.

International relations is determined by geopolitics. Besides geopolitical location, there are people, leaders and national policy strategies that are equally vital for an improved international relation. Among these, geographical location and immediate neighbors cannot change. Nevertheless, a country can bring about changes in other factors that are dynamic like political stability, law and order and external threats.

According to Nepali historian and diplomat, late Rishikesh Shaha, "The geostrategic location of Nepal in the trans-Himalayan area has enabled it to serve as a bridge between the two vast land areas of Asian civilization - India and China - which represent two distinct worlds of thought and culture (Kumar, 2017). This is the crux of the matter of Nepal's international relations at present too. He reiterates, "Comparatively, China and India are each more than twenty times bigger in size and more than forty times larger in population. Like Mongolia, Botswana, Lesotho, and Malawi, Nepal is heavily dependent on one country alone for trade and transit facilities. Nepal is a completely landlocked country. The history of Nepal's international relations begins with the military conquest and unification of Nepal (Stiller, 1973).

Since King Prithivi Narayan Shah consolidated Nepal in 1769, he retained and adapted all old systems and values; improved and modified to make Nepal fit and capable to face the growing power of the East India Company. But his successors could not catch up with his dynamism and lost trade relationship with Tibet in the north aggravating its neighbors in the south with military campaigns undermining diplomatic maneuvers.

The result was the Nepal-Tibet trade dispute and Regent Bahadur Shah's invasion of Tibet in 1788 which dragged China militarily to support the Tibetan forces (Basnyat, 2023).

Turning Point

The war between Nepal and the East India Company in 1814-16 and the Treaty of Sugauli (1816) were the major turning points of Nepal's international relations. Nepal has struggled to adjust and search for new goals after that deprivation, devastation and humiliating defeat. Historian Ludwig F. Stiller interpreted it as the beginning rather than an end to Nepal's time of trouble (Ludwig, 2018). Despite, that, Stiller opines, the Gorkha troops gave an excellent account of themselves before being forced to the negotiation table. Nepal lost one-third of its territory; however, it enhanced its prestige as fighting men and preserved its heritage of independence thereby promoting the growing sense of Nepali nationalism (Whelpton, 1987). The

actual cause of the war was not the Nepali ambition to go to war but the failure of the Joint Border Commission of 1813 to work out the terms of settlement which both warring parties had agreed for a peaceful settlement that would have provided an ideal solution for both governments. In 1814, when the Governor General of the East India Company issued a letter challenging the Nepali government, *Mukhtiyar* (the equivalent of a prime minister) Bhimsen Thapa boldly accepted it which initiated the war (Whelpton, 1987).

These borderlands were valuable for Nepal because they were the real reward of their conquests. Many parts of the Terai land were given as rewards to the rulers, nobles and military commanders during the unification campaigns. It was also essential and critical for Nepali commanders to possess control over the Terai for the continuation of the unity of Nepal. Without it, Nepal would have become fragmented into mini-states

Neither the amputation of the western provinces of greater Nepal nor the psychic shock of defeat had seriously weakened the unity of Nepal proper. However, it was a blow to the prestige of Nepal, and it therefore had a significance all its own (Stiller, 2018).

Paradigm Shift During the Rana Rule

Thirty years after the war, the Nepali court (government) was divided into pro-and-anti British East India Company. During that period, the British resident representative, especially Brian Hodgson, played the most crucial role in intervening and subverting domestic politics. Ultimately, numerous experienced courtiers and commanders were massacred by the new would-be ruler Jung Bahadur Rana during a bloody coup known as the ‘Kot Massacre’ in September 1846. That changed the entire course of Nepali history for the next 104 years.

The new Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief and later *Sri Teen Maharaj* General Junga Bahadur Rana, was an autocrat, but a realist military commander and a statesman. He realized that the best course of action for him and his country would be to remain on friendly terms with the British. He visited England and France in 1850 to gain confidence and deepen his relationship as the king’s ambassador. He was intelligent and smart enough to cultivate trust and friendship with the British rulers and also acquired first-hand knowledge of the ways, policies, strengths and resources of European powers. Militarily, he took advantage of Chinese preoccupation with the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) and the British engagement in the Crimean War (1854); attacked Tibet to acquire territorial and commercial concession and succeeded in signing a treaty on March 24, 1856. According to the Treaty the Tibetan Government was obliged to: 1. Pay an annual tribute of 1000 rupees to Nepal; 2. the children born out of marriages between Nepalis and Tibetans - sons would belong to Nepal and daughters to Tibet; 3. More importantly, any legal

disputes in which Nepali were involved were to be decided only in the presence of a Nepali representative at Lhasa (Stiller, 2018).

When the Sepoy mutiny broke out in Meerut, India, Jung Bahadur volunteered and led nine thousand Nepali troops on December 10, 1857. In return, he successfully acquired back some of the lost territories during the 1814-16 war that comprised four districts of present Nepal – Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur called the *Naya Muluk*. Despite their oligarchic and autocratic military rule, the Rana rulers were successful in retaining Nepal's sovereignty and independence while most of the Indian states were under British colonial rule. Later Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher visited India during which the British Viceroy requested him support Colonel Francis Younghusband's expedition to Lhasa overriding Nepal's 1856 security pact with China. British troops prevented Russian dominance over Tibet and maintained Nepal's 'buffer state' position. He invited King George V of the United Kingdom to Nepal in 1911 and also hosted Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1921 to lay the groundwork for his ultimate aim of gaining Nepal a sovereign status in 2023 (SJB, 2017).

During the First World War, Nepal sent six regiments of Nepali army contingents and an additional 8000 in 1917. Apart from this, there were around 26,000 Nepali already serving in the Indian Gorkha Regiments. Hence, the total number of men who left Nepal for military purposes exceeded 2,00,000 from a total population of five million. The greatest achievement during the rule of Chandra Shumsher was the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Nepal and Britain (SJB, 2017). During World War II (1939-1945), Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher sent thousands of Nepali troops in aid of Britain (Shaha, 2001).

Nepal's crucial geopolitical location has always been well-known. Helen Sexton, the Vice Consul at the Consulate General in Calcutta at that time noted, "The Nepalese leaders may fear that Russian influence will be extended in this area after the war and possibly reach Nepal". She further opined, "Nepal must be watching the current turn of events and evaluating her position. When this withdrawal takes place, the British will have little interest in Nepal in relationship to India. However, (the British Government) and the U.S. Government will have a very definite interest in establishing diplomatic representations in Kathmandu because of Nepal's strategic position in relation to Russia and China" (Shaha, 2001).

Restoration of Democracy to Present

Before the British left India after its independence, they divided the Gurkha Soldiers between Great Britain and India. Nepal and India also signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1950. While the British left, the US showed interest in Nepal and

both the countries established diplomatic relations. A new Independent India under the dynamic leadership of its Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru started to play a key role in the making of the new democratic government of Nepal. During the premiership of Matrika Prasad Koirala, the Indian Military Mission was invited, and 18 northern border posts of Nepal were manned jointly by the Indian and Nepali armies (Cowan, 2015).

Direct engagement of the Nepali Army came to the fore during the Khampa Movement in the 1960s in the Mustang region of Nepal. It was pacified by the Nepali Army through its disarming mission in July 1974 (Basnet, 2020). Similarly, the Nepali Army was mobilized to pacify the armed revolt by the banned Nepali Congress in 1962 (Hoftun, 1999). When Nepal bought a few anti-aircraft guns from China in 1989, India imposed a blockade on Nepal. The imbroglio came to an end when the Partyless Panchayat system was abolished and the old two-pillar system of governance with King in the Parliament was restored in 1990 (Peace, 1990).

In 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) launched, what became a decade-long insurgency, against the Nepali government and the monarchy. The government and CPN (Maoist) signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006, and a special political mission United Nations Mission to Nepal (2007-2011) arrived in Nepal for the management of arms and armies (UNMIN, 2010). The Peoples Movement of 2006 led to the end of the centuries-old monarchy when the country was declared a republic in 2008 (Giri, 2021).

Conclusion

Historically, Nepal's army and other security agencies have played a major role in safeguarding the country's independence and sovereignty. The political change of 1990 brought the then Royal Nepalese Army and Nepal Police under scrutiny to bring them under civilian control. The Comprehensive Peace Treaty of 2006 prioritized this to be one of the prime agendas. The Constitution of Nepal has envisaged to divide the Nepal Police into three tiers. Various such experiments related to the country's defence forces have been made, but the government seems to be without any long-term strategic planning, coordination and direction. These have ultimately given foreign interest groups to play more in Nepal's defence and diplomacy realms which are going to be more complex and critical in the coming days.

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Need for Revitalization in Nepal's Role at the United Nations and Non-Aligned Movement

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Abstract

The formulation, execution and promotion of foreign policy to safeguard its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and promote relations for mutual benefit with neighboring and other friendly countries for enhancing national image abroad is the responsibility of Nepal's government. Garnering support for any scheme of national interest by way of developing strategic foreign policy and implementing it through diplomatic maneuvers to negotiate with other countries in response to the changing context is also its duty. Each country has its way of managing its international relations as the changes in world affairs are dynamic with time. Nepal is one of the oldest countries in the world where no foreign flag is ever flown. It has been adopting its foreign policy mainly in line with the vision of the founder of the nation, late King Prithvi Narayan Shah the great who foresaw the geopolitical implications, challenges and opportunities and had emphasized the need for a carefully formulated strategy in running foreign affairs. Since the world has been witnessing changes at a fast speed, Nepal needs to be more equipped as the current performance appears less result-oriented in comparison with the past ones. Since Nepal's representation at the United Nations and Non-aligned Movement are considered suitable venues for pleading and presenting the country's perspectives, the government of Nepal needs better efforts than what is prevailing at present.

Keywords: Nepal, United Nations, Non-aligned Movement, foreign policy, diplomacy

Background

Every nation in the world has been construing itself as a member of the community of the nations in one way or another irrespective of its geographical size, location, economic and military strength, demographic dynamics, and overall influence. Both rich and poor countries have been adhering rationale of the principle of the necessity of mutuality among themselves. The interdependence between the states

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has been inspiring mutual interactions and cooperation among nations. Depending on the needs and interests as per the demand of time and geopolitical location, all the countries have been responding to the globally changing dynamics in managing their relations with the other countries in response to the call of their national requirement and foreign policy. Nepal is not an exception to this already established universal phenomenon though the impact and result as to how much further success would have been achieved and how the failures that could have been skipped under different regimes as well as the disposable national strength and maneuvering capacity of the country has varied significantly from the history till present.

Nepal's response to the changing patterns in international affairs concerns firstly the neighborhood affairs further extending to regional and global changes that have an impact on the domestic front. These factors are briefly discussed in this write-up by tracing some historical happenings to the ongoing trends globally and nationally by the political authorities under the different political systems. Simultaneously it highlights Nepal's involvement with the UN and NAM world bodies as the key forums for presenting Nepal's viewpoints as both a contributor and beneficiary as its member state as well as emphasizing the need for revitalizing its strength in diplomacy like in the past.

Rationale of the United Nations

Though some concrete efforts among the nations towards moving on collectively and collaboratively were on since early time, the fruits of those endeavors came to bear the desired result formally from the establishment of the League of Nations (LoN) and more so after the advent of the United Nations after its formation in 1945. The establishment of the erstwhile LoN was attributed to the end of World War I (1914-1918) although it could not continue its longevity for more than two decades since the LoN was limited to the 'high power nations'. The UN is about to complete seven decades of its birth. It is coined as the organization of the 'peoples of the world' that came into existence after the termination of World War II (1939-1944) (The UN Charter, 1945).

The advent of the UN since its formation to date, therefore, stands as an instrument in bringing many countries together in one common forum for deliberation on world peace and security, socioeconomic development, and humanitarian issues in pursuance. Its effectiveness is often debated since the keys are at the hands of the five dominant nations equipped with veto power, namely, The United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia and China. Every country irrespective of its size and strength attaches high importance to the United Nations (Kissinger, 1973). To this end, the UN has been an appropriate venue wherein all the member states

underline their point of view on the changing global scenario reflecting their stand including Nepal being admitted to the world body as its 75th member on December 14, 1955 (Shrestha, 2022).

Nepal's Representation at the United Nations

The statements made by Nepal's representatives and high-ranking leaders including the head of the state and the government in the UN for many years to date have a 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 reentrance to the UN right from Nepal's first participation in 1956 to her admission in 1971 has remained one of the key factors for China's friendly gestures towards Nepal in addition to other factors like the 'One-China' policy. Likewise, Nepal and its immediate southern neighbor India share many things in common on various agendas that have effects on maintaining international relations at bilateral, regional or global levels.

Nepal made a captivating statement before the UN General Assembly first time in 1956 just 10 months after its admittance to this world body on December 14, 1955. The then foreign minister Chuda Prasad Sharma had underlined Nepal's stand on global affairs emphasizing the country's nonaligned foreign policy which was in line with the declaration of the first Afro-Asian Summit based on the five principles coined as *Panchasheel*. His statement also put forth strong emphasis on the reentry of the People's Republic of China and Japan into the UN. The view was reiterated by Nepal's first elected prime minister B. P. Koirala at the 15th UN General Assembly in 1960. Similarly, late King Mahendra reinforced Nepal's plead for rightful reentry of China while addressing the UN General Assembly's special session in 1967. China was ultimately readmitted to the UN in 1971. King Mahendra's remark that "Only the alternative to the United Nations is a stronger United Nations" was well hailed both in the UN corridor and beyond (Upadhyaya, 2022).

Nepal's glorious victory as a non-permanent UN Security Council (SC) member twice in 1969-71 and 1989-91 exemplifies the remarkable role played by its leaders and diplomats. The occasions were a great pride for Nepal which availed it with opportunities to chair the SC meetings in an alphabetical order (Rastriya Samachar Samiti, 2021). That recognition was followed by Nepal winning many other UN Committee elections. The selection of Nepal's first permanent representative to the UN, Rishikesh Shaha, as chairman of the investigation commission constituted by the UN to find out possible causes and circumstances leading to the air crash and death of second UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and others, was a significant recognition of Nepal in the UN within less than five years of its

membership (Karki, 2021). The visits of the seven UN Secretaries-General except for Trygve Lie of Norway (Nepal was not a UN member during his tenure) and Boutros Boutros Ghali of Egypt indicate the UN's interest and support for Nepal.

Nepal has been engaged in the UN's peacekeeping mission by sending her army, police and armed police personnel to different conflict-stricken countries. It currently ranks as the largest contributor of peacekeeping troops to the UN in support of its endeavor for global peace and security (DC Nepal, 2021).

Nepal's effectiveness in its performance at the UN in recent years appears questionable in comparison with past achievements, especially in the UN elections of major importance. Nepal's failure to win the two elections, namely for the presidency of the UN General Assembly and a nonpermanent UN Security Council seat appeared to be a humiliating experience as a result of its diplomatic inefficiencies. However, Nepal did not return empty in the other two elections which included the election for a seat each in the UN Economic and Social Council and the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Commission (Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations , 2020). Despite some failures to achieve the desired goals, the UN has been serving as a key platform for Nepal to display the country's policy viewpoint on major global and regional issues of concern.

The Non-Aligned Movement

Since the early 1950s, the voice of nonalignment was raised by the leaders and diplomats of countries who preferred to remain neutral in the conflict among the other countries. It started taking shape from the summit of the first Afro-Asian countries held in Bandung of Indonesia in April 1955 which was participated by many of the newly independent nations of these two continents from the colonial powers and also those countries like Nepal who were never colonized (Britannica, 2023). However, it was at the first summit Yugoslavian capital Belgrade in September 1961 that the nonaligned and neutral group consisting of 25 countries formally came into existence.

Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Indonesian President Sukarno, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Yugoslavian President Josip Broz Tito vigorously engineered the pioneering stage of the nonaligned movement. Today the NAM stands as the second largest world body after the United Nations consisting of 120 member states. The NAM countries constitute 55 percent of the whole world's population though its strength and effectiveness are not out of debate currently from what was there in the earlier period (Insight Asia, 2024).

Since its inception, the NAM has passed through different phases in global affairs. 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 has turned out to be quite different from the vision and mission envisaged by the main founders. The tragedy is that the successors of those founding countries are not putting their required efforts into enhancing the strength of the NAM. There is a need for a more effective and dynamic NAM in response to the present developments in the international order and its possible consequences in the future. The NAM should also launch concrete efforts to garner at least moral support from both the US and China to revitalize the movement. The other feasibility is the creation of a situation in which both the US and China would compete with each other to get confidence and support from the NAM countries.

Nepal's Involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement

Nepal has been continuously advocating and campaigning for the rationale of a stronger and result-oriented NAM since the inception of this body. Nepal has participated in all the NAM conferences starting from the first in Belgrade to the 19th in Kampala, Uganda recently.

Since Nepal's affiliation to the NAM through 19 summits, three summits were led by late King Mahendra, six by late King Birendra and the rest ten by different prime ministers. All the NAM summits have been very appropriate platforms for Nepal to articulate 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 to the cause of the NAM aimed at enhancing better cooperation amongst the member states, promoting the spirit of disarmament, strengthening and improving global peace and security and not being aligned to or a part of any military bloc or pact.

The NAM Summit in Belgrade in 1961 was such an event for Nepal in which the late King Mahendra led Nepal's delegation for the first time abroad to a multilateral forum. From that time onward, Nepal went on to occupy a pivotal role in the nonalignment movement as one of its founding members (Thapa, 2022). In his first participation leading the Nepali delegation at the fourth NAM summit held in Algiers in September 1973, late King Birendra underlined Nepal's unflinching commitment to the NAM simultaneously reflecting Nepal's view on the global situation that had prevailed at that time. He expressed optimistic 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 situation turned into an amicable understanding of what King Birendra had hoped in 1973 (Thapa, 2023).

Conclusion

Nepal's response to the changing dynamics in the relationship among the nations including neighboring countries and other many friendly countries has been displayed bilaterally, regionally and through representations in the UN and NAM. Nepal needs to play a better role in the UN, NAM and other regional and multilateral forums. These multilateral forums have been proven to be the most suitable for Nepal to promote the nation's image and let other countries know its viewpoints on the existing global issues. However, Nepal needs to step up its efforts and expertise at the venues of both the UN and NAM. This is especially important when things in the international arena are witnessing both drastic and fast-paced changes that demand a strategic vision equipped with more diplomatic acumen, expertise and experience on the part of leaders and diplomats of Nepal. Only through revitalization and commitment will they be capable of moving forward in the changing context for promoting and protecting the national interest.

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Development and Bilateral

State of Governance, Development and Diplomacy in Republic Nepal

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Abstract

A new constitution was promulgated in 2015. There are several major problems in the execution of the constitution in achieving the aspired goals. It excludes the participation of large sections of society. All three branches of government, the executive, legislative and judiciary, lack coordination, autonomy, and effectiveness in carrying out their respective duties. They are marred by corruption, nepotism, and non-adherence to the rules, norms and values that govern them. The economy is in shambles with all the key economic indicators showing negative trends. The economy, development works and delivery of basic needs/services are in dire need of major improvement. Over the years, development strategy and priority have prevented the economy from being self-reliant and sustainable. Nepal's foreign policy execution in recent years has become more and more unbalanced and ineffective threatening its autonomy, independence, sovereignty and non-aligned policy. The need of the day is a system that promotes unity and inclusiveness of all sections of society.

Keywords: Governance, development, economy, foreign policy, corruption

Brief Review of Political Change and New Constitution

Nepal's new constitution after the political change was promulgated in 2015. The guiding principle clearly emphasizes an all-inclusive social democracy amendable for reforms from time to time. Based on the experience so far, there seem to be several major problems in the execution and achieving the aspired goals. Some of the major issues of contention include federalism (three tiers of government), the provision of proportionate representation, secularism and the abolition of constitutional monarchy. In addition, conflicting clauses, implementation with disregard to its meaning and spirit and unconstitutional decisions of the governments in power have raised serious questions about the appropriates of the system and its implementation (Shrestha, 2017).

The provincial governments have proven to be ineffective, unaffordable and useless to decentralized service delivery. They have become white elephant outfits and very expensive to Nepal's economy and social resources except for creating unproductive centers for employment of political cadres and relatives of leaders. It

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is better to strengthen the capacity of local governments to improve the delivery of basic services to people instead of retaining the provincial structure given the weak economy.

Likewise, the 60:40 provision for proportionate representation in the name of inclusion will not yield a majority of any single party and is being misused to fulfill the quota for selecting the ones close to leaders rather than qualified persons from disadvantaged/under-represented who cannot run expensive elections. The Upper House is intended for the representation of professionals and disadvantaged with inter-/national reputes. Hence the criteria for selection should be revised. The implementation of secularism has started creating religious and ethnic disturbances in a peaceful and harmonious co-existing society given the fact that Nepal has always been a country tolerant to all religions.

All three branches of government - the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary lack coordination, autonomy and effectiveness in carrying out their respective duties due to interference from the Executive branch resulting in excessive institutionalized corruption as well as misuse of power and authority. Hence checks and balances, accountability and transparency in a functioning democracy are grossly missing. Excessive levels of corruption (financial, resources, misuse of authority/power, lack of rule of law) all have posed serious threats to good governance, sustainable development and service delivery (Shrestha, 2021).

Governance

Bureaucracy is the permanent form of government to execute policies and programs benefitting people. However, over the years, it has gradually become less effective marred by institutionalized corruption (Nepal is among the most corrupt), inefficient/oversized, unaccountable and non-transparent (The Kathmandu Post, 2023). Instead of facilitating development and basic services efficiently to the people on time, it has become more controlling and bureaucratic.

Too many layers of government (federal, provincial and local) have raised serious issues of affordability, relevance, misuse of resources and corruption. There is no justification (political, economic, or administrative) for the provincial governments in the disguise of decentralization of power. Instead, local capacity needs to be built to deliver services to people more effectively and on time (NOUS, 2019).

Democratic Institutions

All three founding pillars of democracy, the executive, legislative and judiciary are not functioning as mandated and expected. They are marred by corruption, nepotism, and non-adherence to the rules, norms and values that govern them. Neither can they perform a check and balance mechanism nor can they coordinate to safeguard the constitution.

The same is true with political institutions (parties) due to vested individual/party

interest above national interest, incompetency, and lack of democratic values/norms/practice. Inter and intra-party conflict for power gains has raised serious questions about their relevance. Independent individual candidates (capable, trustworthy) winning the local elections in a few places despite odds against (money, muscle and power of the big parties) is a good example of people's dissatisfaction with the establishment. More capable and committed youths need to reach leadership positions via the coming national elections.

Political Leaders and Their Moral Values

Many leaders display low levels of moral standards, often incompetent/unqualified, corrupt, dishonest and unaccountable to people. They promise everything to woo the voters and deliver very little or nothing and make all kinds of excuses. People are beginning not to trust and rely on them (Mitchell, 2019). More and more are looking for better alternatives.

Corruption Control

Earlier efforts by the present government to curb high-level institutionalized corruption relating to Bhutanese refugees, illegal smuggling of gold into the country and the Lalita Niwas land scam were all very encouraging. Over the years, leaders and their allies and relatives have squandered billions in corruption. People at large supported and hoped corruption at all levels would be brought to book under the law and penalized accordingly (Cebollero, 2022). However, with the involvement of senior politicians, legal actions against them seem to have fizzled.

Economy

The economy is in shambles with all the key economic indicators showing negative trends leading to lowest economic growth, deficit financing, rising trade deficit, rising inflation (double digit), wrong policy and programs (distributive and consumptive), uncontrolled external dependency, unproductive investment, and oversized budget (only less than 40 percent development budget spent that also recklessly towards the end of the fiscal year) (Giles, 2023). Budget making has been tampered with by vested interest groups questioning the legality and validity of the budget resulting in the forced resignation of the then finance minister.

Over the years, development strategy and priority have prevented the economy from being self-reliant and sustainable. Past strategies of import substitution and export promotion based on Nepal's comparative and competitive advantages have been replaced by layers of middlemen exploiting both the producers and consumers. This needs to be reversed as soon as possible.

Although there have been some improvements in some indicators of the economy in terms of increased remittance in recent days, inflation, unemployment, deficit financing and alarming foreign debt have reduced the purchasing power of basic needs of the general public (Dhakal, 2023). Most affected are the small and medium

enterprises (SMEs) facing high interest, low demand and high cost of production and lack of coordination between fiscal and monetary policies. SMEs are the backbone of the Nepali economy. Nepal's economy cannot be considered improving especially when the constitutional guideline suggests Nepal to be a social democracy aiming for prosperity and happiness for all (Shrestha, 2020). These issues have been raised by various experts over the last few years but no governments have seriously addressed this and we are now witnessing the devastating effect on the socio-economic situation of the masses.

The spirit and guidelines of the constitution have not been followed, although it has some fundamental defects e.g. unjustified provincial governments and a proportional election system have made administrative costs unaffordable. In addition, the monopolistic/oligopolistic behavior of big business/ banking, their influence on political leadership and lack of effective monitoring are mainly responsible for the deteriorating state of the economy. This has contributed to Nepal being the most corrupt and declared the poorest in Asia (Neupane, 2023).

The prices of basic commodities have skyrocketed. Market monitoring and price/ quality checking regulations by the government are ineffective. Likewise, devastating damages to life and property due to the earthquake in Karnali Province and other natural disasters have made the situation worse. Although Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's timely initiative and leadership were commendable in mobilizing resources from home and abroad, delays in rescue, relief and rehabilitation of the most affected have caused major concern. This shows Nepal's readiness for disaster preparedness and management is still very inadequate to minimize further damage.

Social sectors such as health and education services are suffering from quality, inadequateness, affordability and lack of employment opportunity resulting in massive outmigration of youths have caused a big loss to the country's economy (Das, 2023). If uncontrolled in time by creating domestic opportunity, the country may lose skilled/productive manpower affecting development and scarce resources.

The economy, development and delivery of basic needs/services are in dire need of major improvement. Most challenging is improved employment, domestic production, access to affordable credit (especially for SMEs), cost-pushes inflation, supply of basic needs and affordability. Likewise, institutionalized corruption, bad governance, social equality/ equity and increasing foreign interference in domestic issues have raised serious questions about the status of sovereign, independent, and self-reliant Nepal. Therefore, the country needs tangible, results-oriented, and doable programs to address these issues.

Foreign Policy and International Relations

Inconsistent foreign policy, incompetent and inefficient foreign policy execution

mechanisms (MoFA, advisors and missions abroad) and increasing foreign interference have turned Nepal into a playground. Lack of 'Nepal First' approach, diplomatic acumen to negotiate for Nepal's benefit and low levels of confidence among leaders and Nepali diplomats have eroded Nepal's international credibility threatening its geo-political and strategic importance in the changing global order (Shrestha, 2022).

Nepal's foreign policy execution in recent years has become more and more unbalanced, and ineffective threatening its autonomy, independence, sovereignty and non-aligned policy. It is advisable now to declare Nepal as a 'Zone of Peace' (which was supported by 116 countries during King Birendra's call) to avoid it being potentially a battleground for great powers (Nepal Page, 2020). Lessons need to be learned from the situation of Sikkim, Afghanistan and Ukraine.

In the wake of Nepal's failing standing in international relations, recent high-level visits by the prime minister to India, the United Nations and China have uplifted Nepal's image to some degree (Asia Society, 2023). His delivery at the UN and bilateral meetings with counterparts in India and China were noteworthy to uplift Nepal's image. Although the achievements are more intangible, the responses from counterparts are positive and respectful. In that sense, the visits were quite successful and timely. The UN Secretary General's four-day official visit to Nepal and his address to the joint session of the parliament with a focus on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, climate change and socio-economic development of Nepal were assuring and is a testimonial to a successful multilateralism (Guterres, 2023).

The government needs to follow up with result-oriented concrete programs to benefit from such cooperation. Both the government and opposition should be unanimous and not backbiting each other regarding Nepal's development and international cooperation. If such uncertainty, under-development and corruption persist, there will be ample ground for external players to interfere and take advantage of Nepal's geopolitical vulnerabilities. Nepal needs to navigate its international relations with development partners in a more balanced and effective way to secure and preserve its national interests otherwise face the consequences of losing sovereignty and independence.

Conclusion

Nepal's political and socio-economic situation is facing serious problems. People's apathy, frustration and anger towards leaders and the system are turning into a revolt stage. The need of the day is a system that promotes national unity inclusive of all sections and beliefs of society. If leaders do not reform in time for a systemic change, public protest/revolt for regime change is inevitable. The political leadership needs to be aware and take necessary actions in time before it is too late as there is a limit to people's tolerance and complacency.

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The Agnipath Scheme of the Government of India: A Dilemma for Nepal

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Abstract

The Agnipath Scheme was unveiled by the Government of India on June 14, 2022. It plans to recruit *Agniveers* for a period of four years, after which only 25 percent would be retained in the service, and the rest would be demobilized with an amount of INR 1.17 million. The laid-off *Agniveers* will not be entitled to pension and other benefits provided for defence pensioners. This plan mainly aims at lowering the average age of the Indian military and reducing defence expenditure. The introduction of the new scheme has put Nepal into a dilemma as to whether or not to allow its citizens to join the Indian Army as provisioned by the 1947 Tripartite Agreement. This is a complex issue and needs to be analyzed from economic, social, political, diplomatic and security perspectives before making a decision. There are pros and cons on either side. Therefore, a dispassionate and pragmatic decision needs to be taken following in-depth discussions and analyses.

Keywords: Agnipath scheme, tripartite agreement, defence, treaty, gorkha recruitment

Introduction

The Government of India announced the Agnipath Scheme on 14 June 2022. It would apply to all of the three services of the armed forces (army, air force and navy). Under the Scheme, all new entrants (called *Agniveer*) would be recruited for a period of four years. After four years, one-fourth (25 per cent) of the *Agniveers* would be retained in the service as regulars, and three-fourths (75 per cent) would be demobilized and sent home with a fixed amount of money deposited in the 'Sevanidhi package'. The age limit to be enrolled under the Agnipath Scheme would be from 17.5 to 21 years (The Indian Express, 2022).

As announced by the Government of India, the monthly pay for the *Agniveers* would be INR 30 thousand for the first year of service, 33 thousand for the second year, 36 thousand five hundred for the third year and 40 thousand for the fourth

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year. Out of this amount, an amount of 9 to 12 thousand (9 thousand in the 1st year to 12 thousand in the fourth year) would be deducted and an equivalent amount would be contributed by the Government of India (Arora, 2023). This amount would be deposited into the “Sevanidhi account”. After four years, the demobilized *Agniveers* would receive a perk of INR 11.71 lakh, which constitutes the amount contributed by the *Agniveers*, the government, and the interests accrued from the Sevanidhi account. Such *Agniveers* would not qualify for a pension, nor other welfare services arranged by the Government of India for its defence pensioners such as the Ex-servicemen Health Scheme (ECHS) or facility of purchases from the military’s Canteen Stores Department (CSD). Nor will they be accorded the “ex-servicemen” status (Drishtiias, 2023).

There seem to be two major triggers for the Agnipath Scheme. The first is the preference for a “more youthful military” to deal with the country’s security threats. Several expert committees and commissions have recommended making the military more youthful. It may be noted that the present average age of the Indian military is 32-33 years as compared to such age in some other countries (26-27 years in the United States, United Kingdom, France, Israel, Russia and China) (Kaushal, 2023). By 2044, when all the current regulars retire, the average age of the Indian military may come down to around 27 years.

The second justification could be financial. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is quoted as having said, “We never see the army from the point of view of savings”. Behera and Kaushal, however, have estimated that through the Agnipath Scheme, the Government of India could save up to INR 15463 crore (Kaushal, 2023).

The Scheme invited public ire after its announcement resulted in violent protests and demonstrations in various parts of India. Some veterans questioned the scheme itself. Political leaders, especially in the opposition, criticized the decision of the Government. Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the Congress Party, slammed the government for making such a decision. In a post on Instagram, Gandhi wrote: “The government has destroyed the dreams of countless youths by canceling the permanent recruitment process of the Army and the Indian Air Force under the guise of the *Agniveer* scheme, which was brought in to provide ‘temporary recruitment’,” (The Economic Times, 23 December 2023). General M. M. Naravane, the Indian Army chief during the unveiling of the Scheme, is reported as having written in his memoir that the Agnipath Scheme came as a surprise for the Indian air force and the Navy, like a “bolt from the blue” (The Wire, 2023).

Whatever the initial reactions and protests against the scheme, the Government of India has clarified that the scheme would not be withdrawn. India’s National Security Advisor Ajit Doval said that there was “no question of rollback of Agnipath

scheme; government's move is not a knee-jerk reaction.” (Times T. E., 2022). The initial public wrath has by now largely receded, and the scheme has come into implementation as planned.

The Agnipath Scheme and Nepal

The Agnipath Scheme has become a subject of debate in Nepal. Around 32 thousand Nepali citizens are serving in the Indian Army (Embassy of India, Kathmandu, 2024). The 1947 tripartite Memorandum of Agreement between Nepal, India and the UK provides the legal basis for Indian and the British Army to recruit Nepali citizens. The Government of Nepal had approached the British Government for a revision of the 1947 agreement, but no such proposal has been made with India.

Nepalis have been serving in the Indian Army since 1815. The East India Company rulers were highly impressed by the bravery and war skills of the Nepalis during the 1814-15 Nepal-British India war. They recruited about 5000 Nepali soldiers and made them fight alongside other Indian soldiers in Nepal (Pathak, 2022). The loyalty of these Nepali soldiers impressed the British, and they continued hiring Nepalis for their army in India. After the independence of India in August 1947, a tripartite agreement was signed between Nepal, India and the UK on November 9, 1947. Article 4 of the Memorandum of Agreement says “The Government of Nepal...hereby signify their agreement to the employment of Gorkha troops in the armies of the United Kingdom and of India” (Bhasin, 1994). India and the UK still refer to this agreement while talking about Nepali soldiers in their armies (India, 2024). The Government of Nepal on February 12, 2020, officially requested the UK Government for a review of the 1947 tripartite agreement (The Kathmandu Post, 17 February 2020). Similarly, former Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali is quoted as having said that the Gorkha recruitment was “a legacy from the past” and terming the 1947 tripartite agreement “redundant” (Pathak, 2022).

After the Agnipath Scheme came into implementation, an Indian recruiting team reached Butwal in Nepal to select Nepali candidates for the Indian army (Ethirajan, 2023). The Government of Nepal asked the Indian side to suspend the process for the time being. Nepal's Foreign Minister Dr. Narayan Khadka called Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Manjeev Singh Puri, and made the request, which was complied with by the Indian side. Initially, the Nepali side stated that the new Government to be formed after the parliamentary elections of November 20, 2022, would decide on this matter. However, even after a year of the formation of a new government, no decision has been taken by the Nepali side and the recruitment of Nepali citizens in the Indian Army is on hold. The Nepali people are divided on the issue of whether or not Nepal should allow its citizens to join the Indian Army under the Agnipath Scheme.

The Reference Points

The issue of Nepalis joining the Indian Army under the Agnipath Scheme is a complicated one, and, before making a decision, requires an in-depth analysis of a number of aspects associated with it. The issue needs to be analyzed from economic, social, political, diplomatic and security perspectives.

The Gorkha recruitment carries great importance from an economic perspective. The earnings of the serving Nepalis and the pensions of about 127,000 pensioners bring over 60 billion rupees into the country annually (Times, 2023). This also helps in the foreign currency earnings for Nepal. The employment in the Indian army also ensures a great deal of financial stability in the family of the soldier. A Gorkha soldier serving in the Indian Army reportedly “supports nearly 15-20 family members with his salary” (Chauhan, 2023). Thus, the Agnipath Scheme and the dilemma of the Government of Nepal over it have created a situation in which “the economy of one country, and the security of another are at stake (Times, 2023).

From the social point of view, those serving in the Indian army and their family members command high respect in Nepali society. Their houses can be identified from a distance, and their families enjoy a distinct lifestyle. Many parents of the matching community aspire to marry off their daughters to the *Lahures* (soldiers in the Indian Army). The lenders in the society readily lend money to their families. Thus, enrollment in the Indian Army guarantees social respect. Besides, many programs have been run by the Government of India for the welfare of the pensioners. Such programs have contributed to improving the life of the pensioners and their families and the society as a whole.

This issue should be seen from an employment perspective as well. It must be recognized that a sizeable number of Nepalis have been employed by the Indian Army which has contributed to lessening unemployment in the country as well as improving the living standards of many individuals and families in the society.

The Agnipath Scheme darkens some spots in this rosy picture. Under the present arrangements, three-fourths of those recruited under the scheme will be demobilized after four years. What will be their future? Those going for recruitment early, say at the age of 17 years and a half will have left their education incomplete. How will it impact their future life? Some ministries and agencies of the Government of India have announced reservations of a certain number of their vacancies for demobilized *Agniveers*, but this applies only to Indian citizens, not to Nepalis (NDA, 2022). Thus, those returning home after four years will have an uncertain future before them.

The matter of the Gorkha recruitment has evolved as a political issue in Nepal. There is a section in Nepali society that opposes Gorkha recruitment as a whole. They oppose the recruitment of Nepalis in the Indian Army, the British Army as well as Singapore Police Force. They ask why Nepalis should be sent to serve other countries in the form of ‘mercenaries’ and shed blood for others. They understand this issue as a national shame that needs to be stopped outright (Chhina, 2022). They have taken the Agnipath Scheme as a good opportunity for stopping Gorkha recruitment at least with India for the moment.

The diplomatic component of the Gorkha recruitment is one of the most important aspects of the system as a whole. The Nepali soldiers provide a very strong link to the age-old friendly ties between Nepal and India. The Nepali soldiers have sacrificed their lives for the security of India. Their contribution has been recognized and greatly appreciated by the government and the people of India. Addressing the Constituent Assembly of Nepal on August 3, 2014, India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi represented the views of the whole of India when he said, “All the wars that India has won, have witnessed Nepali blood being shed, and Nepalis attaining martyrdom defending India. I salute the Nepali braves who have laid down their lives for India” (Modi, 2014).

The relationship between the Nepali Army and the Indian Army is truly exemplary. Only those who have seen it personally can feel the warmth of this relationship. The Army Chiefs of both countries are awarded with the honorary rank of General of the other army. The Nepali people have witnessed, and appreciated, the humanitarian assistance activities of the Indian Army during natural disasters in Nepal as well as the assistance of the Government of India in the modernization of the Nepali Army. The Gorkha Brigade of the Indian Army and the contribution the Nepali soldiers have made to India are among the most important factors for such goodwill and cooperation.

It must also be acknowledged that the Agnipath Scheme contains some problem areas, especially for the Nepalis. The uncertain future of the early retirees has been mentioned above. Another concern for Nepal and the Nepali people is the possible use/misuse of the returnees by unscrupulous elements, both within and outside the country. These returnees, who are militarily trained, skilled to use modern and sophisticated weapons, physically strong but not much educated, and without an employment may be the first targets for such elements. If they are seduced to join such elements or even terrorist organizations, they may be a great challenge for the country and the international community. It is not appropriate to shrug these problem areas off. Some people in Nepal suggest that the early returnees may run their small businesses with the money they get from the Sevanidhi package. Others

say that they may easily get jobs in security agencies within the country or abroad. However, it needs to be accepted that the challenges and uncertainties that the early returnees face are far more daunting than what can be visualized at this stage.

A dispassionate analysis of all the aspects of the Agnipath Scheme leads to a serious dilemma for Nepal. Should Nepali citizens be allowed to join the Indian Army under the scheme or should the Government of Nepal stop the Gorkha recruitment and terminate the 1947 tripartite Memorandum of Agreement? The Government of India and most people there want to continue recruiting brave Nepalis in their Army. The Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs expressed hope to continue recruiting Nepalis in the Indian Army. Other people in India too have expressed similar views. Some analysts and practitioners in India have even proposed some solutions to address the concerns of Nepal and the Nepali people. Ashok Mehta, a retired Major General of the Indian Army, has suggested that the Government of India needs to make some revisions to the scheme. He has suggested two such revisions: increase the service period for demobilization from four to seven years and demobilize only fifty per cent of the *Agniveers* after seven years (Mehta, 2023). Former Ambassador of India to Nepal, Ranjit Rae, has suggested that the reservations made by other ministries and agencies be applicable to Nepali soldiers as well (Rae, 2023).

Conclusion

The question of Nepalis joining the Agnipath Scheme has become a double-edged sword for Nepal. It has opportunities and challenges on both sides. Therefore, the Government of Nepal needs to give this matter dispassionate consideration. When the Government of Nepal asked the Indian side to suspend the recruitment, there were expectations that a new Government to be formed after the elections of November 2022 would take a decision, possibly with a consensus among major political parties. However, the new government has not yet made this issue an agenda for discussion. It should be kept in mind that indecision in this case cannot be a solution. The sooner the Government of Nepal decides on this matter, the better. The views expressed in Nepal are divided; but most academicians, analysts and practitioners are in favor of the continuation of the Gorkha recruitment. They fear that Nepal-India relations will not remain the same if Nepal terminates the Gorkha recruitment system. If such a vacuum is created, they fear, it would be detrimental not only to the interests of Nepal but also may threaten the security of India.

At this stage, there may be three options available for the Nepali side. The first is to let Nepali citizens join the Agnipath Scheme as announced by the Government of India. The youths aspiring to join the Indian Army under the scheme will themselves consider all the aspects before deciding whether to join or not.

Second, the Government of Nepal may request the Government of India to make some concessionary revisions to the scheme. The revisions may be in the line of suggestions discussed above. If the revisions are made, Nepalis may be allowed to join. Otherwise, the recruitment could be stopped forever. The third alternative is to reject the Agnipath Scheme altogether, and terminate the 1947 tripartite Memorandum of Agreement. Whatever decision is taken, the Government of Nepal must seriously consult all the stakeholders, and take a dispassionate and pragmatic decision after thorough discussions and consultations.

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Metamorphosis of Nepal-China Relations

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Abstract

This article explains how Nepal-China relations would unfold at a time when China is on the verge of becoming a superpower while Nepal is sadly still reeling under political instability, and economic underdevelopment and is largely unable to address new geopolitical challenges. How geopolitics pans out in South Asia in general and the Himalayan region, in particular, will determine Nepal's relations with China in the days to come. Nepal-China relations are historical, but they are only such in the sense that both states have existed since time immemorial and lived side by side. Yet understanding the nature of relations between the two neighbors has been difficult. Many would not like it but the fact remains that we do not see much of historical intricacies of significance between the two countries. How things are evolving in the recent past and present would shape the relations in the future. At the bilateral level, China prefers that (a) Nepal recognizes Tibet as an integral part of China (b) Nepal embraces the One-China policy (now moved towards the One-China principle) concerning Taiwan, and (c) Nepal does not allow its territory to be used against China by others. Nepal, however, does not seek/demand any such commitment from China. Does China reciprocate in the same manner and method? How does China prioritize Nepal with regard to its foreign policy? These are some of the key questions requiring careful answers. Certainly, this paper cannot delve into all of them but will only give a perspective in that regard.

Keywords: China-Nepal relations, belt and road initiative, strategic investment, geopolitics, one-China principle

Background

Nepal-China relations have seen many ups and downs in history (Bhatta and Yadav, 2021). Both countries fought wars over Tibet. Nepal was defeated and lost suzerainty over Lhasa and other areas of Tibet which the former had been enjoying since the time of the Malla kings. The Betrawati Treaty of 1792 turned many things upside down. Nepal was forced to pay tribute to the Chinese emperor in Peking. Normalization of relations between the two only started after the Thapathali Treaty

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of 1856 (Manandhar, 2004). Those were historical events but important ones for the reason that they had a direct bearing on Nepal's sovereignty. Relations since have improved but interactions at the people's level have been minimal. The economic interactions between Tibet (then Bhot) and Kathmandu (then Nepal) were, though, lively which also led to the growth of cultural and familial relations albeit limited.

After the Communist takeover of China and subsequent invasion of Tibet leading to the Himalayan region becoming geopolitically more volatile, things began falling apart. The degree of geopolitical volatility reached its peak when the idea of the Himalayan Confederation or Confederation of Himalayan States was played out (Patterson, 1970; Mishra and Ottaway, 2018).

The geopolitical whirlwind taking around in the region and the perpetual political instability that Nepal is going through, from regime/system changes to governmental instability, not only makes it difficult for itself but also for its neighbors and other powers. Taken together, both are creating a great deal of confusion on both sides. Nepal has always endured honest relations with China right from the time of late Prime Minister B. P. Koirala till the short reign of King Gyanendra – all of them maintained the same policy irrespective of the outcomes they have had to undergo at home. Back in 1960, Koirala strongly pleaded at the United Nations General Assembly to readmit China to the UN. Nepal's policy towards China has remained constant and stable. Even the post-2005/06 political leaders, who are known for mercurial behavior concerning foreign policy, are honest when it comes to China.

The fact remains that China is a long-standing trusted and tested neighbor and developmental partner of Nepal. However, some irritants do emerge including issues at the borders, time and again, which, yet again, is natural when both countries share long borders and interact in more than one way. After the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1955, China's role in Nepal's development is noteworthy, particularly in the areas of infrastructure development (Bhatta, 2023). China continues to assist but its spirit fundamentally appears to have differed, of late. Perhaps, the dominant and changing nature of political economy and geopolitics, which is taking round in this part of the region, might have played a role in that regard. The geopolitics which are hovering over Asia, has made China more concerned but is also nervous. China is of the view that the geopolitical and geo-economic landscape in its periphery and beyond may have direct consequences for its rise and hence prefers to maintain, at least, the current status quo if not completely reverse the conditions. Considering these factors, one may argue that China might have realized the fact that it needs to be self-reliant in this turbulent world for which it has to deeply consolidate its position in its periphery and convert it into opportunity in geopolitical dynamics (Doshi, 2021).

China has already introduced strategic investment in its periphery and beyond. The connectivity projects are the ones in that direction which will not only expand the Chinese market but will also contribute to its economy. Apart from economic and political power, for any country to be a superpower, it also needs to have substantial influence at the global and regional levels. As part of that, China has come up with various projects in the region. One among them is the proposition to build a trans-Himalayan railways network under the Belt and Road Initiative-a major framework initiative-which China has undertaken (Feigenbaum, 2021). What is certainly true is that BRI and its other paraphernalia are part and parcel of the broader geopolitical and geo-economic endeavor and were adopted to avert any impending risk. If all these factors are taken into consideration China certainly has been able to recalibrate its foreign policy in a way where threats can be converted into opportunities. Such an approach has certainly paid and today China is on the path of becoming a superpower (Li, 2021).

Reflection on the Bilateral Relations

Over a period, Nepal-China relations have gone through various phases (Manandhar, 2004; Bhatta and Yadav, 2021). Fast forward to the 21st century, the major turning point, however, occurred in 2015 when China was able to make its entry into Nepal's state of affairs. Although China began its journey in that direction right after the political change of 2005/06 in Nepal (when Nepal's political center became weak), it took a great stride just after Nepal was struck by a massive earthquake in 2015. China provided immediate relief and rehabilitation as well as put long-term investment in rebuilding schools, hospitals, monuments, and other structures in the heart of Kathmandu (Tiezzi, 2023). China's, engagement of this kind, later, provided space to be involved in Nepal's internal affairs, mostly political ones as well (Bhattarai, 2015).

Over time, Nepal also signed a transport and transit treaty with China in the aftermath of (un)official blockade imposed over Nepal in 2015. Then there was the signing of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) agreement in 2017. In the midst of all these, the formation of a two-thirds majority government led by the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) further cemented China's engagement in Nepal. Many consider China was behind the unification of the two left parties – CPN (UML) and Maoist Centre – and thereby forming NCP, and later convincing them to contest elections together (Ramachandran, 2020). All these developments, allowed China to expand its outreach at various levels and layers of Nepali society. China also conducted classes for Nepal's communist leaders on the “Xi Jinping Thought” to strengthen party-to-party relations (The Himalayan, 2019). Seven years down the

road, none of the nine projects under BRI have moved ahead.

While there are virtually no chances of getting a grant from China for these high-profile projects, no government in Kathmandu would dare to move them ahead on the interest rate that China may come up with. Likewise, the transit and transportation agreement is not gaining momentum. Realizing these facts, China has claimed that all the projects under Chinese assistance in Nepal are part and parcel of the BRI in one form or the other. At least, it does not want the BRI to fail in Nepal, but it seems difficult to succeed as well considering its current status (Tiwari, 2023). Apart from the financial part, it appears that some of the major projects (mainly the railroad) may not move ahead because of the difficult geographical terrain.

Meanwhile, China is determined to expand its influence and, for that, it has developed other instruments which crisscross with BRI. Among them are the Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Civilisational Initiative (GCI), and Global Security Initiative (GSI). These are part of China's broader foreign policy underpinnings floated by President Xi Jinping. They aim to establish China as a leader in global governance and offer, what it calls, alternatives to the Western-led global order. China is already asking Nepal to be part of them. Nepal has already become part of GDI and China is implementing a few projects under it in association with China Foundation for Rural Development. China has criticized the Western model of development in Nepal and instead asked to adopt the Chinese model (The Kathmandu Post, 2024). The increased level of interactions, festivals, and Confucius centers are included under GCI. As the GSI has a security component to it, Nepal certainly cannot be part of it due to its stated non-aligned foreign policy.

China's World View and Prospectus of Balancing the (im) Balances

China has understood that the principal contradiction in world politics is not about democracy versus autocracy but about the struggle between development and containment of development and between global justice and power politics which essentially is not an ideological approach but all about conflict between great powers (Zhao, 2023). They are a product of the gradual understanding in Beijing about the current global politics which they call the *Tianxia* (all under the heaven) model of political thought. *Tianxia* as a system of international order sees the 'world' as a single unit instead of using the 'nation-state' as the basic unit of the international system as opposed to the Westphalian notion of international relations which emphasizes the equal status of states, at least in principle (Acharya, 2019).

A power struggle between the resident and the (re)emerging powers is a norm in international relations. What becomes truly important in the course of such a power struggle is how rising power would develop their policies towards small

states (Bhatta and Menge, 2023). Often, their choices are largely ascertained by materialistic logic which sets the ground for power balance. Yet factors that determine power balance are also characterized by asymmetric relations wherein the focus of emerging power remains on countering the resident powers for which they do not hesitate to use the peripheral states (Bhatta, 2019).

If we take this as a theoretical framework, Nepal-China relations certainly are moving in that direction whereby China is largely in the process of power transition, and in the course of that, it has to counter not only the US and its allies – the resident powers – but also other emerging powers such as India wherever it is required. Countries like Nepal are positioned at the center of all these events. If we consider all such factors, ensuring balanced relations with reemerging power such as China is not an easy task for a country that is not only reeling under the political crisis but also dependent largely on the outside world for economic activities. China's rise has not only increased the confidence levels of many states in Asia and Africa – who otherwise were fixated on the West for both development and democracy – it has also created opportunities in more than one way.

China wishes to take its relations with Nepal at a 'strategic level' with Nepal (Giri, 2019). Apart from that, it also prefers Nepal to rally behind it and support its rise. This eventually would create a dilemma for Nepal which is undecided about its alignment. Mao Zedong to Zhu Rongji used to advise Nepal to maintain "close but correct" relations with India (Kumar, 2004). In contrast, Xi, during his visit to Nepal in 2019, surprised everyone by stating that 'attempts to split China will end in shattered bones' (Press Trust of India, 2019). Perhaps, he was hinting at those who wanted to create problems in Tibet, Hong Kong, and Xinjiang as well as taking geopolitics in hand (Bhatta and Yadav, 2021). These may raise the question is China, then, aspiring for a far larger role in Nepal than so far?

From One-China policy to One-China principle

For a long time, Nepal has been adopting the 'One China policy', but the joint statement issued during the visit of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal to Beijing in September 2023 mentioned Nepal's support for the 'One China principle'. While the terms 'policy' and 'principle' may sound similar they are not the same. For example, while a principle is a rule that has to be adhered to, a policy is simply a guideline and can certainly be altered as per the circumstances. From this perspective, the term 'One China principle' expresses firm commitment towards 'One China', that is, there is only one government representing the whole of China, and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory and Nepal is against its independence (The Kathmandu Post, 2023). These shifts and changes in the wording

need to be assessed minutely in the days ahead. It may have its consequences in the future when China truly decides to forcefully reunite Taiwan with mainland China. How Nepal will calibrate itself under that situation should be a matter of concern.

From Developmental Aid to Strategic Investment

China has emerged as a major player in international development cooperation in recent years (Jingdong, 2022). Yet its perspective and approaches to foreign aid have undergone significant changes, reflecting its geostrategic, foreign policy and economic development priorities (Bhatta, 2019). Not only that, but its underlying principle—an emphasis on cooperation, partnership and mutual benefits between China and recipient countries is also changing. China's foreign policy under Xi Jinping focuses on the fact that foreign aid and investment are tied up with its broader foreign policy orientation. China has been adopting this approach everywhere including in Nepal in multiple ways. At least we can see its investment in three areas (a) soft power development (b) economic and infrastructure development (d) building political networks.

Regarding soft power, China's main focus remains to stimulate the interactions that are altogether missing so far at the people's level. Hence it has established sizeable numbers of Confucius centres in various parts of Nepal. It is also officially hosting a large number of visits from Nepal and regularly organizing various festivals in Nepal. China's capacity for doing trade and investments in other countries has greatly increased (Jingdong, 2022). A country that was a large recipient of foreign aid in the 1980s has now fundamentally changed itself. Today, it has become the largest investor outside. China may have increased the scale of investment in Nepal, but it has yet to strengthen people-to-people relations. In the context of Nepal, China now has entered the fourth stage of engagement which is political (the first three being – trade, investment, and security). China's economic investment has increased in Nepal but its contribution to creating employment opportunities for the local people is just meagre. China certainly will have to relook into these factors.

Chinese Investment in Nepal Boon or Bane?

China was awarded a contract to construct a road in the Kohalpur-Banbasa (Gaddachauki) sector of the Mahendra Highway (now East-West highway) during the mid-1980s. The Government of India (GoI), expressed concern with the then, His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HGMN) regarding China building a road in the region that is so close to India. Later, the late King Birendra, realizing Indian sensitivity, cancelled the contract with China, and awarded it to GoI. Forty years down the road, the situation fundamentally appears to have changed in Nepal's Tarai region. The majority of the Chinese investment and proposed infrastructure are located there. Chinese companies are eyeing the proposed airport in Nijgadh (Nayak

and Poudel, 2023). Through their investments, China is developing its 'island of influence' which can be turned into 'China towns' and is trying to displace/relocate local businesses. The changes that have occurred in the Thamel area of Kathmandu, basically a hippie town developed in the 1970s – a new China town in the making - in recent years is the classic example in that regard. While China-India relations are becoming vulnerable, growing Chinese investments and influence in Nepal is bound to draw the attention of India. How the situation will unfold geopolitically in the days to come is a matter of concern. Whether it will become a boon or bane cannot be said now.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion informs that Nepal-China relations are going through a major metamorphosis and many factors will play a role in that regard. What would become most important, however, is how China projects itself in world politics. Certainly, a powerful China and a weaker/underdeveloped, and poorer Nepal will give rise to different momentum in relations. Of all of them, the most crucial factor would be how we understand each other's worldview. In that regard, it will be helpful for Nepal, if it tries to understand the psyche of the Chinese state, the Communist Party of China, and its leader. This will have to come from Nepal, as China often tries to understand other(s) from its perspective as it considers itself a civilizational state without a break. The 100 years of humiliation and cultural revolution of Mao may have lost some of its civilizational values but China certainly is not going to dance in other tunes. Neither does it wish to become a 'modern' and 'democratic' state in the Western sense of the term. China has developed its own model of governance which may look authoritarian to others, but it certainly has benefited the country from multiple perspectives and maintained its status as a middle kingdom. It is this China, that we have to deal with in the days to come. Yet for Nepal, we should not seek relations with China merely for the political benefit. As a token of advice, China should neither reduce Nepal to a mere geopolitical pawn nor should it make Nepal dependent on it as many others are doing. In contrast, both Nepal and China should look beyond what can alone allow us to come out of the extant geopolitical whirlwind and further enhance confidence-building measures (Bhatta and Yadav, 2021).

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Eyeing for External Resources: Wants and Ways

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Abstract

External resources have shaped the making and breaking of the nations. In the past, the rulers dominated the source or provider of external resources while in the present days, the rulers (political leaders) are under the domination of resource providers (be it a government, agency or company). In the period following World War II, the United States rose to prominence politically and economically. The 21st century is seeing the rise of China. This study deals with the methods and practices relating to foreign aid and investments that have evolved and looks into their hold on Nepal. The study shows that the availability of external resources started with a goodwill approach. However, over time it has moved onto the sphere of influence of the resource providers while the governance failure has made the country more and more dependent on external resources failing to adopt safeguard measures.

Keywords: Foreign aid, foreign direct investment, donor, economy, development

Introduction

There is mixed evidence of foreign aid contributing to development. If it is used for consumption instead of investment it would not contribute to economic growth as shown by the studies (Griffin, 1970), (Boon, 1996). Aid needs to be appropriately tuned up. Otherwise, uncontrolled foreign aid will be counter-productive creating a space for corruption while failing to deliver results with limited percolation to the poor or the targeted population. In many instances, the aid inflows have perpetuated corrupt behavior, as bureaucrats and ruling elites take it as a means of generating revenue and a source of employment for their coterie that makes them more powerful while deteriorating the quality of governance (Sharma, 2013). Studies also showed that aid is effective only in the presence of a sound economic policy, as the evidence does not show the link between openness and aid effectiveness and democratic regime and aid effectiveness in the case of Nepal (Adhikary, 2024).

A benchmark was even set in the 1970s by the United Nations that the donor country should provide aid to the tune of 0.7% of its Gross National Income (GNI) (Clemens, 2007). But so far only five countries (Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden

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and Luxembourg) have done so while other donors are still behind. Following the establishment of the United Nations Development Programme was established by the UN General Assembly in 1965, provide multilateral aid got started with the establishment of IMF, World Bank Group, and other regional financial institutions like the African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank etc. while Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank was the latest to join in 2016 (Smolaga, 2017). While the UN mobilizes funds from the members to provide humanitarian and development support in the form of grants to needy countries, other multi-lateral agencies extend loans and/or invest in equity of the project or undertaking company while part of the initial appraisal could be in the form of grants.

Method of Study

This study is based on secondary information drawn from manuscripts, published studies, and Nepal government budgets and economic surveys. The information has been processed and analyzed to look at aid or investment purposiveness as well as intendedness.

Review of Literature

The benevolence of providing aid, so to say foreign aid from the recipient's perspective got started from strategic perception on the part of the provider.

- a) Earliest form (military assistance): Prussia in the 18th century provided military assistance to its allies which is attributed in essence as foreign aid (Brittanica, 2024).
- b) Modern form (economic support): The US doled out a package known as the Marshall Plan to rehabilitate the economies of WWII ruined 17 European countries. With the US and USSR rivalry turning into the Cold War, developing and keeping allies got strategically instrumented with providing of aid. Other countries also followed suit (McKinlay, 1977).

Further, in the 20th century following the end of WWII the rich countries, apart from bilateral support in the form of grants or loans, initiated establishing multi-lateral institutions to help out the resource requirement of needy countries on eligibility grounds. Besides, the private sector emerged helping to enrich itself by way of off-shore investment or FDI and sharing the richness by way of charity directly or through trust or charity organizations.

- a) Bilateral assistance: This constitutes aid given by a government directly to the government of another country or a local NGO therein for the sake of political stability (on the strength of humanitarian and developmental effects) strategically aiming at the protection of allies and thereby upholding common interest. The US initiated it through Truman's Four Point Program of 1949 which provisioned economic assistance to independent low-income countries (McKinlay, 1977).

Multilateral assistance: As an international bank for reconstruction and development, the World Bank started operations in 1946. Its first loan was provided to France in 1947 and Chile became the first non-European country to receive a loan amounting to USD 13.5 million in 1948 for hydroelectric power generation. Apart from monetary, the Bank also initiated technical assistance and has also included NGOs as aid recipients. Its affiliate organization the International Financial Corporation (IFC), established in 1956, also lends out and makes equity investments in private enterprises (International Finance Cooperation, 2024)

Offshore investment: ‘The current international corporate tax regime for taxing the business proceeds of firms operates arbitrarily. As a result, multinational business decisions are distorted by tax considerations’ (de Wilde, 2015). When the advantages are higher than the home country and it is legally doable such investments are made to get additional benefits. This is happening as many countries to attract foreign investors offer tax incentives as such offshore investment takes place in tax havens.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): When an entity based in one country purchases in another country of asset (land and building) or equity of an ongoing or new company, it constitutes FDI that provides a total or shared ownership in a business. It is an inorganic investment if it is buying a company and is called organic if it constitutes an expansion of operations of an existing business in the target country (Hayes, 2023).

External Resources to Nepal

Foreign Aid

Nepal was a self-contained nation in isolation till 1950 with people in subsistence while ruling Rana families were in enrichment. This was due to pocketing more of the state coffer that went less to the people. The state coffer was constrained by providing land as ‘*birta*’ to the family members and conduction of trade sans income-tax i.e. for the state: exports of resources (woods from the jungle and people from the hills), and imports conducted in collusion with businessmen (who were locals mostly Newars). After 1951, when the state needed extensive resources for fostering development the state coffer was in a pitiable state. The 1951 budget broadcast over Radio Nepal (as there was no legislature) indicated NPR 30 million as revenue and NPR 52 million as expenditure with a deficit of NPR 22 million (Basnet, 2023). In such a situation Nepal looked towards foreign aid as a possible option since prominent nations had already started offering aid and multilateral agencies also started their operations in developing countries to meet their resources gap.

NGOs like the Ford Foundation and United Mission to Nepal were quick to dole

out resources. Nepal joined the Colombo Plan in 1952 which was started to assist the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific region in their economic and social development (Micinski, 2017). Most importantly, aids were received from two far-off Cold War poles which had started aid diplomacy to turn the uncommitted nations into allies. They considered Nepal, which was just out of isolation, of strategic importance that it should not be grabbed by other political hegemony. The US with which Nepal established diplomatic relations in 1947, initiated its aid providing NPR 22,000 under an agreement signed on January 23, 1951. The US went on to provide aid that helped develop roads, establish telephone exchange, eliminate malaria from Tarai and enable growth in agriculture during the 1950s. The aid flow surged in the 1960s, when US President Dwight Eisenhower pledged USD 15 million to King Mahendra in April 1960 for the sake of Nepal's development (Adhikary, 2024).

Following the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1956, the Soviet Union also initiated its assistance in 1959 which covered the development of physical and industrial infrastructure that contributed to building roads and hospitals, plus the establishment of power generation and manufacturing plants (cigarette, agri-tools, sugar, rosin and turpentine, etc.) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). Neighboring countries India and China also wanted to maintain good relations because of Nepal's strategic importance and their desire to create a sphere of influence. Upon the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1955, China started providing aid to Nepal. Aid assistance from China helped develop roads and airports, manufacturing industries and conference halls (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). After becoming independent from the British Raj, India signed a peace and friendship treaty with Nepal in 1950. While it assisted in democratic change in 1951 with the signing of the Delhi Compromise, the aid assistance started in 1954 by setting up the Indian Aid Mission which remained till 1966 as it helped develop roads, industrial estates, etc. (Adhikary, 2024).

Other bilateral donors joined later. The foremost was Israel with which diplomatic relations were forged in 1960. Nepal then stood as the only country to recognize Israel from this part of Asia, and Israel assisted in the development of cooperatives and townships (Bharatpur at Chitwan in particular) and machinery of transport (Poudel, 2020). Pakistan, after establishing diplomatic relations in 1962, connected an air link with Nepal and offered free trade access with transport facilities through the port of Chittagong (which was part of the then East Pakistan) (Nepal, 2022). Despite the formal diplomatic relations forged in 1923, the United Kingdom was a little late to come out to aid Nepal by initiating fellowships in the early 1950s and providing volunteers since 1964. The grant aid got started much later. Japan started

providing aid to Nepal in 1969, even though diplomatic relations were established in 1956. The aid started with commodity loans and technical cooperation while a year later grant aid got started. Japan's support has covered health, education, transportation as well as irrigation and power facilities (Shrestha, 2016). Other countries including France, Australia, Korea, and others joined later in providing aid to Nepal.

Meanwhile, Nepal was able to get assistance from multilateral donors comprised the World Bank Group, Asian Development Bank, etc. The shift came when the Nepali economy faced hardships in the 1970's. On the whole, by the end of the 1980s, aid flowed into Nepal from 11 UN agencies, 7 multilateral agencies, 8 private agencies and 17 countries (Shrestha, 2022).

The dependency on foreign grants for development was almost total till the mid-1960s and got lowered with domestic contribution on the rise. Another shift was seen from 1970 onward with major funding coming from multilateral agencies as compared to bilateral donors with an overall shift occurring from grants to loans:

- Loan share in aid: from under 4 percent between 1965-70 to more than 25 percent by 1985-88
- Aid dependence: as a percentage of GNP increased from under 8 percent to almost 13 percent between 1984 and 1987
- Debt service: as a percentage of GDP increased from less than 0.1 percent in 1974-75 to almost 1 percent in 1987-88
- Outstanding debt: increased from NPR 346 million to almost NPR 21 billion between 1984 and 1987

The contribution of aid continued to increase to 22% in 1990. As per the World Bank, official development assistance to Nepal was USD 8.2 million in 1960 which increased to USD 369 million in 2003 and then fell to USD 177 million in 2004. As per government data, total foreign aid committed in fiscal year (FY) 2003 was USD 555 million, with 63.3 percent in grants and 36.7 percent in loans which fell to USD 320 million in FY 2004 with 37.7 percent in grants and 62.3 percent in loans (Goossenaerts, 2013).

Donors were attaching conditions and wanted to execute the funded projects by themselves after 1990. The Foreign Aid Policy was formulated in 2002, but the flow was disrupted following King Gyanendra's takeover of the rein on February 1, 2005. Following the pluralistic transition in 2006, the aid was resumed. Upon the promulgation of the constitution in 2015, the state of foreign aid in terms of commitment and utilization indicates that grants increased in 2016/17 onward but

utilization of aid decreased significantly over the years as observed from the table below:

NPR million

FY	Approved foreign grant	Utilized foreign grant	Approved foreign loan	Utilized foreign loan
2014/15	91603	38286	134216	25616
2015/16	79204	39544	116395	33228
2016/17	97676	40819	152569	59022
2017/18	84904	39319	117094	92233
2018/19	33429	22899	104826	124372
2019/20	30105	19191	189777	149462
2020/21	27386	26791	197984	107538

Source: Economic Surveys, Ministry of Finance, Nepal

Aid Effectiveness

The government of Nepal stepped up in aid transparency in 2013 setting up its Aid Management Platform (AMP) for public view which put specific sub-nationally geocoded information on more than 600 development projects. The World Bank specified a country assistance strategy in 1998 and introduced a systematic country diagnostic report in 2018 which suggested following differential strategy calling for a) inclusivity in public organizations, b) private sector investment increase of employment creation, c) human capital development, d) utilization of national resources, e) capacity development to deal with national calamities, and f) utilization of migrant workers. It required improvement in budget implementation, transparency and accountability, and using resources to reduce poverty (Adhikary, 2024).

Foreign Direct Investment

In terms of appropriateness and quick progression, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is considered better than foreign aid.

To attract FDI, Nepal organized a ministerial conference in 1982 and an Investment Promotion Meeting (IPM) in 1984. While these were encouraging, the IPM held again in 1992 loosened further the foreign investment restrictions. Both options, the parent company creating a subsidiary firm and purchasing an existing one or setting up a new one, are available in Nepal. The 2021 Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) bylaw on

FDI and Loan Management has provisioned a direct route for offshore investment companies (but not the offshore PE companies) not requiring further approval from NRB or other authorities once the permission from the Department of Industries is obtained. However, in case of investment exceeding NPR 5 million, permissions are required in every stage of investment, divestment, and return of sale proceeds, thus resulting in increased cost and time for decision-making while the process remains to be digitized. Double taxation at exit is not as yet removed which stands at 25% in Nepal on any gains from the sale of investments or even a change of ownership by 50% or more within three years (Pandey, 2021).

There has been hardly an incremental shot of foreign direct investment into Nepal (as it depends on the conditions prevalent in the country) as against the comparative conditions in China and India which did attract foreign investment right through 1990 to the present day. It amounted to NPR 1.27 billion in 1990, NPR 9.03 billion in 1996, and stood at NPR 2.74 billion annual average over 2001-2011. The approved FDI was at its peak during the mid-1990s and thereafter declined due to the Maoist insurgency. In terms of actual receipt, it is considerably low as confirmed by the NRB which reached 2.5% in 2011, that is much lower than Maldives 72.4%, India 6.4%, Pakistan 5.3% and Bangladesh 4%, but better than Sri Lanka (2.1%), Bhutan (2.1%) and Afghanistan (2%) in South Asia (NRB, 2022). According to UNCTAD's data, South Asia witnessed a robust growth of 23% in 2011 and has made incremental showing thereafter. In 2017, out of a world total of USD 1746 billion for 192 countries, China alone secured 133 billion, India 44.5 billion while Nepal could secure only USD 100 million. The FDI afterward does not show an encouraging trend despite Nepal holding another IPM in 2019 owing to clumsy political governance, poor aid effectiveness and business environment. The withholding factors apart from the political instability and resultant policy and legal uncertainty are the poor state of infrastructure and the militancy of trade unions (Adhikary, 2024).

Amidst the policies and the operative framework that simply encouraged trade and financial investment in quick-yielding areas for ensuring nominal margins with large benefits going outside the country, there occurred an unprecedented rise in external dependency. This constrained harnessing of resources within the country and enhancing competitiveness in a way to raise the internal productive capacity of the economy which could generate productive employment in the domestic economy simultaneously. In the absence of this, an exodus of hundreds of workforces daily got underway with almost no possibility of immediate domestic employment generation under business as usual. Around 400,000 enter into the job market every year most of which go to foreign countries as the Nepali economy has failed to absorb them (Adhikary, 2024).

In short, Nepal could not promote exports and attract foreign investment as Nepal failed in infrastructure development causing problems in supplies. Besides, Nepal has faced transit problems being landlocked.

Changing Situation of Accessing External Resources

The state of globalization that heralded in 1990s has changed a little bit swinging to protectionism upon the West wanting to control the upswing of China which it is considering a threat to its security. In this situation, the trends that are appearing concerning external resources indicate the following:

- a. Multilateralism is getting distorted and alliance-centric is getting pivotal which has affected even relief from epidemic/pandemic and climatic catastrophes,
- b. Bilateral assistance is still played on from the donor's perspective as a proportion of aid is intended to address its strategic interest which could be political dominion or hegemonic influence
- c. Control over investment or security of investment is a priority.
- d. In the case of normality what is still on is that passing out funds is subject to business-ability: either a loan that requires a good credit score or an investment that requires a standing on continuity (not halted by regulative off-swing and labor outbursts) and competitiveness (better than the alternative locations).

With regard to Nepal, the aid availability lurked around the following:

- a) US: In the aftermath of 9/11, it got concerned about the growing Maoist activities in Nepal. In this period, the US aid to Nepal was concentrated on increasing the state's capacity to prevent Nepal from becoming a failed state. It has however limited presence. Upon the restructuring of the state between 2006 and 2015, the MCC framework was rolled in which was a case of limited homework by the political leadership in Nepal.
- b) India: Its aid to Nepal covers a wide array of sectors. It is keen to maintain its influence by providing aid from the political to the socio-economic domain. Recently, the government of Nepal and the government of India signed an agreement that allows the Indian side to provide financial aid to projects and institutions in Nepal up to NPR 200 million from the existing 50 million (The Kathmandu Post, 2024).
- c) China: The aid consideration of China was seen primarily due to its concern in Tibet. In the past, China could not influence the political standing of Nepal due to difficulty with border infrastructure. However, over period the state formation has changed in Nepal. China now has built up infrastructure in Tibet and beyond. It seems now keen to help Nepal develop its road infrastructure under its BRI program.

- d) Other countries: Lately Russia seems to be interested in Nepal but not much has progressed, while Japan and South Korea are regular aid providers and the UK is continuing aid friendship.

With respect to Nepal being an investment-friendly place (to attract FDI), two bottlenecks still persist:

- a) Nepal lacks its strategic drive towards building resource based economic growth. As such the market connectivity and technological swing remain out of question while the economic health remains afloat by aid and remittance from Nepalis working outside the country. Still, the resource constraint is so much that the government every year is asking for aid for budgetary support.
- b) Instability in Nepali politics has continued. Besides, the decision of one government does not get continuity when another takes over. This makes long-term investment focus out of the question.

Discussion

The external resources do help the developing countries to speed up economic progression but it all depends on its modality. At times, it might become a source of promoting corruption. With respect to foreign aid, what needs to be avoided is:

- a) Asking for budgetary support which is just reflective of the government's ineffectiveness to stay put its survival within the limits of financial capability, and
- b) accepting aid with donors' mindset of pursuing their interest in the disguise of helping out. This would mean doing away with (i) doling out millions in charity support by foreign countries and (ii) providing funds to politicians on an individual basis in any pretext. Both of these are tantamount to making the individual or the group serve the interest of the donor which, in other words, constitutes external state-induced corruption for political dominion. Apart from avoiding these, what needs to be done is to articulate an aid acceptability strategic framework to make it specific to programmatic support on results orientation within limits of resource use efficiency order.

In so doing what matters is the imperative of counterpart funding by the recipient country which would be in the order of 10-20% at minimum. But most importantly a country should rise to the level which does not wait for donors' approval but starts on its own while asking donors to contribute for the sake of completion of the project. This would lead to timely completion of the project within the original investment needs thus achieving the expected resource use efficiency.

What matters with investments is the state of doing business at the basic level, but that alone is not sufficient to attract sufficient inflow. Political orderliness that leads to stable government is required and the way economic progression is eyed

on the conditions of competitiveness that need to be strengthened are critical for investment decisions. Furthermore, investors would still toil with the question of what extra mileage they would get by investing in Nepal as against investing in China or another South-Asian country, India in particular. Nepal as a market or resource base would be one thing, but market or resource base outside Nepal would be entirely another thing. The situations in the past such as investors coming in for readymade garments production hubs that disappeared with the end of the multi-fiber agreement and the Colgate or Ever-ready setting up plants that were closed with the labor trouble do provide learning points (Giri, 2021). How Bangladesh could expand the readymade garments in terms of industrial operation (third country market, technology and raw material but with cheap labor that cannot go on strike in this industry as the political leaders supporting it) also provides a learning point.

Conclusion

In order to eye external resources, Nepal's political leadership needs to decide whether to accept the premise of goodwill or be willing to fall into the donor's domination. As such it has to a) formulate strategic conditions for foreign aid acceptability which is not possible if the political mindset is extractive, and b) operational framework for foreign investments. Concerning the latter, it has to pitch a business favorability comparative to investment-seeking competing countries which is not possible sans political stability and regulative orderliness. The absence of it would mean foreign aid for falling into others' spheres of influence while foreign investments would shy away from venturing into the country.

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Mobilising Nepalese Missions for Tourism Promotion

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Abstract

With a huge comparative advantage, the tourism sector is Nepal's most potential sector for its economic development. Despite this, it has not yet been established as the engine of economic growth. The immense opportunities for its development can contribute eventually to the overall development of the country. The slow pace in its international marketing is one of the reasons behind the weak performance of the industry. Nepal's diplomatic missions can be mobilized effectively for branding and marketing if the government has a proper strategy for this. The Ministry of Tourism should realize this first, and take initiatives in benefitting from Nepal's diplomatic presence in the major source markets worldwide.

Keywords: Nepalese mission, tourism, destination, hindu, strategies

Introduction

Although Nepal had historically been a major destination for a few Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims from India and China, it became known to the wider section of international tourists only after the early 1950s. This Himalayan kingdom had entered the democratic era in 1951 at the end of 104 years of the autocratic Rana regime. Nepal was almost closed to the outside world until then. Another event that brought Nepal to the global limelight was the successful and historic climbing of Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa from the British Expedition team to the summit of Mount Everest in 1953. Since then, growing numbers of people, interested particularly in adventure tourism such as mountaineering, trekking, sightseeing, etc., have been visiting Nepal every year. Lately, apart from the tourists from India and China, it has become a popular destination of international tourists, mostly from Europe, America and Asia.

Nepal is considered one of the most beautiful countries in the world. Its pleasant climate, unique natural beauty, varieties of elevations and altitudes within a comparatively narrow strip of land, several rare species of flora and fauna, long history, rich culture and friendly people make it an exceptional combination of attractions to people of different ages and interests from all over the world.

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The westerners are mainly fascinated by the Mount Everest and several other high mountain peaks covered with snow throughout the year. Nepal is home to eight (Everest, Kangchenjunga, Lhotse, Makalu, Cho Oyu, Dhaulagiri I, Manaslu and Annapurna I) of the world's 10 tallest mountain peaks. Lately, rock climbing, hot air ballooning, bungee jumping, paragliding, rafting, kayaking, canyoning, mountain biking, jungle safari, bird watching, Everest skydiving, Everest marathon, Annapurna marathon, elephant polo are some of other new products available to the adventurers.

While the temples of the holy Pashupatinath and several other holy shrines are the places of special importance to the Hindus from different parts of the world; Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha is equally significant to the Buddhist tourists from all over the world.

Several studies commissioned by the government of Nepal and its various development partners in the past have concluded that tourism industry is crucial to Nepal's economic development. Although Nepal treasures a large variety of such products that are capable of making it a significant tourist destination, its potential has hardly been exploited. The current number of tourists visiting Nepal is quite insignificant compared to the vast range of attractions it showcases. This single industry has the ability to absorb increased number of young workforce, provide market to the local agricultural products, develop the local areas, earn good amount of foreign currency and ultimately contribute substantially to the economic growth of Nepal. Unfortunately, its vast potential for the overall development is yet to be appreciated fully by the government, political leaders and the private sector.

Growth in Nepal's Tourism

The growth of the Nepalese tourism industry has been very sluggish ever since the early years. A total of 6,179 international tourists had visited Nepal in 1962, the year government initiated maintaining database on tourism. The data for the 25year period preceding the outbreak of covid pandemic had revealed that absolute number of international visitors had grown only slightly over three times, from 363,395 in 1995 to 1,197,191 in 2019. It is worth-noting that the tourist arrival rate was even negative in many years during the decade-long armed conflict of 1996-2006. However, the numbers had gradually picked up in the subsequent years as the Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in November 2006.

The table below summarizes the total international tourist arrivals in Nepal, their mode of transportation and the length of stay in the latest quarter of a century.

Table: Tourist Arrival and Average Length of Stay in Last 25 Years (1998-2022)

Year	Total		By Air		By Land		Average Length of Stay (days)
	Number	Annual Growth Rate (%)	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	
1998	463,684	9.9	398,008	85.8	65,676	14.2	10.76
1999	491,504	6.0	421,243	85.7	70,261	14.3	12.28
2000	463,646	-5.7	376,914	81.3	86,732	18.7	11.88
2001	361,237	-22.1	299,514	82.9	61,723	17.1	11.93
2002	275,468	-23.7	218,660	79.4	56,808	20.6	7.92
2003	338,132	22.7	275,438	81.5	62,694	18.5	9.60
2004	385,297	13.9	297,335	77.2	87,962	22.8	13.51
2005	375,398	-2.6	277,346	73.9	98,052	26.1	9.09
2006	383,926	2.3	283,819	73.9	100,107	26.1	10.20
2007	526,705	37.2	360,713	68.5	165,992	31.5	11.96
2008	500,277	-5.0	374,661	74.9	125,616	25.1	11.78
2009	509,956	1.9	379,322	74.4	130,634	25.6	11.32
2010	602,867	18.2	448,800	74.4	154,067	25.6	12.67
2011	736,215	22.1	545,221	74.1	190,994	25.9	13.12
2012	803,092	9.1	598,258	74.5	204,834	25.5	12.16
2013	797,616	-0.7	594,848	74.6	202,768	25.4	12.60
2014	790,118	-0.9	585,981	74.2	204,137	25.8	12.44
2015	538,970	-32	407,412	75.6	131,558	24.4	13.16
2016	753,002	40	572,563	76	180,439	24	13.4
2017	940,218	25	760,577	81	179,641	19	12.6
2018	1,173,072	25	969,287	82.63	203,785	17.37	12.4
2019	1,197,191	2.05	995,884	83.19	201,307	16.81	12.7
2020	230,085	-80.7	183,130	79.6	46,955	20.4	15.1
2021	150,962	-34.3	150,625	99.7	337	0.3	15.5
2022	614,869	307.3	592,631	96.4	22,238	3.6	13.1

Source: Government of Nepal, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

This growth in numbers cannot be considered satisfactory particularly in the context of the multitude of treasures Nepal can offer to the international visitors.

For instance, in several other countries international tourists outnumber their own populations. Among them, while France and Spain welcome the highest number of tourists annually, Austria and Greece receive tourists more than three times their national populations. In the Asia Pacific region, countries hosting larger number of tourists are China, Thailand and Japan. Despite having an increased number of destinations and increased range of new products, particularly in adventure tourism, introduced and promoted in Nepal, it has hosted visitors only around three to four PERCENT of its population in the most successful years so far.

A recent example of the under-achievement the government target is the much publicized Visit Nepal Year 2020. The government of Nepal had declared 2020 as the Visit Nepal Year and had fixed a target of 2 million international tourist arrivals within the year. In view of both the 1.17 million actual arrivals in 2018, and the average annual growth rate of 17 percent achieved in the preceding five year period 2014-18, this target was already much ambitious, and hence was unachievable.

Further, as the outbreak of the novel coronavirus was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization on January 30, 2020, the target became totally unfeasible. Economies and livelihoods around the entire world were affected unprecedentedly. Many countries had applied quarantine, travel ban and border closures as some of the most effective measures for the containment of the pandemic. Aviation and tourism industries being directly involved in people's movement were obviously the most affected sectors globally. Both the nationwide lockdown and the suspension of all international flights to Nepal for several months made the case severe. Finally, the government had to suspend the campaign itself. The number of international visitors in Nepal dropped sharply down to just 230, 085 against the target of 2 million that year.

Calculating the Benefits from Tourism

While analyzing the benefits from tourism, the total number of visitors alone does not represent the scenario fairly, the average length of stay and the average expenses per visitor per day need to be considered importantly in the calculations. The average length of stay of international tourists in Nepal in most of the normal years in the last quarter of a century, presented above, could not grow to more than 14 days. As an exception it was 15.1 days in 2020 and 15.5 days in 2021. It happened due to the closure of international borders and suspension of flights during the pandemic period. Many European tourists who were already in Nepal were stuck here. Likewise, the 7.9 days mark in 2002 was as the impact of the royal massacre in 2001.

As for the average spending by international tourists in Nepal, the picture is even gloomier. Lately Nepal is known in the international market as one of the cheapest destinations in the world. The table below presents the average per day spending by international tourists in Nepal in the recent-past decade.

**Table: Average Spending by international tourists in Nepal
(2013-2022)**

Year	Average expenses per visitor per day (US\$)
2013	42
2014	48
2015	68
2016	53
2017	54
2018	44
2019	48
2020	65
2021	48
2022	40

Source: Government of Nepal, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Nepal, until few decades ago, was a favorite destination of high- end tourists. The ones who like to spend much obviously expect uniqueness, comfort, personal attention and superior service quality in return. The accommodation, food, transportation, safety standards, etc. should unavoidably meet a certain standard when it comes to serve this category of guests. The products, service or destination should be appealing, without failure. Such a responsibility clearly demands in the hosts a high-class entrepreneurship made up of best service quality, special approach and proper communication skills to deal with people from different corners of the globe, the art of seeing things from the guest's eyes, etc.

Interestingly, some specific pocket areas in Nepal already used to host not only high end but ultra-high end guests in the past. The jungle lodges inside Chitwan National Park have been the preferred destinations of this class of tourists since the 1970s. The service providers in Chitwan feel that with the closure of the lodges inside the jungle in 2012, such clientele has almost vanished. The construction in late 1960s of the Hotel Mountain View in Syangboche at an altitude of 3880 metres above sea

level within the Sagarmatha National Park was another initiative in attracting high-end tourists those days. Thanks to the visionary team of Takashi Miyahara and his Nepali colleagues for the operation of this world-class hotel, that gives the guests a 360 degree view of the Himalayas.

Moving a step ahead, Nepal should now target increased income from the tourism industry instead of merely counting the heads of guests. There are hundred and one reasons for how Nepal's nature, culture and adventure can appeal to high end tourists. Lots can be learnt from the experience of other countries. Maldives can be an example in the neighborhood. The only thing required is clear understanding in the country's political leadership and policy makers of what assets Nepal possesses and how they can be capitalized for mass benefit. The private sector is always ready to provide services, but the government should stand there equally responsibly to facilitate.

Recognizing the pivotal role of both public and private sectors for the development and promotion of tourism in the country, government had established the Nepal Tourism Board in 1998 in the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model with the mandate to promote tourism in the international market. Although this organization has been spending a lot in promotional activities such as participating in international tourism fairs, its success has been very limited. Questions are raised frequently in all concerned sections, including in the parliament, on the effectiveness of their promotional activities. It is sad to note that despite spending larger funds in the name of international marketing, neither the average length of stay nor the average per day spending has improved; nor the country has earned the feasible amount from tourism.

While inadequate physical infrastructure and insufficient human resource development are some of the crucial issues, ineffective marketing at the international level has remained the main reason for the gross under-exploitation of Nepal's source markets. If marketed properly, tourists from around the globe will love to make it one of their favoured destinations for travel and holidays.

Need for Source Markets Focused Strategy

Besides the Visit Nepal Year 2020, the government of Nepal had launched several other special promotional campaigns in the last two and a half decades. The Visit Nepal Year 1998 was an effort to introduce Nepal as one of the destinations to a broader section of the foreign tourists. Likewise, the Nepal Tourism Year 2011 was aimed to establish Nepal as a choice of holiday destination. Other campaigns were Visit Lumbini Year 2012 and the Everest Diamond Jubilee Year 2013.

Tourists do not visit Nepal simply because the government has such campaigns. They have their own priorities, preferences, likes and dislikes for any particular country. Not all the tourists have the same purpose of visits, nor are their spending capacities similar. Even in the case of visitors from any particular country, their likes and dislikes of products differ with their age, sex, culture, educational status, financial status, etc. Definite class of people looks for specific products that go with one's interest and size of purse. Informed people always like to visit new places if they are appealing enough and affordable.

Visitors' preferences of products and services differ according to their purpose of visit. While the large majority of American and British tourists love to visit Nepal for holidays, obviously expecting fun and pleasure; majority of Srilankan tourists' purpose is religious, visiting Lumbini. Effective communication with the targeted people in source markets on the unique products Nepal can offer to them matters much.

In 2022, as much as 64.7 percent of the total visitors in Nepal were for holiday and pleasure, 12.9 percent for pilgrimage, 10.0 percent for adventure including trekking and mountaineering and 12.4 percent for other purposes. Such figures in the past as well have established Nepal as a favoured destination of holiday lovers.

India, China, USA, UK and Srilanka have been Nepal's largest source markets over the last couple of years. In 2022, the total international arrivals collectively from three countries (India, USA and UK) were as much as 53.9 percent of the total annual arrivals.

Nepal is located in between two economic powerhouses. India is already Nepal's largest source market. Majority of Indian tourists visit Nepal for pilgrimage, and pay homage to lord Pashupatinath and Muktinath. A few of them are here in transit to Manasarovar in Tibet. The casinos have been attraction to a small portion of Indian tourists, mostly middle class, who visit Nepal for fun. There seem immense growth potentials if quality research is conducted in India's high-end religious and fun-lover market segments.

Likewise, China has been growing as a big tourism source market for the entire world. With the increase in their individual income the number of outbound travelers is growing substantially. The Nepalese hospitality industry also witnessed this growth. The number of Chinese guests in Nepal jumped very substantially from 32,272 in 2009 to 153,633 in 2018, indicating further growth potentials.

The timings of travelers of Nepal's existing source markets also differ quite significantly, which is an added benefit to the Nepalese tourism industry. While

most of the Indian tourists visit Nepal in May and June, the preferred months of the westerners are February-March and October-November. The Chinese travelers generally love to visit Nepal throughout the year, however, their number drops down slightly in May and June. Proper strategies can help Nepal receive good flow of visitors round the year.

Nepal has always been a favored destination of UK and several other European countries. The following table presents share of Europe in Nepal's overall source market:

Table: Visitors from some European countries in Nepal

Country	Visitors in 2022	Highest Number in the Past
France	16,933	31,810 (2018)
Germany	17,742	36,879 (2018)
Italy	6,388	15,676 (2019)
Netherlands	7,515	15,352 (2018)
Spain	8,349	20,214 (2018)
UK	45,094	63,466 (2018)
Total	102,021 (16.6%)	

Source: Government of Nepal, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

As for the UK market, very insignificant portion of their total outbound tourists, 63,466 out of 72.3 million, visited Nepal in 2018. It suggests ample room for expansion in UK if Nepalese products and services are made appealing, and marketed efficiently.

Apart from those six countries there are visitors in smaller numbers from many other European nations as well. Accordingly, total European visitors in 2022 can be estimated to be around 20 percent of the total arrivals.

Nepal is yet to develop markets in several other maiden geographical regions. A country with minimal scope for the development of manufacturing sector, and simultaneously possessing unparalleled opportunities in tourism, Nepal can explore potential new markets in the global landscape. Each of the Western European nations can be a high-spending tourism market for Nepal. It can bring the Nordic states, the Baltic countries and the Middle East into its net. The list goes longer.

The Nordic region covering Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland are

high income economies; and so are Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the Baltic. All those European countries maintain a very high Human Development Index.

The scenario clearly suggests that there is abundant scope for the market growth opportunities in several potential countries. But the success depends mainly on the government's proper strategy and a concentrated and coordinated approach. In-depth country specific analyses from several perspectives- number of their outbound visitors, length of stay, preferences and spending behavior, from both existing as well as the potential markets provide useful inputs in designing appropriate strategies. Periodic monitoring of such trends helps in the success of the strategies.

The private sector, which has already developed some sorts of business relationship with those countries, obviously expects government's facilitating role in strengthening the relationship to expand the market sizes.

Mobilising the Nepalese Missions

Currently Nepal has bilateral relations with 181 countries and has its embassies in 31 countries. Further, it has its permanent missions to the UN and other international organizations in three places, namely New York, Geneva and Vienna. Likewise, 7 Nepalese Consulates General are stationed in Kolkata, Hong Kong, Lhasa, New York, Jeddah, Guangzhou and Chengdu.

The following table presents region-wise location of Nepalese embassies.

Table: Nepalese Embassies in Different Regions

Asia	Europe	Middle East	North America	South America	Africa	Oceania
Bangladesh Pakistan China India Japan Malaysia Myanmar Sri Lanka South Korea Thailand	Austria Belgium Denmark France Germany Russia Switzerland United Kingdom	Israel Bahrain Kuwait Oman Qatar Saudi Arabia United Arab Emirates	Canada United States	Brazil	Egypt South Africa	Australia
10	8	7	2	1	2	1

Source: Government of Nepal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Discussion

One of the objectives of the Nepalese foreign policy is to contribute to the socio-economic transformation of the country through the conduct of economic diplomacy in sectors such as the mobilization of development cooperation, and promotion of investment, export and tourism. (MOFA, 2023)

In the course of conducting economic diplomacy the ministry itself and the diplomatic missions abroad are mandated to work to expand bilateral and multilateral economic relationships and partnerships with the friendly countries. Tourism is one of the identified priority sectors to be developed through economic diplomacy; others being infrastructure development, export trade, foreign investment, technology transfer, development assistance, and foreign employment. A high-level Economic Diplomacy Monitoring Committee is in place to monitor the implementation of country specific strategies and strengthening interagency cooperation and coordination among the ministry, missions and the relevant government agencies and private sector organizations in the conduct of economic diplomacy. These organizational structures and the presence of the Nepalese missions in several potential countries can be utilized proactively for the development and expansion of the tourism sector.

Nepal can promote high-end tourism in countries in the higher income brackets. Particularly Europe could be a focused region for this. There are three distinct reasons: the distance from Europe to Nepal is almost half of that from the Americas to travel to Nepal, most of the European countries are high income countries, and they have a culture of holidaying. Apart from Europe, Nepal has the opportunity to utilize its presence in Australia and the United States for hosting the high-end tourists.

However, Nepal has not been able to utilize its diplomatic missions adequately for promoting tourism. The lack of effective interagency coordination in the government has for long remained one of the crucial factors in the slow progress of Nepal's overall development. The Ministry of Tourism, in close coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, should take initiations in mobilizing the Nepalese missions to the fullest extent possible for the development of tourism. It's good to note that while the development of tourism demands country specific strategies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also believes in this model in the implementation of Nepal's economic diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs seems ready to lend its proactive support. Proper strategy needs to be developed for this by the government at the initiation of the Ministry of Tourism.

Another area that needs immediate attention is the critical review of the sluggish growth of the tourism sector over the years. The Ministry of Tourism depends fully

on the Nepal Tourism Board for international marketing of the national tourism industry. The Board is not known to conduct transparently any source market-specific research. The lack of such research contributes to the under-exploitation of available opportunities. Reports of studies, if any sponsored by the Board, are not made transparent limiting the benefits of the entire stakeholders. It is high time to make an independent assessment of the Board's achievements in the last twenty-five years of its existence.

Conclusion

Finally, the tourism industry in Nepal demands very firm commitment and effective strategies from the government if the latter is serious enough in its development. It needs to plan appropriate country-specific marketing strategies, based on quality research, and ensure their effective implementation. The implementation part of the National Tourism Strategic Plan's recommendations on several important areas needs very critical review. At the same time the government needs to mobilize its missions abroad for the promotion of high-end tourism and shift its priority from mere headcounts to increased earnings from tourism.

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Foreign Aid and Agricultural Development in Nepal

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Abstract

The history of foreign aid for agricultural development began in 1951 under the Point Four Program of the United States to strengthen Nepal's democratization process and human resources development. Answering the questions related to the trend of foreign aid inflow, its impact on the development of the agricultural sector and the contribution of the agricultural sector to Gross Domestic Product make the theoretical framework of the paper. Secondary data analysis was the method employed to seek the answers. The results suggest that the per capita total outstanding debt was NPR 50,000 in FY 2076/77 BS, foreign aid and its disbursement increased over the period of 5 years, but its functional use in the agricultural sector had declined sharply to 1.1% at the end of the five years. The agricultural sector had the lion's share of 25.12% of total GDP in 2076/77 BS. The production status of rice and other cereals has increased slightly but not significantly. However, rice import has increased sharply (788,492 mt) at the end of FY 2076/77 BS, i.e., 36.6 times more than the 22,802 mt at the beginning of FY 2072/73 BS. Even then data shows a positive relationship between the inflow of foreign aid and the development of agriculture in Nepal, foreign aid is inversely related to the import of rice during the time of the studied period.

Keywords: Foreign aid, agriculture, rice, import, development

Foreign Aid in Nepal

Foreign aid has been recognized as the most crucial factor in enhancing the overall economic development of a country, especially in meeting basic needs, reducing poverty and even addressing financial crisis. Foreign aid means resources given by developed countries and international organizations to developing countries to help them with their welfare and well-being (Pandey, 2017; Thapa, 2017).

Nepal has been receiving aid for its development from different sources such as bilateral and multilateral agencies. Its history can be traced back to 1937 when the country was badly hit by the massive earthquake. At that time main donors were the US and India (Kaini, 2020). However, the first international development

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cooperation was formally initiated under the Point Four Program of the US on January 23, 1951. Its sole objective was to strengthen Nepal's democratization process and human resources development (Bhandari, 1985). The Tribhuvan Village Development Program that was launched nationwide was the first US-aided project on rural development in Nepal (Pradhan, 1985). The grant money totaled USD 22,000. Foreign aid later arrived from China in 1956 and from the Soviet Union in 1959 (Thapa, 2017). The US grant was received during the time of its 33rd President Harry S. Truman. It played an important role in rallying the forces of the overall development and well-being of people in Nepal (Thapa, 2023).

In this context, this paper has been conceptualized to understand the relationship between foreign aid and the development of agriculture in Nepal. Since the concepts of these two topics are broad, the paper is confined to focusing only on the following three questions:

1. What is the trend of foreign aid inflow in Nepal?
2. What is the contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP?
3. What is the overall impact of foreign aid on agricultural development?

Methodology

Data was collected from the economic surveys published annually by the Ministry of Finance and the Foreign Trade Statistics of the Department of Customs for the period from FY 2072/73 BS to FY 2076/77 BS. The analysis of these secondary data was done using simple statistical techniques together with a quick review of some documents. The results are presented in tabular forms.

Selected Macroeconomic Characteristics

The per capita outstanding debt in FY 2072/73 BS was NPR 22,721 but increased by 2.2 times at the end of 5 years i.e. NPR 50,002 in FY 2076/77 BS (Details in Table 1). Currently, the estimation of the per capita total outstanding debt is NPR 70,612 (Ministry of Finance, 2023).

In FY 2076/77 BS, the per capita GDP was USD 1,167 whereas per capita Gross National Income (GNI) was USD 1,180. In the same year the per capita Gross National Disposable Income (GNDI) was only USD 1,475 (Ministry of Finance, 2023).

Table 1: Per capita total outstanding debt (in NPR)

Fiscal Year	072/073	073/074	074/075	075/076	076/077
Per capita total outstanding debt	22,721	25,022	32,599	36,910	50,002

Source: Economic Surveys (2079/80: Macroeconomic Indicators)

Inflow of Foreign Aid

Table 2 shows the approval, disbursement and utilization of aid for 5 years (i.e. FY 2072/73-2076/77 BS). Both approved and disbursed amounts have been increasing over the years while that of utilization in the agricultural sector is significantly decreasing.

According to the table, the amount of aid approved (committed) by the government for FY 2073/74 was NPR 195,600 million. Some 37% of it was disbursed, of which only 7.25% was utilized in the agricultural sector. The approved amount increased to NPR 219,880 million in FY 2076/77 BS. The actual increase was NPR 14,250 million (Ministry of Finance, 2023).

As far as the disbursement is concerned, the amount increased from 37% in FY 2072/73 BS to 64% in FY 2076/77 BS. However, the utilized amount in the agricultural sector decreased to 1.1% in FY 2076/77 BS from 7.1 % (NPR 5280 million) in FY 2072/77 BS (Ministry of Finance, 2023).

Table 2: Trend of foreign aid: Approval, disbursement and utilization (NPR in million)

Fiscal Year	Approved Amount (1)	Amount Disbursed (2)	Use of Amount in Agriculture (3)
072/073	195,600	72770 (37%)	5280 (7.25%)
073/074	250,240	99,850 (40%)	5250 (5.25%)
074/075	202,000	131,550 (65%)	3730 (2.8%)
(2075/076	138,260	147,270 (73%)	1660 (1.1%)
076/077	219,880	139,700 (64%)	1490 (1.1%)

Source: (1) Economic Survey (2079/80): (1) Annex 2.8, (2) Annex 2.7, (3) Annex 2.9)

The agricultural sector (which includes agriculture, forests and fisheries) has a lion's share of about one-fourth of the GDP. Table 3 shows that in FY 2072/73 BS, its share was 28.43%, which went down to 25.12% in FY 2076/77 BS. In the current fiscal year, it is estimated to be at 24.12% (Ministry of Finance, 2023).

Table 3: Share of GDP by agriculture sector

FY	072/073	073/074	074/075	075/076	076/077
Share of agriculture to GDP (in %)	28.43	26.81	25.63	24.92	25.12

Source: Economic Surveys (2079/80: Annex 1.12)

Foreign Aid & Agricultural Development

Attempts have also been made here to look at the states of rice production, rice import and other selected indicators of agricultural development. First, a look at the rice production situation in Nepal in terms of area, yield and productivity. The time-series data of 5 years in Table 4 show that there is an increase in area by 7%, yield by 13%, and productivity by 0.65% between the FY 2072/73 BS and FY 2076/77 BS. Similar patterns can be seen in maize, wheat and cereal crops (rice, maize, wheat, oat, buckwheat and finger millet) (See Table 4 for details).

Table 4: Trend of rice and cereal production

Crops	Indicators	FY 072/073 (2015/16)	FY 073/074 (2016/17)	FY 074/075 (2017/18)	FY 075/076 (2018/19)	FY 076/077 (2019/20)
Rice	Area (ha in 000)	1363	1552	1470	1492	1459
	Production (mt in 000)	4299	5230	5152	5610	5551
	Productivity (mt/ha)	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.8	3.8
Maize	Area (ha in 000)	906	871	849	928	882
	Production (mt in 000)	2067	2179	1999	2283	2145
	Productivity (mt/ha)	2.2	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.4
Wheat	Area (ha in 000)	767.0	765	759.0	754.0	762
	Production (mt in 000)	1746	1846	1882	1883	1975
	Productivity (mt/ha)	2.7	2.1	2.5	2.5	2.6
Cereal	Area (ha in 000)	3,306	3,519	3,429	3,450	3,421
	Production (mt in 000)	8,614	9,772	10,009	10,686	10,935
	Productivity (mt/ha)	2.6	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.2

Source: Economic Survey (2079/80: Annexes 2.9, (2) 7.1)

Another indicator is rice import to Nepal. Rice has been imported from India, China, the US, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Philippines, Korea and many other countries. The term rice is used by the Department of Customs for tax purposes, and therefore, it includes rice in the husk, husked rice, semi-milled rice (polished or glazed) or broken rice. Technically, the paddy means specifically

the standing crop of rice (Department of Customs, 2020).

The data in Table 5 show the use of aids in the agricultural sector going slowly down to 1.1 % from FY 2072/73 BS to FY 2076/77 BS. However, the quantity of rice imported in FY 2072/73 BS increased by 25.9 times in the second year and after four years in FY 2076/77 BS, it further increased by 34.6 times (Ministry of Finance, 2023).

The table shows the inverse relationship between rice import and grant utilization in the agricultural sector. In other words, the use of grants decreases while the import of rice increases sharply. Nevertheless, one should be cautious in interpreting these data as we have an open border with India. Rice in the season informally goes there from various outlets and is brought back to Nepal, which is, in both cases, not accounted for. So much so that even the bits and pieces of broken rice are included in the category of rice.

Table 5: Relationship between the use of grant and rice import

FY	Use of Grant in Agri. Sector (1)	Rice import (in mt) (2)	Increase in Import
2072/073	7.25%	22,802 mt	
2073/074	5.25%	590,198	25.9 times
2074/075	2.8%	743,390	32.6 times
2075/076	1.1%	769,568	33.8 times
2076/077	1.1%	788,492	34.6 times

Source: Economic Survey (2079/80): (1) Annex 2.9); Department of Customs (2077)

Similar patterns can be seen in other indicators as well. For example, the sale of fertilizers has gone up from 258,914 mt in FY 2072/73 BS to 400,541 mt in FY 2076/77 BS (Annex 7.5). The sale of improved seeds also grew from 24,950 mt in FY 2072/73 BS to 33,803 mt in FY 2076/77 BS (Annex 7.12). Similarly, 1,853,885 mt of milk was produced in FY 2072/73 BS and it increased to 2,309,000 mt in FY 2076/77 BS (Annex 7.11). The supply of agricultural credit by banks & financial institutions increased from NPR 78,790 million to NPR 225,770 million in 2076/77 BS (Annex 7.14). The number of small farmer groups has also increased tremendously from 77,378 in FY 2072/73 BS to 1,20,337 in FY 2076/77 BS (Annex 7.15). Likewise, the number of employments generated by the agricultural sector also increased annually from 64,544 in FY 2072/73 BS to 113,510 in FY 2076/77 BS (Economic Survey 079/80, Annex 7.15) (Ministry of Finance, 2023).

Conclusion

The study is based on the data that are presented in the government's annual economic surveys of various years. Despite problems and constraints, the indicators of agricultural development have shown positive signs and indications even though the utilization of foreign aid has decreased over the years. The results, based on secondary data analysis, indicate that the agricultural sector had the lion's share of 25.12% in total GDP, although decreasing over five years in FY 2076/77 BS. In FY 2072/73 BS, it was 28.43%. The expectation for this running fiscal year is 24.1%, which is even lower than that of FY 2076/77 BS. The macroeconomic indicator shows that the per capita total outstanding debt in FY 2076/77 BS is NPR 70,000 as compared to NPR 50,002 in FY 2076/77 BS.

Rice has been the number one imported grain in Nepal. In comparison to the data of FY 2072/73 BS, when the quantity of rice imported was 22,802 mt, the import increased by almost 34.6 times higher i.e. 788,492 mt in FY 2076/77 BS. Most of the rice was imported from India (Foreign Trade Statistic: Annual Statistics of FY 2079/80).

Foreign aid over the years (FY 2072/73-FY 2076/77) grew slightly but not significantly, and it was positively related to rice production (in terms of area, yield and productivity). Similarly, the selected indicators (sale of fertilizers and seeds, milk production, credit given by banks, number of small farmer groups and employment generation) of agricultural development are also positively related to the inflow of foreign aid. However, it is negatively related to the growing rice import in the studied period of FY 2072/73 BS.

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Nepal Council of World Affairs

Activities 2023-24

Nepal Council of World Affairs, established on Falgun 6, 2004 BS, organized its **75th Anniversary** on Falgun 11, 2079 (February 23, 2023) at the Rashtriya Sabhagriha, Kathmandu. Chief Guest Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari, the then President of Nepal, addressed the Council and expressed her views on Nepal's foreign policy, diplomacy, and various dimensions of international relations. On the occasion, NCWA honored former Foreign Minister and former President of the NCWA, Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, for his contributions in the field of Nepal's international relations for more than six decades. President of NCWA Mr. Hemanta Kharel chaired the program, and Executive Member of NCWA Dr. Bishnu Dev Pant conducted the proceedings.

Nepal Council of World Affairs celebrated its 75th anniversary with the lighting of the lamp by the executive committee members at its premises in Harihar Bhawan, Lalitpur on Falgun 6, 2079 (February 18, 2079).

Nepal Council of World Affairs organized an interaction on “**Foreign Policy of Nepal**” on Chaitra 27, 2079 (April 10, 2023) at Time Square, Baluwatar, Kathmandu. On the occasion, Hon'ble Mr. Bhuvan Pathak, Speaker of Bagmati Provincial Assembly and former Secretary of NCWA, was felicitated. President of NCWA Mr. Hemanta Kharel chaired the program.

On the occasion of the Constitution Day on Ashoj 3, 2079 (September 19, 2022), the Government of Nepal recognized the Nepal Council of World Affairs for its long-term contribution in the field of Nepal's international relations by conferring the organization with the ‘Suprabal Janasewashree Bibhushan’. The then President of Nepal Ms. Bidya Devi Bhandari awarded the honor to NCWA on Baisakh 1, 2080 (April 14, 2023) which was received by NCWA President Mr. Hemanta Kharel on the Council's behalf.

Nepal Council of World Affairs organized an interaction on “**Singapore-Big Success from Small Country**” on Baisakh 21, 2080 (May 4, 2023) at its hall in Harihar Bhawan, Lalitpur. Dr. Omkar Shrestha, Associate Research Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), Adjunct Faculty, National University of Singapore (NUS), was the keynote speaker and NCWA President Mr. Hemanta Kharel chaired the program.

Nepal Council of World Affairs organized an interaction on “**Nepal-EU Relations and Future Prospects**” on Baisakh 28, 2080 (May 11, 2023) at its hall in Harihar Bhawan, Lalitpur. The Head of Delegation of the European Union and Ambassador to Nepal, H.E. Ms. Nona Deprez spoke on the occasion as the chief guest, and NCWA President Mr. Hemanta Kharel chaired the program.

Nepal Council of World Affairs organized an interaction on “**Nepal-German Cooperation and Future Prospects**” on Jesth 10, 2080 (May 24, 2023) at its hall in Harihar Bhawan, Lalitpur. Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany H.E. Dr. Thomas Prinz put forth his views as the chief guest, and President of NCWA Mr. Hemanta Kharel chaired the program.

Nepal Council of World Affairs organized an interaction on “**Nepal-Pakistan Relations and Future Prospects**” on Shrawan 23, 2080 (August 8, 2023) at its hall in Harihar Bhawan, Lalitpur. H.E. Mr. Abrar H Hashmi, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was the chief guest and keynote speaker, and NCWA President Mr. Hemanta Kharel chaired the program.

Nepal Council of World Affairs held its **76th Annual General Meeting** on Bhadra 2, 2080 (August 18, 2023) at Lainchaur Banquet, Lainchaur, Kathmandu. Secretary General of NCWA Mr. Ramesh Singh presented the annual report, and the Treasurer of NCWA Mr. Bimal Khadka presented the financial statement and annual budget for the next fiscal year 2023/2024 (2080/081 BS). The Meeting unanimously passed the annual budget, proposed programs for the fiscal year 2023/024 and approved the auditor’s report for the fiscal year 2022/023 (2079/80 BS). President of NCWA Mr. Hemanta Kharel chaired the AGM.

Nepal Council of World Affairs organized a festival greetings program on Kartik 1, 2080 (October 18, 2023) at its Hall in Harihar Bhawan, Lalitpur. On the occasion, President of NCWA Mr. Hemanta Kharel extended his greetings by wishing that the cultural traditions of Nepal such as Bijaya Dashami, Shubha Deepawali/Tihar, Nepal Sambat, Chhath, Lhosar and Eid would help unite the Nepali people. On the occasion, greetings were also extended for world peace and brotherhood.

Nepal Council of World Affairs organized an interaction on “**Changing Global Geopolitical Dimension and its Implication for Nepal**” on Mangshir 10, 2080 (November 26, 2023) at its hall in Harihar Bhawan, Lalitpur. Senior Fellow at the Stockholm Center for International Law and Justice at Stockholm University, Sweden, Prof. Dr. Katak Malla, was the chief guest and keynote speaker, and President of NCWA Mr. Hemanta Kharel chaired the program.

Nepal Council of World Affairs organized an interaction on “**Foreign Policy of Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities**” on Magh 14, 2080 (January 28, 2024) at its hall in Harihar Bhawan, Lalitpur. Former Foreign and Finance Minister Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, Former Foreign Minister Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, and Adviser to Former Prime Minister of Nepal and Former Ambassador Dr. Dinesh Bhattarai were speakers of the program, and President of NCWA Mr. Hemanta Kharel chaired the program.

Nepal Council of World Affairs

Activities Photos



Chief Guest, the then President of Nepal Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari, delivering her address on the Occasion of the 75th Anniversary of NCWA on February 23, 2023

Chief Guest, the then President of Nepal Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari honoring Former Foreign Minister and former President of the NCWA, Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, for his contributions in the field of international relations for more than six decades

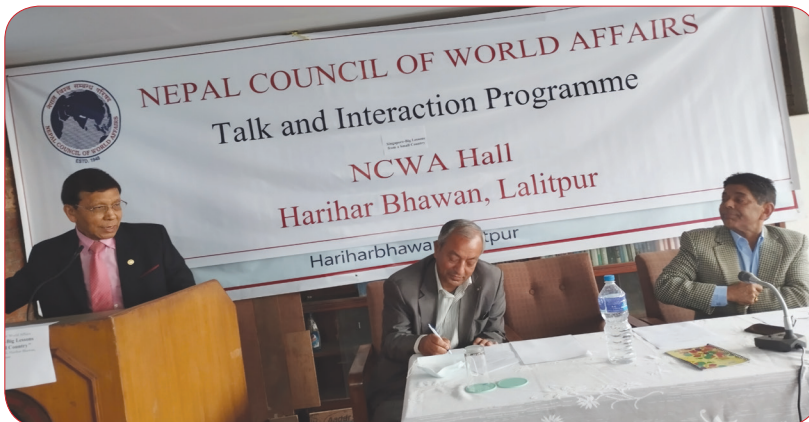


Group Photo with Chief Guest



A glimpse of participants at the 75th Anniversary

NCWA President Mr. Hemanta Kharel receiving the 'Suprabal Janasewa Shree Vibhushan' on behalf of NCWA from the Rt. Hon'ble President of Nepal on April 14, 2023



Interaction programme on Singapore-Big Success from Small Country on May 4, 2023



Participants in an interaction programme on Singapore-Big Success from Small Country on May 4, 2023

Group Photo of an interaction programme on Nepal-EU Relations and Future Prospects on May 11, 2023.



Participants attending interaction programme on Nepal-EU Relations and Future Prospects on May 11, 2023



German Ambassador speaking an interaction programme on Nepal-German Cooperation and Future Prospects on May 24, 2023

Participants attending the interaction programme on Nepal-German Cooperation and Future Prospects on May 24, 2023



Pakistan Ambassador speaking during an interaction on Nepal-Pakistan Relations and Future Prospects on August 8, 2023



A glimpse of participants attending interaction on Nepal-Pakistan Relations and Future Prospects on August 8, 2023

76th Annual General Meeting of NCWA on August 18, 2023



Participants attending the 76th Annual General Meeting of the NCWA on August 18, 2023



Festival Greetings Program on October 18, 2023

Participants in Festival Greetings Program on October 18, 2023



Group Photo taken during the interaction programme on Changing Global Geopolitical Dimension and its Implication for Nepal on November 26, 2023



During talk programme on Foreign Policy of Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities on January 28, 2024

Participants in an interaction on Foreign Policy of Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities on January 28, 2024



Group photo of the participant during interaction on Foreign Policy of Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities on January 28, 2024



Participants in an interaction on Foreign Policy of Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities on January 28, 2024

President and the Executive Committee 'Lighting the Lamps' to Mark the establishment of Nepal Council of World Affairs (Falgun 6, 2004 Bikram Sambat) as part of the 76th Anniversary Celebrations on February 18, 2024.



'Lighting the Lamps' to Mark the establishment of NCWA(Falgun 6, 2004) as part of the 76th Anniversary Celebrations on February 18, 2024.