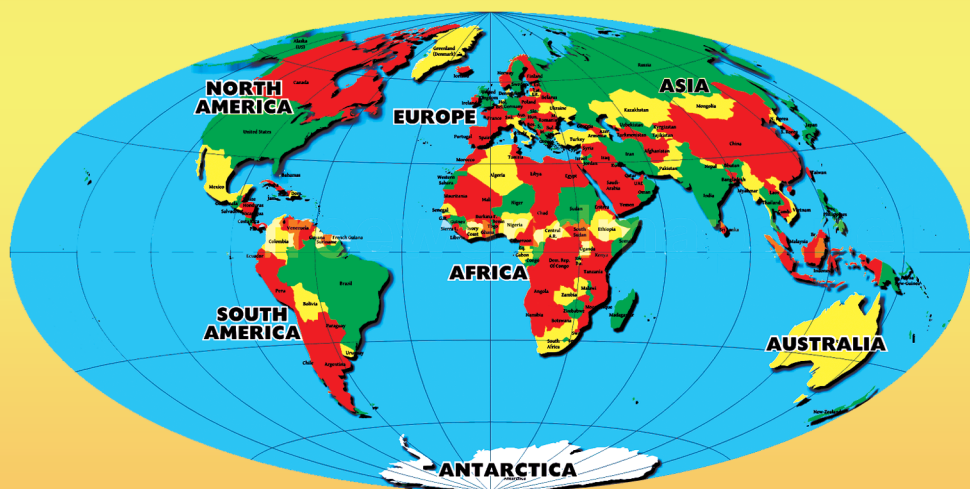


Defending National Interest in the Emerging Internal, Regional and International Challenges

One Day National Seminar



परराष्ट्र मामिला अध्ययन प्रतिष्ठान
Institute of Foreign Affairs

Institute of Foreign Affairs



Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Nepal

Defending National Interest in the Emerging Internal, Regional and International Challenges

**One Day National Seminar
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Preface

Nepal is in the process of transformation. All old and obsolete concepts of the nation state, its structure and political system have seen a paradigm shift with the epoch making change brought about by the decade long Maoist insurgency and the 19-day Peoples' movement.

After the death of CA I amidst multi-ethnic/regional cataclysm and peaceful conduction of election of CA II, Nepalese are hopeful that the pending process of constitution writing will be completed by January 22, 2015, which will pave the way for lasting peace and stability with democratic dispensation in the country and the general public starts enjoying the so far elusive socio-economic dividends. The resultant product is believed to be strengthening ourselves against any impending internal and external threats to our national objectives.

Partisan politics prevailing over vital issues such as national political system; politicization of national institutions includes judiciary, education, bureaucracy, and criminalization of politics; internal cultural conflicts including inter-religious; inter-ethnic/racial and inter-regional are other factors to be considered while planning for defense of national interest.

Internally, protecting national interests encompasses software such as freedom from all kinds of fear, poverty, marginalization, unemployment and exclusion etc. The hardware side of national interests includes protecting the lives of all citizens during internal conflicts and calamities and protecting the national borders and preservation of national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Nepal is in a very sensitive geo-strategic position as a bridge between two physical, economic and military giants, competing with each other for world attention and leadership. It is a delicate matter for Nepal to play a balancing role as a physically, economically and militarily small country.

Vis-a-Vis Nepal, China has Tibetan issue at hand and India has terrorism and fake currency issues. Nepal needs to assure both the neighbors that it is trusted friend and takes their vital interests and issues seriously.

Globally, there are competing interests in an impending paradigm shift. The erstwhile bi-polar world has turned to be multi-polar after a brief period of US led uni-polarity. In the backdrop of rise of China as the regional power house and India closely following China, US has been advocating about "Rebalance"

after the “Containment” policy. US seems very much concerned and is all out countering China’s influence in the region in securing global dominance and economy. This new phenomenon is sure to influence the region including Nepal.

Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya suggests that at this critical juncture, Nepal needs to urgently develop a coherent foreign and defense strategy which ensures protection of our national interest and also caters the need of our neighbors. Our aim should be to work with and for policymakers, provide them policy level recommendations and ensure that government incorporates and implements it. This is going to be a major challenge for us in the days ahead.

With this background, IFA with the support of FES, organized one day seminar on, “Defending National Interest in the Emerging Internal, Regional and International Challenges” on September 9, 2014 with the objective of making participants and others aware on the emerging internal and external challenges to the national interests of Nepal. The audiences comprised of defense and security experts, international relations experts, relevant academia, diplomatic community, officials from MoFA, MoD, MoHA, media etc.

IFA extends appreciation to Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey for his key note speech on the issue; two presenters, Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya and Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada; two chairs, Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa and Dr. Lok Raj Baral and two commentators, Yuba Raj Ghimire and Anand Aditya.

I extend my appreciation to Dr. Dev Raj Dahal, FES Country Chief for Nepal, for the intellectual and financial support for the program. I also wish to thank Mr. Yadav Khanal, Resource Person at IFA for his active participation and contribution to the seminar. Mr. Sanu Raja Puri, Librarian, IFA and Mr. Chandra Shekhar Adhikari Senior Diplomatic Correspondant at Kantipur Daily are appreciated for their roles in publication of this proceeding.

The outcome of the seminar was disseminated by overwhelming presence of the media and related individuals and organizations. The papers, discussion points and comments have been published in this book for further dissemination widely for security and foreign policy advocacy.

The institute welcomes comments, suggestions and feedbacks so as to refine the future publications of IFA.

Dr. Rishi Raj Adhikari
Executive Director

1. Concept of the Seminar

Defending National Interest in the Emerging Internal, Regional and International Challenges

"If those in power now fail to demonstrate wisdom they could preside over change not only in the course of Nepal's history but also its geography"

The Crying Soul, The Kathmandu Post 2004-08-04

Nepal is in the process of transformation. All old and obsolete concepts of the nation state, its structure and political system have seen a paradigm shift with the epoch making change brought about by the decade long Maoist insurgency and the 19-day Peoples' movement. We have witnessed phenomenal changes in all spheres of the country's political, social and cultural life over the last eight years since the peace accord was signed between the state and the UCPN-Maoist in 2006.

The phenomenal political change has also brought about changes in the national perception on varied issues of public concern, including national interest. It is widely felt that Nepal now needs a new national doctrine that clearly defines possible threats to our national security emanating from various sources and sectors (internal and external) and determining ways and approaches to deterring and countering them.

National vital interests include protection and preservation of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, for which a nation-state is prepared even to go to war. Such vital national interests remain outside the arena of domestic political changes.

With the changing times and situation at both the national and global level, the concept of security now encompasses a wide array of issues. Today, security is defined as freedom from fear and freedom from want. In other words, it is defined as both state security and people's security. Freedom from fear covers the issues that ensure the physical safety of the state and its citizens. State security mainly seeks to secure its border and maintain national independence and territorial integrity as well as protection of its people from

all kinds of external encroachment and intrusion.

Challenges to Nepal's National Interests

Survival is the key issue of Nepal's defense strategy. Ever since Nepal emerged as a nation state, survival has been the uppermost strategy. Various tactics and tricks were applied to maintain its sovereign status. In the beginning, Nepal was in an expansionist spree which came to an end following its headlong collision with British India during 1814-16.

1. Internal Challenges

Nepal faces growing internal security challenges because of its transition if the proposed federal system is not handled with wisdom. The constitution could not be promulgated due to disagreements on ethnicity based federal set up. There are threats of violence possibly leading to dismemberment of the nation. There is potential risk of other criminal groups severely jeopardizing Nepal's internal security.

There are also pervasive human security challenges like poverty, unemployment, health and climate change. The impending climate changes may lead to new conflicts over refugees and resources; new suffering from drought and famine; catastrophic natural disasters; and degradation of land quality.

Additional internal challenges to national vital interests/objectives include: crisis of national leaderships enjoying trust and confidence of all Nepalese; lack of consensus among the major political parties on what constitutes national purpose and vital interests; doubt over the credibility of the CA for writing of new Constitution on time; partisan politics prevailing over vital issues such as national political system, declining national unity; politicization of national institutions including judiciary, education and bureaucracy; ill/myopic management of Nepal's vital resources – water – and geopolitical/geo-strategic location; very low economic growth rate; widening socio-economic disparity between the haves and have not; and, the possibility of economic meltdown and criminalization of politics; controversial citizenship issue; underdeveloped civil-military relation; regional, ethnic and class differences, social discrimination, insecurity of marginalized groups; brain drain of population; and over population.

The security threat to Nepal may also come from internal cultural conflicts including inter-religious (Hindus versus others like Muslim, Christians), inter-ethnic/ racial (Khas/ Mongols, Madhises versus Tharus), and inter-regional

(Pahadis versus Madhesis), because such cultural sort of conflicts are most likely to trigger chain reaction across the nation-state and invite regional and international interference.

Due to open/unsecured border, Terai with almost 50% of the total population and serving as economic and political core, remains very vulnerable to several types of threats. The self-serving leaderships may hold the reigns of national power which could be equally dangerous to vital national interests.

2. Regional Challenges

Nepal, being in a special geo-strategic position, needs to address the security concern of two emerging giant neighbors. China has always maintained a policy of non-interference in Nepal's politics. It respects Nepal's foreign policy and the country's transition to a federal republic. At this point, China's only concern in Nepal is regarding Tibetan issues and worries that Nepal's territories could be used for 'free Tibet movement'. China to certain extent seems to be concerned on federated Nepal in relation to its impact on Tibet.

India is concerned about political agitation on the revision of the 1950 Nepal-India treaty and the possibility of terrorists using Nepal as a transit point, taking advantage of the open and shared border, fake currency circulations etc. India has also expressed its concern about the possible links between Nepali and Indian Maoists, given that India considers its Maoist movement its greatest internal security threat.

On the issues of federalism, India has been positive towards ethnic self-determination. India considers that such an arrangement would address its security concerns more favorably.

Regional threats include: Water resources control, economic blockade and energy crisis; encroachment of international border; construction of series of unilateral embankments close to 'No man's land'; grand design under 'Nehru-doctrine'; sustained cultural invasion; infiltration of Nepalese leaderships and bureaucracy; manipulation of mainstream and regional political parties for the control of the government, regional instability; mass migration of people caused by the impact of ecological disaster in South Asia.

Located between two global economic and strategic powerhouses, Nepal can greatly benefit from developments taking place in India and China today. The main external threats to Nepal could be its immediate neighbors – India or China in spite of having excellent bi-lateral relations with both the countries. Both are capable of militarily invasion and occupying Nepal within a short

span of time. However, Nepal is most unlikely to face such a direct foreign military invasion because of its geopolitical location, the short-term and long-term implications of such invasion, and the elements of uncertainties involved in such an adventure. The best interest of Nepal is in nurturing a relationship of trust and confidence with both India and China. Rising China, Shining India and Changing Nepal create new opportunities for all sides to strengthen the age old friendship for the benefit of the people of all three countries in the new century.

3. International Challenges

Nepal is the meeting point of two great civilizations and today it is one of the epicenters of competing interests in an impending global paradigm shift.

Asia-Pacific countries have led to dramatic competition in the region. The US has intensively expanded its effort to the Pacific region. National security, global domination and economic interests are the key factors of the US shifting towards Asia. The U.S. has been moving ahead with an aim to maintain close ties with its Asia-Pacific allies to counter China's influence in the region. Such a situation could change the political, economical, and even military scenario in the region including that of Nepal. The US has expressed its commitment of vision towards its ally and desire for a peaceful, stable and economically prosperous region. But the key pillar of foreign policy "pivot to Asia" is sure to influence its heavy weight military might and increased participation in economically vibrant Asia along with defense and trade policy. On the policy shift, it has announced to focus 60 percent of American air and sea power in Asia by 2020. Some regional countries have sought greater US presence while some disagree. Vitality of relations with neighbors does not preclude pro-active role internationally. Strengthening relations with the new US administration, further deepening traditional friendship with UK, European Union, Russia, Japan, Germany and France, and greater visibility in the UN are some of the other priorities of Nepal.

Way Forward

In order to fill the void between existing and ideal status on national interest, Nepali academia and policymakers need to urgently develop a coherent defense strategy. Nepal needs to develop a comprehensive policy (both foreign and security) to tackle such internal and external threats and address legitimate security concerns of its giant neighbors. Nepal does not have a defense white paper to guide its security policy in the changing regional and international context, further undermining Nepal's ability to deal with

the rising powers in China and India independently. Hence, a comprehensive security and foreign policy is required, which should be better informed through appropriate academic and policy-level discussions.

There is need to invest more time, resources and money on conducting research to better guide and inform our policymakers. Our aim should be to work with and for policy makers, provide them policy level recommendations and ensure that government incorporates and implements it. This is going to be a major challenge for us in the days ahead.

Organization of the Seminar

The seminar was a one day long beginning from morning to afternoon. Two papers were presented on relevant topics by the international relation/defense/security specialists of Nepal.

There were three sessions, starting with Inaugural and one for each paper. Out of two papers one dealt with internal and regional challenges and the other with international challenges to the national interest of Nepal.

There was one commentator for each paper and one chair for each session and a team of rapporteurs. Intense floor discussions were encouraged to collect views on the theme of the seminar from broader audiences. The audiences comprised of defense and security experts, international relations experts, relevant academia, diplomatic community, officials from MoFA, MoD, MoHA and media etc.

The outcome of the seminar were to be disseminated by overwhelming presence of the media and related individuals and organizations. Later the papers, discussion points and comments are going to be published in this book which will be disseminated widely for security and foreign policy advocacy.



2. Welcome Remarks by **Mr. Yadav Khanal** **Resource Person, Institute of Foreign Affairs**

Mr. Chairman
Honorable Foreign Minister
Acting Foreign Secretary
Distinguished Guests, Media Representatives
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Institute of Foreign Affairs, I wish to welcome Hon'ble Foreign Minister, Acting Foreign Secretary, Distinguished Guests and Media Representatives in this very important seminar where we have come together to discuss the dynamics of the country's vital national interest that coincides with final stage of constitution drafting process. Keeping in mind the gravity of this subject, IFA is organizing this discussion forum with an objective that the outcome of this discourse will add value to a desirable resolution of our vital transitional moment.

Another challenge is national integrity and the zeal to agree on matters of national interest 'putting the nation first' in the international arenas. The country is struggling to hit upon the consensus on political, economic, regional and cultural fields among others. I believe that the outcome of such interaction will certainly provide feedbacks to policy makers, political leadership and general public in finding way forward to preserve the national interest and to create harmony among our people.

We also need to identify the core of the national interest and work unitedly, so that the country will not be left behind. With the stable and strong governments in the neighborhood, safeguarding and promoting the national interest is even more vital. Looking at the very fashion the way these neighbors are moving, they will become the global powerhouses in the near future. Nepal in this context should come out of the buffer psychology and must be engaged intensively in formulating regional strategies to create regional harmony and development.

Nepal, like any country, has many challenges at the international level. Though we are a landlocked country, we cannot be left isolated from the world due to globalization effect and expansion of information technology. The west is heading to the east and our neighbors and the entire East Asia have become the focal point of today's global politics. Together, the world is interconnected amongst the number of issues like environment, resources, terrorism, diseases and so on. We need to be more vigilant in safeguarding our interest and at the same time working together with the rest of the world.

We have a very distinguished panel of experts today and I believe that the discussion will be really productive. The institute is very thankful to everyone who have accepted our invitation and look forward to having an extensive discussion in both of our sessions. Once again, I extend my sincere welcome to Hon. Minister, Acting Foreign Secretary, paper presenters and panelists and all distinguished guests and media representatives and thank all of them for sharing their valuable time with us this morning.

Thank you.



3. Opening Remarks by **Mr. Shankar Das Bairagi,** **Acting Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Mr. Chairperson

Honorable Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey

Former Foreign Secretaries

Former Ambassadors

Representatives from Security Agencies

Academia

Media persons

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by commending the Institute of Foreign Affairs for organizing this event and inviting me to speak a few words in the inaugural session of the seminar entitled, “Defending National Interest in the Emerging Internal, Regional and International Challenges’. I also thank the FES for supporting this event. Initiating a substantive debate on such an important topic of national importance is a welcome development. Deliberations of this kind are certain to foster greater understanding and consensus among the key stakeholders on the basic ingredients of national interests and, based on them, the overall conduct of foreign policy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Needless to say, the core objective of foreign policy is to promote and safeguard national interests. Parameters of national interest define a boundary within which every government has to seek external engagement. For any state for its survival and growth, nothing is more important than preserving and promoting national interest. For this, states employ different tools and strategies.

Nepal’s national interests have got eloquent expression in its constitution. Our enlightened interests include maintenance of sovereignty and territorial integrity; building strong, self reliant and independent national economy; promoting healthy, just and moral society; and creating cooperative and

harmonious environment conducive for security, peace, and stability in the region and beyond. Our foreign policy and diplomacy are geared to achieve these ends.

National interest cannot be pursued in isolation or in vacuum. Every government operates in a maze of complex challenges and has to address them effectively. Challenges and complexities abound at national, regional and international levels. Indeed, circumstances and contexts under which we attain foreign policy objectives are not as simple and predictable as we would wish for. For obvious reasons, it is more challenging for a small country like Nepal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The growing shift of power to non-state actors has created both opportunities and challenges. On the positive side, transnational non-governmental organization, civil society groups, faith-based organizations, multinational corporations, other business bodies and interest groups have greater say today at reframing issues and mobilizing publics. On the negative side, hostile, non-state actors such as criminal organizations and terrorist networks all empowered by new technologies can pose serious security threats and compound systemic risk.

International security has become multi-dimensional. Terrorism and cross border crimes are on the rise. The international community is yet to find amicable solutions to various crises around the world. However, premature of a concept it may sound, the world is abuzz with the 'onset of second cold war'. To our dismay, multilateralism is being weakened. Security architectures have not been able to cope with growing security complexities. The growing number of issues and their complexity is outpacing the capacity of international institutions and national governments to cope. Globalization and liberalization has created a handful of winners many losers which has resulted in the widening gap between haves and have nots. Poor and weak countries are being increasingly marginalized and sidelined; their development capacities are impaired; and vulnerabilities are increased. New security threats-from climate change to deadly viral diseases and from cyber crimes to trafficking in persons have threatened developing countries and least developed countries the most.

In addition to such global menaces, our region is confronting a host of challenges- be it in security, economic, political or social cultural fields. To our consternation, Asia's potential flashpoints for conflicts are increasing, not decreasing. Poverty, backwardness, political instability, rampant

corruption and bad governance, cross-border crimes, exclusion, extremism, fundamentalism, and food-water-energy crises have all been contributing to make our region more challenging and difficult to manage.

At national level too, challenges are manifold. These challenges come from different sectors- political, economic, social, cultural, institutional, governance to name a few. It is generally held that longer the political transition, weaker the state's capacity. Though we have made substantial progress in political realm, we have not been able to make corresponding progress in economic realm, without which political stability cannot be achieved. Accomplishing the task of constitution writing and getting it promulgated through the CA within a year is the most important national priority. In view of a myriad challenges we face, it appears that Nepal's challenges are mostly internal.

Yet, we have reasons to be assured of better future. Enormous opportunities are being unfolded for us to capitalize on. They will add to our strength. They help protect and promote our national interests.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Political transformation that Nepal is currently undergoing is unparalleled in the world's history. Indeed, Nepal's nationally-driven and internationally supported peace process can be one of the best models to emulate for finding a solution to armed insurgency. The fact that we are performing well in terms of achieving most of the MDGs gives us confidence in our capacity to accelerate the pace of socio-economic development. Our geo-strategic location, our established international identity, young population, natural endowments like hydro-power, tourism resources, social cohesion in diversity, inclusive society, and commitment to and involvement in the maintenance of world peace are some of the factors that underpin our national strengths. We have felt that economic strengths and interests have gained primacy in foreign policy making and execution.

Many new and positive developments are creating conducive environment for further cooperation in the region. The stated policy of the new Government of India under Prime Minister Modi to give priority to relations with neighbours has generated tremendous enthusiasm across South Asia. SAARC Member states, given huge potentials, must cooperate in a meaningful way to assert South Asia's rightful place on the world stage. We are expecting the 18th SAARC summit in Kathmandu later this year to be an important milestone in the evolution of SAARC.

Also, positive synergy our two big neighbors-India and China- are creating in terms of their economic and trade relations contributes to stability of this region. We must prepare ourselves to catch up and get benefit from unprecedented economic transformation that is taking place in our neighborhood.

We see many positive developments at global level too. Shifting power to Asia; importance accorded to Asia by major countries; priority given to ameliorate the plights of LDCs and LLDCs; growing roles of UN peacekeeping; and global fight for poverty are among those areas of developments. However, declining resource flow from the traditional development partners and the increased demand from the North to assume more responsibility by the South (emerging economies) in terms of providing resources for development could create confusion over the roles and responsibility of both the North and South. Aid flow going to countries like ours is declining, margin of trade preferences is eroding and FDI becoming more competitive, which will have far reaching consequences for development endeavours.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Safeguarding and advancing our national interests hinges on how and whether we can overcome a plethora of challenges at different levels and coming from different sectors. Our strengths are tested how and whether we can grasp the opportunities available. Above all, it depends on whether we have a long term vision and mission; whether we have clear and well-thought out policies and strategies; whether we have been able to create and develop robust institutions; how independent, reliable, objective and analytic our intellectuals, academics, and media have been; and how much experienced and skillful our diplomats and professionals are.

Our balanced relations with India and China; great faith in and active participation in multilateral diplomacy; steadfast commitment to and involvement in Non-alignment; dynamic engagement in regional diplomacy under SAARC and BIMSTEC; our consistent support and involvement in UN peacekeeping; our focus on economic diplomacy are among the activities we have been carrying on with full vigor. These policy measures along with our diplomatic efforts have paid us a lot in our humble efforts. They helped safeguard and advance our national interest, notwithstanding many upheavals in national, regional and international arena.

Still, what we feel is that we need to go a long way to this end.

With this in mind, I put forward some suggestions '6Cs'- for consideration. First is 'Consensus'. Indeed, we need to build broader national consensus to define the parameters of our national interests. Based on them, we can develop our vision, mission, policy and strategies on how to achieve those interests. Second C is for 'Critical and creative thinking'. It is incumbent upon us to take stock of continuous developments in the region and world and think critically and also creatively to measure correctly how we can fit into these new developments. Third C is for 'Clear, consistent and credible' policy- without which we cannot attain our national interests. Both domestic and foreign policy should be guided with this premise. Fourth C is related to 'Cooperation and collaboration'. We all know that diplomacy in the 21st century is not a zero sum but a positive sum. Focus should be on collaboration, cooperation, fraternity and partnership with neighbors and others. Fifth is 'Comprehensive and cooperative' security doctrine. I feel rather strongly that the interplay between security and foreign policies is all the more important in advancing Nepal's national interests. Sixth C stands for 'Constructive diplomacy'- without which the whole idea of advancing national interests is of no availing. For this, we need to develop robust diplomatic institutions and professional foreign service with due emphasis on clear policy, due motivation, professional training, and supportive political and administrative environments.

Having said this, I express my confidence that the seminar will deal with each of these components one way or another. It is also my belief that papers to be presented and discussions to be held during the seminar will enlighten us how to find better way and overcome all impediments and challenges on our way to the advancement of national interests.

I once again repeat how happy I have been to be here!

I wish the seminar a success!

Thank you



4. Key Note Address by **Chief Guest, Hon. Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Mr. Chairman,
Hon. CA Members,
Acting Foreign Secretary,
Panelists and Commentators,
Distinguished Participants:

I feel honoured to have the opportunity to participate in this seminar and deliver the Keynote speech. As the Foreign Minister of the country, defending Nepal's national interests in relation to international community in a broader sense is my primary responsibility. Moreover, Nepal faces a number of challenges, many in the context of the recent developments, in meeting its foreign policy objectives. In this sense, discussing and analyzing the challenges the country is facing, or is likely to face in the days ahead, and trying to find out possible measures to effectively address the challenges is a timely and important initiative. I thank the Institute of Foreign Affairs and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung for holding the seminar on such a pertinent topic.

Foreign policy of a country is guided and dictated by a number of factors both internal and external. Other peculiarities such as the country's location, diplomatic traditions and aspirations of the people play equally important roles in deciding the country's foreign policy. Besides, every country has its national philosophy which provides inputs in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. This is true in Nepal's case as well.

Ever since Nepal took the shape of a united country, especially after the period of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, its foreign policy has largely been guided by geopolitical factors. Located as we are between the two big neighbours, our foreign policy orientation has been to maintain the best of relations with both countries based on the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence and mutuality of benefits.

Before talking about the challenges that Nepal faces in defending its national interest, it would be appropriate to briefly discuss about Nepal's national interest in reference to foreign policy. As any representative government, the Government of Nepal, too, has a long-term vision of developing Nepal into a democratic, stable, peaceful and prosperous country in which all people can live a life with dignity and honour. This is what the people of Nepal rightfully deserve. Reflecting this reality, Nepal's Interim Constitution - 2007 has provided that "the main objective of the State shall be to promote the welfare of the people on the basis of the principles of an open society, by establishing a just system in all aspects of the national life including social, economic and political life while at the same time protecting the lives, property, equality and liberty of the people". The same Constitution has also indentified the maintenance of peace and order, protection and promotion of human rights, promotion of public welfare and democratic and participatory governance as the objectives of the state.

How can we achieve this? And how to effectively develop Nepal's foreign policy as one of the tools to realize these objectives is the main challenge before us. Nepal's successive constitutions, including the Interim Constitution, have identified objectives of the country's foreign policy. The objectives include preservation of the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, and promoting Nepal's dignity and honour in the international arena. The UN Charter, Non-alignment, Panchasheela, international law and the norms of world peace guide our foreign policy. The modus operandi is to have harmonious and cooperative relations with all countries, including our immediate neighbours, on the basis of equality.

Nepal has taken number of initiatives and policy decisions to realize these broad objectives. We have been maintaining balanced relations with our neighbours; have been advocating the rights of the developing countries in general, and those of the least developed and land-locked countries, in particular; have expressed our unswerving commitment to the principles as enshrined in the UN Charter; have been playing active role as a NAM member; and have been making exemplary contribution to maintaining world peace. We are also actively participating in regional integration processes under SAARC and BIMSTEC. Today, Nepal is a respected member of the international community. The interest shown by many countries in Nepal's ongoing developments and their contribution to the socio-economic development of our country are the manifestations of this reality.

Things are not that simple and straightforward, however. As rightly incorporated into the topic of today's seminar, there are internal, regional and

international challenges that countries face these days as we live in an age of interdependence and interconnectedness. Internally, Nepal is in the process of drafting new constitution for the country to institutionalize democratic gains achieved over the years. We have to meet the ever growing expectations of our people, especially in the aftermath of the successful People's Movement-2. Besides, we have to reduce poverty and unemployment, provide essential services to our people, and have to guarantee law and order in the society. From the outside, these issues seem not to have any bearing on foreign policy. But, they have. Needless to say, foreign policy is the extension of domestic policy. We need moral and political support from our neighbours, friends and well-wishers in the international community to accomplish the vital task of constitution writing and generous material support to meet our socio-economic development needs. In this context, I would like to mention about our commitment to achieve developing country status by 2022. We are moving ahead satisfactorily, and are optimistic for the future. We also know that we have to work hard with added commitment and dedication.

Regionally, too, we are facing some common challenges. Poverty alleviation is our common goal. Raising the standards of living of our peoples and improving their quality of life by providing basic facilities constitute our shared objective. We have to fight social evils such as terrorism, cross-border crimes, and epidemics. In recent years, natural disasters have emerged as a formidable challenge, which demands concerted efforts regionally and globally. We believe that by making SAARC and BIMSTEC more effective we can address problems facing our region.

Many of the challenges that we are facing in our region are global in nature. Terrorism, for example, is not confined to our region, but is a global menace. Environmental degradation has global bearings. Epidemics like Ebola Virus Disease cannot be confined within national borders. Globalization has brought people together and has provided with vast opportunities; but it has also provided fertile grounds for criminals. In this way, in today's globalized and interdependent world, we are not only sharing opportunities and virtues but also threats, challenges and vices. For poor and under-developed countries like ours, getting integrated with world economy and avoiding marginalization is an added challenge. We see no other alternatives but to work together with the international community in securing our national interests. As you all know, we are actively engaged in the region and beyond through our membership of regional and international organizations, and making contribution to the best of our ability.

In the beginning, I mentioned Nepal's national objectives and interests. The people of Nepal deserve a democratic, stable, peaceful and prosperous country where they can live a life with dignity and honour. But, we know that we have to work hard ourselves to realize this dream. Our friends abroad can only lend a helping hand, a hand of support. As a Minister for Foreign Affairs of the country, I am working towards maintaining and promoting good, friendly and cooperative relations with our friends in our neighbourhood and beyond. I am happy to mention here that we have had very warm and friendly relationship with our neighbours as well as other members of the international community.

I also understand it very well that foreign affairs are not unilateral phenomena. We have not only rights and expectation from our friends abroad but also duties, obligations and expectations of other countries from us. We, too, have our expectations from our neighbor and other friends. We are thankful for their continued support and cooperation. At the same time, we also understand that they have expectations from us as well. Our immediate neighbours, China and India, for example, expect Nepal's active cooperation in not allowing our territory to be misused by elements inimical to them. The international community expects Nepal to be a truly democratic country, marked by respect for human rights, rule of law and social harmony. Thus, as we can clearly see, the interests of our country and that of many others coincide and converge. This phenomenon has encouraged, and necessitated, us all to work together in facing our common challenges. I am happy to note here that we are sensitive to the expectations of our neighbours and the international community as a whole. As I said earlier, we are focusing our attention on developing Nepal into a democratic, stable, peaceful and prosperous country. We are aware that a democratic, stable, peaceful and prosperous country can better contribute to regional as well as global peace, security and prosperity.

As I mentioned above, promoting Nepal's dignity and honour in the comity of nations is another objective of Nepal's foreign policy. How can we achieve this objective? Yes, the Government of Nepal is working hard on this part. The roles and activities of our people are equally important in this regard. Honest, hard working, and civilized citizens can greatly contribute to enhancing the country's image and dignity in the international arena. Therefore, we have to better educate our people, impart skillful training to our human resource, and further develop Nepal as a respected and responsible member of the international community. Nepal possesses immense potential in terms of soft power projection.

I have tried to briefly outline Nepal's national interest, and the Government's plans to defend them. I would like to stress that national consensus on foreign policy issues is absolutely essential for us to be effective in pursuing our enlightened national interests. These matters need detailed and dispassionate discussions. I am sure that this seminar would seriously deliberate on all these aspects, and make policy recommendations which could be useful for the Government of Nepal. I am confident that, with such qualified panelists and commentators and enlightened participants, this seminar would fully achieve its objectives. I wish the seminar all success.

Thank you



5. Closing remarks by
Dr. Rishi Raj Adhikari
Executive Director, Institute of Foreign Affairs

A very good morning to all of you.

- Hon. Foreign Minister and Chairperson of IFA, Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey
- Acting Secretary, Foreign Ministry, Mr. Shankar Das Bairagi
- Former secretaries
- Paper presenter, Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada, former PR to UN, Geneva
- Paper presenter, Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya, former PR to UN, New York
- Session Chairs, Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa and Dr. Lok Raj Baral, and paper Commentators, Yuba Raj Ghimire and Anand Aditya
- Eminent personalities in the field of defense, foreign relations, economy, business, diplomacy, academy and political parties and Civil Society
- Dr. Dev Raj Dahal, FES Head, Nepal Office
- Friends from media
- Colleagues from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other Ministries, All other invited guests and my co-workers from the Institute of Foreign Affairs

I thank Hon. Minister MOFA, Acting Secretary, MoFA for their eloquent and thought provoking ideas on the theme of the seminar and for setting the tone for the following two sessions.

I welcome you all and am thankful that you were able to participate in this important seminar on our request inspite of your busy schedule.

The objective of the seminar is “To make participants and others aware on the emerging internal and external challenges to the national interests of Nepal and way forward”.

Internal Challenges

Nepal, currently, is at a cross road of myriad issues especially in the grueling and never ending exercise of constitution writing. All important factors and apparatus of state conduction are in a fluid state.

We witnessed the death of CA I amidst multi-sectoral and multi-regional cataclysm and are wary about the fate of CA II, though there are glimmer of positive sign and symptoms on the horizon. We believe a constitution, the mother of all laws, will pave the way for avenues wherein we will be able to defend ourselves from any impending internal and external threats to our national objectives. Lest we should enter into a biggest internal threat to national interest if we cannot handle or we ill handle various issues of contention amongst the political entities regarding federal set up, and governance structure to be determined as part of the constitution.

Internally, protecting national interests encompasses software such as freedom from all kinds of fear, poverty, marginalization, unemployment and exclusion etc. We also have to start imagining the chaos to be created if our youth, battered as migrant workers, and angry, start returning back from abroad in hordes due to labour problem in destination countries and seek their right to be employed! This could be another manifestation of weakening the national interest.

The hardware side of national interests includes protecting the lives of all citizens during internal conflicts and calamities and protecting the national borders and preservation of national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Partisan politics prevailing over vital issues such as national political system; politicization of national institutions including judiciary, educations, bureaucracy, and criminalization of politics; internal cultural conflicts including inter-religious; inter-ethnic/racial and inter-regional are other factors to be considered while planning for defense of national interest.

Regional Challenges

Nepal is in a very sensitive geo-strategic position as a bridge between two physical, economic and military giants. They are competing with each other for world attention and leadership. It is a delicate matter for Nepal to play a balancing role as a physically, economically and militarily small country.

Our two neighbors are very friendly to us and are themselves coming closer and their relationship is towards betterment especially in the economic front. However, there are many flash points which may aggravate any time and engulf the surrounding smaller nations including Nepal.

Vis-a-Vis Nepal, China has Tibetan issue at hand and India has terrorism and fake currency issues. Nepal needs to assure both the neighbors that it is trusted friend and takes their vital interests and issues seriously. The recent hullabaloo on water and energy PTA and PDA with India has roots emanating from the historical hard facts of lop sided water use agreement in Gandaki

and Koshi rivers.

Other past evidences of potential challenges with India are: Economic blockade crisis; encroachment of international border; Construction of series of unilateral embankments; micro-management of Nepalese issues and infiltration of Nepalese leaderships, and bureaucracy. etc. However, Nepal has to work hard on the positive vision expressed by Indian PM Excellency Narendra Modi so that his government walks his talks.

International Challenges

There are competing interests in an impending global paradigm shift. The erstwhile bi-polar world has turned to be multi-polar after a brief period of US led uni-polarity. In the backdrop of rise of China as the regional power house and India closely following China, US has been advocating about “Rebalance” after the “Containment” policy. US is very much concerned and is all out countering China’s influence in the region in security, global dominance and economy. This new phenomenon is sure to influence the region including Nepal.

At this critical juncture, Nepal needs to urgently develop a coherent foreign and defense strategy which ensures protection of our national interest and also caters the need of our neighbors.

Strengthening relations with the US administration, further deepening traditional friendship with UK, European Union, Russia, Japan, Germany and France, and greater visibility in the UN should be some of the priorities of Nepal.

There is need to invest more time, resources and money on conducting research to better inform our policymakers. IFA could be the partner of the government and other relevant organizations in this national endeavor.

Thank you all again for honoring our request for participation in this important seminar. I expect active participation from all of you in the next two sessions.

Thank you again!



6. Paper presentation on
**“In Defence of Nepal’s National Interests:
Internal and Regional Perspectives”**

by Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya,
Former Permanent
Representative of Nepal to the UN

As an ever-independent country Nepal has been able to secure its core and vital national interests including the preservation of its sovereign status. Nepal’s constitution outlines broad parameters of national interests and basic tenets of foreign policy. But the discourse of foreign policy has yet to generate a nationally agreed and enlightened consensus on what constitutes the national interests. Given various threats to national security and national interests, Nepal should engage proactively in defending the national interests, including through a clear strategic thought, adoption of national security strategy, strong institutional set up, national consensus and a dignified and principled foreign policy. It must take into account the internal as well as regional dimensions of Nepal’s national interests.

In September 2014, Nepal’s 47 fringe parties, including the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), opposed the initialing of Nepal-India Power Trade Agreement at the official level saying it was against the national interest. They have threatened to launch agitation programmes if the initialed agreement is endorsed by the government. The major parties, including the ruling parties and the main opposition Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), have said the signing such agreement is in Nepal’s interest. It highlights how every issue related to foreign affairs is tied up with national interests and how that is prone to different perceptions and interpretations, especially at political levels.

National interest is a contested topic without much clarity at academic, political and diplomatic levels. At political level, leaders use the term national interest without much clarity. They pledge to work towards promoting national interests, often without specifying them, just as they do for working

for the people. In every country, there is considerable debate or difference as to what constitutes a national interest. Often politicians use the term national interest to justify their action or inaction. Rulers, leaders and dictators have misinterpreted the term national interest to suit their personal or regime's interests. In most circumstances, the definition of national interest is prone to perceptions of the decision-making elites of the country. In Nepal, national interests have been historically, compromised for narrow partisan interests or the interests of the regime. For example, the signing of the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship by an outgoing and weakened Rana Prime Minister had more interest of protection of the regime in mind than the core interests of the country. This is among the reasons that there is call for reviewing this treaty, though much has to do with the changing domestic, bilateral and international circumstance as well as the practices adopted by the both countries. Even today, different political parties groups and leaders define the national interests according to their partisan agenda. Sometimes, they even interpret the national interest according to what suits them personally.

In foreign policy, the term national interest is often invoked to define a country's position in relation to other countries. Usually, a country's foreign policy is dictated by its national interests. In other words, national interest is the guiding force that defines the foreign policy of a country. Foreign policy is an instrument in defense of a country's national interests, it is said. It is also said that a country's national interests are best served with its foreign policy. It is generally understood that the objectives of foreign policy are defined in terms of the national interests and that the state should deploy all means and instruments of power- moral, political, economic and military- to defend such interests. Diplomats often seek to justify their actions to be in the national interest, sometimes without much clarity.

In Nepal, there is no clarity as to what constitutes the national interests. It is usually left to the government in power, the envoys and foreign ministry mandarins to define the national interests according to their "*swabibek*". Diplomats are asked to work in the best interest of the nation, without clarifying what these interests usually are.

The security establishments use the term vital national interest more or less cohesively and comprehensively, often together with the state's *strategic* policies. Even they are prone to differing perception and assessment of threats and strategy to deal with such threats.

Even academicians do not have unanimous views on national interests. Various schools of international relations seek to interpret mechanisms of

protection of national interests differently. One school of particular interest is *realism*, which assumes that the goal of foreign policy is the protection of national interests and that it applies the state's hard power to achieve those interests. It says that nations use all instruments of national power to protect their national interests, hence creating a competition (*international anarchy*) among them in securing their national interests, which are sometimes mutually exclusive. The concept of *idealism*, on the other hand, seeks to employ the instruments of morality and principles in foreign policy and use of multilateral institutions in giving legitimacy to international actions to defend the national interests. This weakens the state's power to defend its national interest on its own.

Economically, states act to promote the economic well being of their peoples, governments and the private companies. But there is not enough clarity and agreement as to how these interests are achieved. For example, allowing competition between the national and foreign investors and business is supposed to be a healthy economic proposition, which it may not directly benefit the national industry and business. But it may eventually help bring more investment and hence induce economic growth.

Culturally, the parameters of national interests can be different. Most states define their national interest based on their culture, values and moral principles. For example, the United States can go to war to defend its single citizen. This is based on the value of human dignity and individual person¹. The concepts "humanitarian intervention" and "responsibility to protect" are defined on such values. During the Cold War, the two superpowers acted according to their "ideological interests". Even after the Cold War, the maintenance of the world political and economic order is in the interests of many nations.

Even the statement that national interests are permanent does not stand as solidly, as it appears it should. "*In foreign policy, there are no permanent friends or enemies; there are only permanent interests*", It is often said and quoted, rather misquoted from the original words of British statesman Lord Palmerston in 1848, in which he said:

*"We have no eternal allies or perpetual allies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual and those interests it is our duty to follow"*².

One of the premises in which the national interests are considered permanent is that they do not change with change of government or political regime. Political parties that come to government or that lead the new regime often seek to interpret their national interests in their own terms and are sometimes

successful in bringing such changes. Though the basic parameters that determine the country's national interests are conditioned by external as well as internal factors, including geopolitical considerations, the national interests themselves may be molded according to the changes in external and internal circumstances. Strategic shifts do take place in foreign policy owing to change in the fundamental characteristics of international relations. For example, the US is exploring partnership with Iran, to fight with the fundamentalist Islamic State, which is flourishing in Iraq and Syria, though the aim of foreign policy used to be checking the strategic space of nuclear Iran in the region. But it does not change the core national interests.

There are hierarchies of national interests. Basically, a country's national interests fall under three broad categories, namely political, security and economic interests.

Politically, the core national interests include preservation and protection of the country's national independence and territorial integrity. Economically, each country seeks to achieve economic edge from the comparative advantage in relation to other countries. Key economic interests include securing economic growth and making opportunities available for the private sector and individuals for their prosperity constitutes national interest, while social justice becomes necessary element in such economic prosperity.

Nation's security interests can be best defined through a *national security strategy*, which takes into account the core interests of the nation, the threats and challenges to such interests, means and instruments of national power available to counter such threats and mechanism to employ such instruments for protecting the national interests. The national security strategy often combines elements of political, diplomatic, economic and security interests. "In the realm of strategy, compartmentalization into purely diplomatic, economic or military is both unwise and ineffective", says Jaswant Singh in *Defending India*³.

Some interests are *vital* or core interests, while others are *corollary* interests. In fact, there are layers of national interest, as they can be multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. Usually, there is some *hierarchy of national interests*. Some academic thinkers have proposed hierarchy of national interests starting from the *survival* interests (e.g. threat to national existence), to *vital* interests (e.g. national security) to *major* interests (e.g. economic well being) and *peripheral* interests (e.g. interests of the citizens and companies). The vital interests, such as the country's sovereignty and independence, cannot be compromised in all circumstances. The state will have to take actions or deploy means at their

disposal-political, economic, military, and diplomatic - to achieve the vital interests. Academicians also seek to distinguish between “*necessary*” and “*variable*” elements in national interests⁴. The UN charter speaks of *common interest*, especially in relation to restriction to the use of force, saying that it would refrain from use of force except for common interests. Common interests can have broader meaning, not just security interests. Yet another hierarchy can be national, sub-national, group and individual interests. In all these levels of interests, it has been evident that a lower level of interest may have to be compromised for a higher level of interest.

National interest has been core of the state policies since the historical times. In ancient eastern philosophy, the interests of the kings or rulers used to be supreme and were interpreted as the national interests. In the famous *Arthashastra*, Chanakya sought to define the parameters in which the king could use the instruments of his power and means to achieve his primary interests.

Often, the term national interest is said to have originated from the French phrase *raison d'état* (reason of the State) or *raison d'être* (the reason of existence) of a state, which seeks to invoke the national interest above the political, legal or moral considerations. Italian philosopher and political scientist Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) was one of the first proponents of the concepts of national interest. In his famous book *Prince* (1513), Machiavelli justified use of all means, including war, diplomacy and deceit, in protection of the national interests. Concepts of *mercantilism*, *beggar thy neighbour* policies and *balance of power* were also based on the concept of national interest. National interest has been invoked as *casus belli* (act or event justifying a war) that justifies war in most instances, including the European wars.

Even today, nations apply all means at their disposal to protect their vital national interests. They use all their means including, political, economic diplomatic and military instruments to achieve the vital national interests. They even go to war for protecting these vital national interests. Most wars between countries take place on the issue of territorial claims, which becomes a vital national interest.

National interests become the core basis of conduct of international relations. Nation states may have complimentary as well as mutually exclusive interests. Nations pursuing their national interests must be aware of other's national interests, both with a view to avoid conflict in areas where there are mutually exclusive interests and with a view to seeking synergies in complimentary interests.

Historically, Nepal has defended its national interest using various instruments. Historically, the “strategy for survival” was the lone national interest that guided Nepal’s foreign policy or interface with outside powers. This is among the conclusion of the Professor Leo E Rose in his 1971 book *Nepal’s Foreign Policy*⁵. With that objective in mind, the rulers of Nepal sought to adopt the policy of isolation, resistance, and appeasement. But it was also clear that Nepal was prepared to go to war to protect its vital economic interests, as has been the case with Tibet. *Three wars* (date) that Nepal fought with Tibet were fought on Nepal’s vital trade interests, protection of Nepali merchants and circulation of Nepal’s currency in Tibet.

During early history after unification, Nepal remained an introvert state refraining to come to contact with bigger powers until its interests were confronted. *Jai Katak Nagarnu Jhiki Katak Garnu* (do not meddle with others unless you are confronted or attacked) was a core mantra in protecting the national interest that King Prithvi Narayn Shah had issued in his famous *Dibyopadesh*. This defensive posture was aimed at securing the national interest of survival and maintaining political independence.

When the Nepali state started to expand after unification it came into interface with the British power in India. In the resultant conflict of interests over territory and resources, Nepal resisted the British power through a two year British-Nepal War (1814-15). At that time, Nepal was prepared to defend its territorial gains even at the cost of going to war with a bigger and more powerful force. Nepal could not win the war, but it was able to retain its independence. Though Nepal had to concede territorial claims to certain parts of the country it had expanded in the previous two decades of unification drive, Nepal’s ruling class agreed to sign the Treaty of Sugauli (1816) with an ostensible objective of protecting the national interest. In other words, not signing of the treaty could have further jeopardized the national interest of protecting the country’s independence.

When the policy of resistance with a stronger force was no longer viable, the Nepali rulers started to adopt the policy of befriending the British power. During most of the Rana Period, the foreign policy of the state was based on appeasement to the British rule in India. This was guided by the same intent of defending the country’s independence and territorial integrity. It was with this policy that Nepal’s Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana led a troop of 12,000 fighters himself to help the British control the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. This helped him bring back some of the territories (Naya Muluk) that Nepal had lost after the Treaty of Sugauli.

Since the 1950s, Nepal joined the comity of nations through its membership to the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement. In the post World War politics of superpower rivalry Nepal refused to join any political or security blocs and alliances. Nepal also opened itself for tourism and started receiving foreign aid. Since the 1960s, Nepal also adopted a policy of equidistance between India and China, though that policy has often been accused of King Mahendra's playing of "China card". Nepal sought to diversify its relations with other countries of the world, establishing diplomatic relations and opening embassies in major places of Nepal's national interests. During King Birendra's regime, the declaration of Zone of Peace proposal sought to protect Nepal's national interest of peace, security and independence. Nepal also took active role in the establishment of the SAARC hosting its Secretariat, again with a broader view of national interest. Nepal also joined the regional group BIMSTEC in that context. Later, Nepal joined the WTO. All of these instruments and polices were used for promoting Nepal's national interests, including the promotion of its international personality and dignity as an independent and sovereign nation.

The Interim constitution has set several parameters of national interest.

The *Interim Constitution of Nepal* (2007) includes "national interest" among the parameters that bind the people into a "nation" (Article 3). It defines the State of Nepal as an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive and federal democratic republican state (Article 4). In accordance with the constitution, the state is obliged to promote the welfare of the people, raise their living standards, maintain peace and order, national unity and cultural diversity, promote human rights, institutionalize democracy, transform national economy into an independent, self-reliant and progressive economy, exploit the natural resources in the best interest of the nation, keep the environment clean, protect biodiversity, provide employment opportunities to the people, provide social security to the needy, ensure inclusion of erstwhile excluded groups of people, and establish social justice eliminating inequalities.

In foreign policy, the Interim Constitution says, "*The State shall direct its international relations towards enhancing the dignity of the nation in the international arena by maintaining the sovereignty, integrity and independence of the country.*" (Article 34.6). All of these commitments of the state in the form of obligations, directive principles and state policies reflected in the constitution can be interpreted as national interests. State officials are supposed to take oath of secrecy so that the country's national interests are not compromised.

Sources of threats to national interest are many. Threats to national interest may range from external to internal, military to political, and environmental to economic ones. One of the most significant threats to national interests, real and perceived, is the emerging *strategic competition* of neighbours and big powers in Nepal. In this competition, Nepal may have hard time to keep its own interests intact or may be swayed by the interests of one of the powers against others. An open liberal political discourse is likely to be influenced by this strategic competition. In Nepal's case yet another fundamental threat to national interest is the *weakening of the state*. There are further chances of weakening of the nation state in the *divisive tendencies* in the efforts to state-restructuring, if that is done without taking into account the vital national interests. Further threats emanate from *fluid political situation*, including a situation without having a nationally-owned constitution agreeable to all. There are still disagreements on fundamental issues of the constitution, including the state-restructuring and model of governance. Without political stability, a country cannot defend its national interests. The *continuing deprivation of the masses*, who are languishing under the toil of poverty without any employment and income-generating activities, often *excluded from the mainstream economic discourse* of the nation is yet another threat to the national interest. This was among the causes cited for the success of the Maoist insurgency. This also served as push factor for luring hundreds of thousands of Nepali youth to cities and countries abroad in search of jobs. This still continues to be a strong parameter in defining the threats to national interest. Despite the political pledge to end exclusion of all kinds, various types of *political, economic, social and cultural exclusions*, based on gender, geography, ethnicity and religion also count as threat to national integrity and hence to national interests. Yet another threat to national interest arises from the *crisis of governance*, as the successive governments have not been able to provide good governance to the people. It was among the reasons cited for the growth of insurgency and domestic conflict in the country. Externally, *cross-border movement of populations*, if left unmanaged can compromise Nepal's national security interests. Internally, there are several *fault lines* that may have serious impact on Nepal's national interests in relation to its foreign policy implications. The first is the *lack of national cohesion* in developing the country's new constitution, especially in the state-structuring along federal lines. This may expose the centrifugal tendencies of the state. Nepal's ethnic and geographic diversity, if left unmanaged, can become a liability in this process, rather than an asset.

There is a strategic competition in South Asia of which Nepal constitutes an important part. We know that the international scene is in a state of flux,

as new post-American world is only emerging⁶. The shape of things to come are unknown. But there is a strong strategic shift towards Asia and shift of balance of power towards the developing countries. The strategic importance of South Asia and that of Nepal is increasing, with the rise of India and China as economic, military and political powers in the world.

The moving of US strategic pivot to Asia Pacific region⁷ (or *rebalancing* policy), the strategic partnership between the US and India, and increasing Chinese presence in the region have shown how South Asia has become important in global strategic space. Now India's commitment to improve relations with countries in South Asia as initiated by Prime Minister Modi is also likely to count in increasing South Asia's strategic significance.

The regional and international interest in Nepal is on the rise. This owes to Nepal's strategic location between India and China, potential of Nepal's being a transit economy between them, and the abundance of natural resources especially the hydropower invoking the interests of foreign investors of two of the world's important economies. In Nepal, there is an unseen strategic competition among neighbours and big powers in the country. There is a certain degree of overlap and competition over strategic space in Nepal between India, China and the United States.

There is also strategic convergence between India and China. Though India and China compete on strategic space in the region, they have similar positions in most of the global issues, including on climate change, the doctrine of "responsibility to protect", preference of UN role in solving global threats to peace and security, greater say for developing countries in multilateral financial institutions (hence formation of BRICS). They have converging stake on the continuation and promotion of trading and economic relations, which is growing⁸. They have similar positions in the WTO, including in the Doha Development Agenda. Both do not like big power activism in solving international problems. This convergence provides an opportunity for Nepal, including for benefitting from the economic prowess of both India and China, especially developing value chains and backward and forward linkages to their economies.

There is a strategic void in the country. Nepal does not have an actively thinking strategic community of its own. So the country's strategic decisions are left to those who occupy the government at the time. There is very little consultation with the academia and the think-tanks on the strategic thought or policies. The lame National Security Council is relatively weak in developing a strategic thinking. In fact, we can even say that Nepal does not

have a *national strategic policy* of which a draft was prepared but remains to be adopted. Among other things, the draft seeks to cover such areas of national interest as maintaining country' independence, territorial integrity, sovereignty, national unity, economic security, social harmony, political stability, religious tolerance, national development, information security, public security, human security, and environmental security. In absence of a national security strategy, each security agency, including the country's army is devising its policies and strategies on its own. Without such policy at hand, protection of national interest becomes an exercise in a vacuum. Nepal should adopt a national security strategy at the earliest. It must be noted that Nepal's national security interests will only be met by a good combination of foreign policy, political and diplomatic process and adoption of economic choices available to it.

Nepal's military doctrine is still evolving. It is commonly understood Nepal cannot afford to build capability to fight against any of its big neighbours in the event of being attacked. Nepal's army draws its military doctrine primarily aimed at maintaining a capability to defend and deter any hostile against Nepal's security interests and Nepal's territorial integrity. Though not spelled clearly, the security doctrine of the country includes refraining from any hostile offensive acts without being provoked, not allowing the Nepalese soil against the security interests of neighbouring and friendly countries, and rejection of stationing of any foreign troops in its soil. The army has devised its command and control structure, weaponry, cadres, tactics, training, resources, and rules of engagement to meet this doctrinal objective. It is under this doctrine that the Nepalese army has been participating in the UN peacekeeping operations abroad and disaster relief operations, counter-insurgency operations and development activities at home. The army has developed preparedness for convention and unconventional security threats, both external and internal.

The national army of a country plays the most important role in protection of vital national interests. The army is a vital instrument for the national defense, security, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. It is in Nepal's interest to maintain a well- equipped and professionally trained army to ready defend the country' vital interests. Since Nepal cannot build comprehensive security forces including the navy and air force, it can aim to *develop competitive edge on certain areas* of expertise such as trouble-shooting commandoes, peacekeeping forces, disaster response capacities, and high altitude readiness.

In the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006 between political forces, it was agreed that there would be *democratization of the army*. Article 144(3) of

the *Interim Constitution* also provides for preparing and enforcing a detailed action plan for the democratization of the Nepal Army. Though not defined clearly, it could include concepts such as civilian control and oversight of the army, inclusion in the cadres, and reforms in the army along the democratic principles of transparency and accountability, and respect for human rights. Some of these measures have already been in place, such as the constitutional provision over the cabinet control of the army and parliamentary oversight. But there is some degree of confusion in absence of clear cut demarcation as to what constitutes democratization.

The army is still dominated by one group of people. According to the official website of the Nepal Army, 43.5% of Nepal army positions are held by Chhetris, who account for 16.60% of population. Contrary to commonly held beliefs, some ethnic groups like the Newars (6.41%), Magars (7.38%), Tamang (5.56%), and Rai (2.50%) are represented according to their proportion of population. But it is Madhesis and women who are under-represented. After the 2006 amendment in the Army Act, 45% of positions are reserved, which are allocated to women (20%), Janajati (32%), Madheshi (28%), Dalit (15%), and remote regions (5%). Inclusiveness in the army is a strong parameter of building a nationally cohesive army, which is in the interest of national security and unity.

Also important is the improvement in *civil-military relations*. National interest cannot be protected without a strong collaboration and good relations between the country's civil and military components.

Failure to recognize and give importance to capable intelligence service: Intelligence constitutes an important aspect of national security strategy and can play an instrumental role in information/analysis of threats and challenges to national security. For many reasons, Nepal has not yet developed its intelligence mechanism anything comparable to the capability of neighbouring countries. Intelligence agencies has been left neglected in Nepal. It is also prone to non-transparent recruitment methods and political intervention in its activities. There is a need to develop a capable, modern, and efficient intelligence service suited to the needs of national security. It should also develop capability to undertake counter-intelligence capabilities against any potential national security threats.

There is no agreed consensus on national interests. This owes to the polarized and divided positions among the political parties on many issues related to foreign policy. Nepal's political parties have a sharply polarized worldview, which is often irreconcilable to each other. For example, some

extreme left groups categorize the foreign powers as pursuing “hegemony” to “expansionism”, others are seen as pro-certain countries. They are divided not just on ideological frame, but are also divided on specific foreign policy issues. The recent example is divided political opinion about the signing of *Power Trade Agreement* with India. Some political parties, including those in the government are for it, while others are campaigning against the same. Both blocs have their own interpretation of national interest on this issue. Thus it gets blurred as to what constitutes the national interest. If there was clear what was in the national interest, no political party could have stood against such national interest in any issue.

There is a need for a broadly agreed national goals and priorities on foreign policy based on clearly defined national interests. Many countries have clearly defined national interests. Others have national interests academically articulated well. For example, Kumar and Kumar (2010) articulate the national interests of India to be threefold: ⁹

- Securing the country against the external and internal threats to territory, populations and vital economic interests:
- Obtaining the external inputs necessary to achieve economic prosperity as represented by sustained gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate between 8 and 10 %; and
- Playing an active part in the international fora and the global governance structures to secure a fair and equitable share in global public goods.

In Nepal, we do not have such well-articulated national interests. The foremost of tasks in defending the national interest is the need to agree on national goals and priorities on foreign policy. *Nepal's foreign policy must develop a clearly defined strategic objective linked to its national interests.*

First of all there is a need to agreeing on such *national security interests*, such as (i) protecting country's national independence and territorial integrity (defense against external aggression; securing international boundaries); (ii) protecting the country's national unity (stopping disintegrating forces internally); and (iii) protecting the general well-being of the people from external threats (e.g. terrorism, transnational crime, unconventional security threats).

Usually, national security interests are achieved through alliances or coalitions, on which Nepal has adopted non-aligned policy. Then it is built around the policy of national defence, on which Nepal has doctrine of minimum deterrence. Yet another instrument in protecting national security interests

is to create harmony in the security interests with the neighbours, so as to avoid friction.

In *national economic interests*, we can include (i) pursuance of the country's economic interests, including that of achieving sustainable and inclusive growth; (ii) promoting foreign investment, trade, aid, remittances, and exploitation of natural resources, and secure access to sea and markets, and (iii) protection of economic well-being of the people, government and the private companies.

Other interests might include maintaining friendly relations with neighbouring countries and beyond, exercise of independent foreign policy based on principles; promotion of Nepal's international identity and dignity; stopping foreign interference in national affairs (drawing red lines for outsiders); promotion of the interests of the private sector in relation with other countries; promotion of the interests of Nepali nationals abroad; securing fair share of global public goods through participation to multilateral institutions like the UN, WTO, etc. and regional public goods through instruments of regional cooperation and regional economic integration (e.g. SAARC).

Nepal must address the issues of identity with a view to minimize internal threats to national interest. National interest emanates from national identity. So said Samuel Huntington in his 2005 book "*Who are We?*"¹⁰ In Nepal, the process of assertion of group and regional identity has undermined the national identity. The assertions of identity also pose potential internal security threats, as had been seen with the emergence of several identity-focused armed outfits in the Terai and eastern Nepal in the post-conflict period. As the issue of identity remains to be fully articulated to the satisfaction of everybody, this constitutes one of major threats to national interests, especially if the simmering discontent or backlash is not managed properly in the political process and in the new constitution to be promulgated by the second-time elected Constituent Assembly. There is a need to protect Nepal's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and multi-religious identity under the secular framework of the constitution without compromising the identities of each of the diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, geographic and religious groups of the country. This should also be kept in mind how the interests of the Hindu majority population does not become a burden in the secular framework of the constitutions. Any provocation against the religious sentiments and identity can pose serious threats to national integrity and security, hence to national interests. For that matter, protection of the sentiments and identity of the each group becomes vital national interest.

National interests meet with the interests of others. Any country's national interests may have interface with another country's interests. Sometimes, the national interests of two or more countries can be *competing or mutually exclusive* (e.g. territorial claims), while in others the countries may have *competing but compatible* interests. In other cases, the national interests of two or more countries can be *converging* or even *complimentary* to each other.

Safeguarding the security interests of neighbours comes within the parameter of national interest. Nepal's premier diplomat Yadu Nath Khanal said some time ago:

"Our foreign policy will breakdown at the point where either India or China loses faith in us and concludes that her vital national interests and sensitivities do not receive proper recognition in our conduct of relations".

Nepal's national interest can be undermined if the security or vital political interests of either of big neighbours are undermined in Nepal. Despite the declared policy of not allowing the Nepalese soil against the security or political interests of the neighbouring countries, including India and China, the continued activities inimical to such interests poses a strong challenge to the Nepali state. For example, there is continued allegation of the Nepali territory used by anti-China activists and by the elements posing terrorist threats to India, including through the covert support of the intelligence activities of yet another neighbouring country. With case of the Tibetans seeking refuge in Nepal there is distinct dichotomy of humanitarian and political policies that Nepal has adopted. Politically, Nepal has always supported the "one-China policy" and pledged not to allow any anti-China activities in its soil. On humanitarian grounds, Nepal has always given asylum and safe passage to the Tibetan refugees. Nepal does not recognize the political authority of Dalai Lama, but is not against the spiritual and religious sentiments behind His Holiness, who has strong following among the Buddhist communities in Nepal. The *Nepal Game Plan Report* (2000) leaked from the Indian foreign intelligence agency showed how Nepal has been a playground of the foreign intelligence agencies. This exposed how Nepal is vulnerable to security and intelligence interests of other countries.

Political actors need to commit to national interests. They need to commit publicly that they will not use foreign policy instruments in domestic politics. Ostensibly, every political party, group or individual have their vision and ideology for protecting the national interests and the interests of the people they are supposedly leading. They should avoid using foreign policy

instruments or issues for their political, partisan or personal gains. Political parties should adopt an agreed code of conduct for their leaders and workers so that they are not allowed to seek personal favours from foreign powers making use of their positions of leadership. Such restrictions should apply to those seeking medical treatment, asking for foreign government-sponsored scholarships or admissions in foreign universities, refusing paid junkets to visit foreign countries and the like. The country's political party law should be amended for making the Code of Conduct mandatory in each political party. Similarly, the diplomatic code of conduct applicable to the officials and dignitaries should be strictly adhered to.

Political actors and sub-national groups needs to compromise their interests in the interest of the national interests. There will be certain derogation of individual, group or sub-national interests in the interest of the national interest. This factor is often ignored in Nepal's debate on federalism. The sub-national interests sometimes gets compromised towards the national interests. That is why many country's constitutions have *supremacy clauses*, and *preemption provisions*, which allow the central government or parliament the supremacy over foreign policy issues. The individuals, groups and sub-national entities should give up certain interests for the interest of the national interest. This should be the core principle of federalizing the country and should be written clearly in the new constitution. As is explained above, there are hierarchy of national interests and interests of the nation, groups and individuals. In the interest of the national interests, the sub-national and group interests sometimes are derogated without undermining the core principles of human rights and democracy. This is a factor sometimes ignored in Nepal's debate on constitution-making and state-restructuring. It must be adopted as a core principle in the conduct of foreign policy.

There is a need to address the security-first mindset. Often in our region, there is a tendency to assume security-first mindset, in dealing with every issue, which is not a problem in itself. But it must also be understood that security-first mindset is hampering smooth flow of people, goods and services, serving as a barrier to trade and economic development. For example, trucks in the transit through Kakarbhitta-Banglabandh route operates only with Indian security escorts on workdays with a minimum convoy of 20 trucks. This cannot be exactly described as the best modality in the interest of trade and transit. This has to do with the security first mindset. It needs to change for better.

There is strong need for taking into account unconventional threats to national interests: There are several unconventional threats to national

interests, mainly its security interests. The issues of food security, environmental security, health hazards and energy security are primary among them. Nepal's rural areas face perennial shortages of food supply and face hunger. Each year, Nepal faces devastating natural disasters including floods and landslides, which is aggravated by threats of climate change including the melting of the Himalayas. Nepal is also reeling under perennial energy crunch and load-shedding due power shortages. Occasional instances of epidemics also cause panic in the country. For example, Nepal is not yet fully prepared to deal with the Ebola virus, should it break in here. Thus, Nepal must prepare itself to tackle all these unconventional threats to national interests.

Nepal has a few limited options and instruments available to protect the national interests. Nepal has only a few options and instruments available at its disposal to defend its national interests. They include:

- *A dignified and principled foreign policy:*
- *Power of persuasive diplomacy*
- *Pursuance of economic diplomacy*
- *Instrument of military power* (which has limited applicability for self-defense or for deterrence purposes)
- *Using international instruments* (treaties, conventions, institutions and multilateral diplomacy at the UN and other international institutions e.g. UN .
- *Use of regional instruments:* It is in Nepal's self-interest to engage proactively with the instruments of regional cooperation (such as SAARC and BIMSTEC) and the multilateral mechanism (such as the United Nations).
- *Building partnerships and cooperative security arrangements:* Though entering into any coalitions and alliances is against Nepal's declared policy of non-alignment, partnership and cooperative security strategy can be used as an instrument to promote national interests.

There is need to evolve grand narrative based on national interests. Nepal does not have a national narrative of its worldview. National interest does not just lie in the domain of the state or the government. There has to be an active strategic and academic discourse on defending the national interests. Non-government actors like the civil society, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, academia, Track Two diplomats, and the country's private sector must have a say in articulating and defending the national interests and in the development of national narrative based on national interests. This requires articulating the worldview through a prism of national interests.

“A further strengthening of our distinct national identity and pursuit of socio-economic progress in a democratic framework are Nepal’s cardinal goals into the next century”, said former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai¹¹ Before the turn of the century. Nepal must set such longer-term strategic goals of foreign and strategic policies based on the national interests. This exercise must continue towards defining interest- based goals and objectives of foreign policy and defending them utilizing all instruments of national power, including political, economic, diplomatic and military.

End Notes:

- 1 For example, President Barack Obama authorized aerial flights over Syrian following killing there of an American journalist, James Foley in August 2014.
- 2 Quoted in Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, (London: Simon & Schuster, 1994)
- 3 Jaswant Singh, *Defending India*, (McMillan India, New Delhi 1999)
- 4 Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1951).
- 5 Leo E Rose, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival*, (Oxford University Press, 1971)
- 6 Fareed Zakaria, *Post-American World*, WW Norton and Co. (New York, 2008)
- 7 Since 2011, the US administration has shifted its centre of gravity towards Asia and the Pacific from its earlier focus to the trans-Atlantic partnership. This has been named as US pivot or rebalancing policy. It is basically an acknowledgement of rise of India and China as major powers and importance of strategic partnership with Japan and other countries in the region.
- 8 Volume of India- China bilateral trade in 2013 was \$ 65 billion.
- 9 Rajiv Kumar and Santosh Kumar, *In the National Interest, A Strategic Foreign Policy for India* (New Delhi, 2010), available at Amazon.com
- 10 Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are We?: The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 2005)
- 11 Quoted from Speech by Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai at seminar organized by the Institute of Foreign Affairs on Nepal’s Foreign Policy, 20-21 August 1999



7. Comments by **Mr. Yuba Raj Ghimire, Senior Journalist on Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya's Paper**

Honourable Chair,
Paper presenter Madhuraman Jee,
and participants

Presentation was very elaborate and I'm given a task to comment where I'm touched upon in Madhuraman Jee's paper. Commentary of the paper by him has much enriched his presentation. It is very hard for an outsider to comment on a paper by a person with very vast theoretical knowledge, his involvement on representing nation's interest, his involvement to revive and review those national interests and a person retired with a reputation of a competent career diplomat with vast experience. But I'll try to comment on where I'm touched upon.

Defining national interest is not possible but to perceive the challenge, to face the challenge and to refine those challenges can be done. An ordinary Nepalese traveler have to face many difficult situation along with lack of cooperation in international airports which shows us what type of super identity we have in international arena and what type of stands Nepal have in international community which is not happier nor healthier in present situation. This means our challenges, our reputation, is increasing for Nepalese identity and for Nepal as a nation. Talking about bureacracy in transformation from failed state to modern state, from civil serving to nation serving, it is continually evolving and our Interim Constitution also have guiding core principles in foreign policy, are also mentioned by Madhujee in his paper.

I have observed that after 1950's, it has become tougher for Nepal to make her position in international community but whatever presence Nepal made today is quite difficult task to perform. From early 1950's, in the establishment of Chinese Embassy and Russian Embassy in Nepal, Jawaharlal Nehru questioned for its necessity saying foreign policy of Nepal being conducted and represented by them to till date where our international relations has extend to a infinite boundaries, is not a small challenges that Nepal has performed. After that King Mahendra's eqi-distance policy, King Birendra's Zone of Peace

proposal are also touched by the paper and above all King Pritvinarayan Shah's non-aggressive war policy or his policy of war for survival, war to preserve and protect vital national interests comes. Another I would like to add is our real thought out, our considered foreign policy. We fought with anti-colonial, anti-empirical forces preserving and protecting our independence. And to continue this legacy is today's challenge. We talk about legacy, we talk about past glories but on legacy of a state or disowned past of a state, on present and on present challenges or to secure future, we are still not fully convinced. This is a big challenge. We can learn from the past but could not change it but if the legacy is not disowned, future cannot be secured.

We are talking about legacy here, Foreign Minister also mentioned in his Keynote speech on unification by King Pritvinarayan Shah but we do not celebrate National Unification Day nowadays. I would like to add that the unique identical philosophical role should be undermined, which persists in bearing foreign policy and which affects Nepal's secondary challenges affecting our mindset would be relevant to ignore in this context.

Madhuraman Jee talked about political activists. Once Saileja Acharya's visit to Delhi as Deputy Prime Minister was put on objection by Basu Risal following the norms. We do have norms but when norms get converted into exceptions, there will be decline in our character and it affects our Nepalese identity as a whole. So the image of such actors becomes important.

Directing national security and representing national interest is good but doing so carrying party's or politicians bag worse our image. A post of a minister of a country holds the responsibility to represent a nation in non-partism basis and nowadays some reviving process is started but in comprehensive situation, how we cope such challenges in power centric politics, how we read it, how we understand larger national interest and how we campaign it is crucial.

On writing constitution, he has quoted, "What state should expect from it? What are the endeavors of our foreign policy? What is dignity of the nation?" and they are directly interconnected with public security. Mostly youths, about 450 thousand, have fled abroad because they did not saw their future in their country, if feeling of safety of secured future from a nation diminished, how we can adjust that challenge? How we can connect them with their nation? and how we can ensure the feeling of isolation being Nepali ends from here? These are today's secondary challenges. This challenge is directly interlink with our dignity, nationalism and with our future and it has interlink with the missions of our foreign policy. We talk about sovereignty on coating Interim Constitution, but how much sovereign we feel we are? Politics, public policies, constitution making are all sovereign processes. We have act independently here.

As a mediaperson, I have seen two contradictions here. One, constitution making, law making, and making public policies are much outsourced. Talking about pre-state actors, post-state actors, sometime what I feel is that on one side we move forward our national consensus, restructuring nation, building infrastructure, subsidize withdrawal and while doing so our welfare component of the nation is almost nil. Incidents are beyond trust of the general public. We have psychologically driven feeling of our challenges being filled-up by the foreigners and we are restricted by them. There is decrease in faith towards the model, faith towards state.

On SAARC, though not fully active, we are on journey together from 85', sense of togetherness with no hegemony in the region and have equally contributed to peace and prosperity as equal partners with such spirit of concept. We have observer like China, who have certain value system to value others independence. So due to their dignified independence for Nepal, we feel secure although they have their own vital interests. We have multidimensional relations with India with ups and downs relationship. And what I feel is that after 12 point Agreement, India is detecting internal politics of Nepal. Although India is a good friend, but to conduct our internal politics is to undermine our sovereignty, our vital national interest which cannot be expected from a good neighbor. And major changes is made by 4 or 8 actors and endorsed by foreigners.

On perception, talking about our security, Madhujee mentioned on military doctrine. They are one national institution, power centric institution without alternative. I have seen vulnerability in three organizations, in military organization, apex court or judiciary and on media.

Aandolon is for change and after its success what I would like to figure out is mistrust for politicians. We are ready to give credit to others for bloodless regime change rather than king's wisdom, we think it as Indian intervention. And another challenge that we are facing is lack of role of civil society and media in pursuing national interests. Sometime we act as anti-state actors. On transition, dealing with national interest and making them accountable is a big challenge. The best way to meet our national challenges and our aspirations is to promote and make strong and accountable national institutions rather than degrading them.

Thank you.



8. Remarks by
**Chairperson, Prof. Dr. Lok Raj Baral,
Former Ambassador to India**

Madhuraman jee has tried to conceptualize the rising issues of national interests. I strongly recommend such paper for syllabus committee of International Relations and Political Science areas. He also has very sound theoretical foundations for understanding these subjects. Events come everyday and go away but certain things are constant like geography. If you read a book by Robert Kaplan "The Revenge of Geography", you see how geography matters a lot because that is the fundamental factor for identifying national interest for divising security interests and minimizing threats. What are proximate threats? We have to identify that. We don't have very sound understanding in this subject. Indo - Nepal relation is a very common subject but for me it is very complex. Individual level, community level, national level and regional level, all things go together. Without understanding complexity, without understanding civilization of commonality and without understanding historical context, how can we understand Indo-Nepal relations? We have certain parameters determining the existence of nation state. Understanding the basic of a subject is absolutely essential. We have to establish our own credibility and that needs leadership, commitments and good governance. How much study and researches our political parties have on foreign policy pertaining national interest? And that directly impacts our Foreign Ministry. I am realistic more than idealistic. We have to read and understand context, situation, behavior, history, organizations, environment, rulers etc. in totality. Buddhijee raised questions on border management. After Sugauli Treaty, Indo-Nepal border is stable. I found more rumors than border disputes on my one year border study conducted by BP Koirala Foundation and submitted report to Ministry also. We have to understand ground realities. Cooperation in border level has much deepened now.

I disagree with the word 'eqi-distance' used by Madhuraman jee. I think it is not suitable on Nepalese context. What it means and what its implications must be cleared. On Nepal's interests, her territorial integrity and sovereignty is what matters and 1950 Treaty does not make any difference. Although, it is said inequitable treaty, it has no lasting effects in Indo-Nepal relations. And on cross country population and minorities, minority populations are safety valve for Nepal.

Thank you.



9. Paper presentation on “Defending National Interest in the Emerging International Challenges”

*by Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada,
Former Permanent Representative
of Nepal to the UN*

The world is changing profoundly and Nepal is undergoing deep rooted changes internally. In this process of transformation, Nepal’s political parties and leaders are divided on almost every important aspect of national politics, economic management and international affairs, making Nepal vulnerable to internal division and external influence. In such a situation, to minimize the risks, optimize opportunities, a minimum consensus among the main political forces on the vital issues of national interest has emerged as the most urgent challenge of Nepal’s domestic politics, economic management, foreign and security policy making.

Such vital national agendas are best served by a vigorous national debate for understanding and agreement that despite ideological differences or competition for power at home, inherent in a multiparty political system, main political actors will not compromise on national interests or use foreign and security policy for domestic political ends or partisan or personal gains. An enlightened discourse on identifying and creating a better understanding of such vital issues, strengthening institutions and placement of right individuals with commitment and capability to implement policies aimed at protecting and promoting national interests are critical and a seminar on this topic is a welcome initiative.

National Interest-the vital core of domestic politics and foreign policy: Hans Morgenthau, one of the champions of the Realist School of International Relations suggests that statesmen think and act in terms of national interest defined as national power. In this sense national interest constitute the vital core of a nation’s domestic politics reflected in its foreign policy. This is fairly

straight forward. But how do you determine and who decides what is in the best interest of a nation-state, itself in a state of transition internally in the midst of a region and the world all undergoing profound changes?

Is it politics or economics that determines the course of inter-state relations? The debate is long and the truth perhaps lies somewhere in the middle. It is also a fact that a multiplicity of actors and institutions are involved in the national decision making process and subsequently implementing them. But politics as the most vital of the human art or science ultimately determines foreign and national security policy like all other policies. That is why foreign policy is sometimes seen as extension of domestic politics. But the interface between domestic politics and foreign policy is complex, especially for Nepal with such geo-strategic location at a very critical time of history, making the discussion on defending national interest a challenging proposition.

Dimensions of National Interests: In any state policy formulation there is an irreducible core, known as vital national interest, for any state at any time. Such vital interests include, for all states at all times, as a minimum, protection and preservation of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. In the words of Frederick Hartman “if and when these vital national interests are threatened nations are prepared to go to war”. Such vital interests constitute the constant, the continuity dimensions of domestic politics and foreign policy. Vital national interests remain or should remain outside the arena of domestic political changes.

National interests also cover categories of needs and demands that vary from time to time based on the social, cultural, religious backgrounds, political predispositions, economic outlook and worldviews of changing political leadership. To quote Henry Kissinger, “Personality and policy could never be fully divorced”. Such interests and views of the changing political elite reflected in their political and economic priorities and national policies constitute the dynamic dimensions of a country’s national interests. Social harmony, protection of national honor and pride, political stability, economic prosperity, commitment to external treaty obligations or supply of vital resources and keeping the supply lines open are also important aspects of the overall discourse on national interests. Terrorism, trans-national crimes and the “current global disorder” have added new dimensions with notions of human security, responsibility to protect and pre-emptive regime change profoundly changing the whole discourse. In such a national and international environment where should we begin our own discussion on defending Nepal’s national interest?

Historically the view of the founder of modern Nepal as a "yam between two boulders" made cautious relations with India and China a vital strategy of Nepal's survival. Such prognosis helped Nepal remain independent while the rest of South Asia was overwhelmed by the onslaught of colonialism. The unprecedented rise of China and India in the post Cold-War global paradigm flux has created opportunities for changing this "revenge of geography" into a *reward*. Besides the challenge of managing the *vitality and complexity of proximity*, good relations with other international actors is equally important for Nepal's peaceful transformation to a prosperous democratic republic. Within this overall policy framework the following could be some of the critical issues in the protection and promotion of Nepal's national interest in the context of emerging international challenges.

- **Relations of trust and confidence with India and China:** Nepal is the meeting point of two great civilizations and South Asia and the central Himalayas are emerging as one of the main epicenters of the impending global paradigm shift. Nepal India relations are deep rooted and wide ranging encompassing the entire spectrum of history, geography, politics, economics, language, culture etc. Today India is emerging as a major global power with rapid economic growth and growing political influence. The tremendous economic transformation of the last few decades have already established Nepal's northern neighbor China as the second largest economy and one of the major global players. Nepal has been an independent nation in the lap of the Himalayas between these two great civilizations and emerging global powers.
- Internally, Nepal today stands at a new threshold of fundamental and far reaching transformation. In this context, managing relations with India and China by remaining well aware of India's security sensitivities and fully committed to the One China policy and thus strengthening and widening the natural relations with the two large and friendly neighbors on the basis of mutual trust, confidence, cooperation and mutuality of interests is the top most foreign policy priority of Republican Nepal. Nepal's ability to strengthen this vital link with *Shinning* India and *Rising* China can contribute to political stability and security at home, provide unlimited potential in trade, tourism, investment, infrastructure development and employment as well as strengthening Nepal's position in the international arena.
- While admiring the vision and steadfastness of Prithvi Narayan Shah and his lasting imprint on foreign policy, I was one of the earliest advocates of redefining "the yam between two boulders", idea from its classical

constraint perspective to a more transformative approach of potential. In this context, the recent visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has contributed greatly to the potential of taking Nepal-India relations to a whole new level. Towards this goal, just as Nepal was one of the earliest supporters of China's membership of the UN and we continue to extend strongest possible support on issues it considers vital such as the One China Policy as well as Human Rights, I have also been a supporter of India's permanent membership of the UN Security Council since long. The recent decision of the government of Nepal in this respect demonstrates the will of the Nepali side to transform Nepal-India relations also to new heights. It is now in the hands of Nepalese and Indian officials to work out the details of the mega-models of mutual cooperation making Nepal-India relations a model of inter-state relations in the 21st Century.

- **Strengthening relations with the International Community:** Strong friendship with the two neighbors must not mean relations with other important players in the International Community should not be a priority. Strengthening friendly relations with traditional and new friends such as the world's only superpower the United States of America, United Kingdom, members of the European Union including Germany and France, Japan, Russia, Canada, Switzerland, Norway etc. and utilizing their goodwill and cooperation for the consolidation of the new sovereign, independent, peaceful and prosperous federal democratic republic of Nepal is in Nepal's best national interest. In this context an important step has been taken by establishing new resident embassies in Canada, Denmark, Australia, Israel and the Republic of Korea. Establishing new embassies in the other G-7 capital Rome, Italy and Vienna, Austria, two of the key UN centers, besides New York and Geneva, could also be important.
- As part of strengthening and expanding relations with the friendly countries of the Developing World, Nepal has already established new resident embassies in the South American Continent, Brazil and in the Republic of South Africa. In accordance with this policy, further initiative could be taken to establish resident embassies in the remaining G-20 capitals in addition to the SAARC members Afghanistan, Bhutan and Maldives as well as in one of the countries of the energy rich and strategically important Central Asia and members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
- **United Nations:** Fully committed to the principles of the United Nations Charter, Nepal participates in all activities of the UN, particularly in the areas of peace and security, socio-economic development and human

rights. We have always attached great importance to the central role of the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security, international cooperation for economic and social development and promotion and protection of human rights now represented by the three pillars - the Security Council (SC), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Human Rights Council (HRC). Nepal's role in UN's peacekeeping work is evident as one of the main troop contributors. It has benefited from development assistance and technical cooperation with more than 22 UN agencies - United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to UNESCO - active in Nepal. Nepal has been a pro-active player in human rights including the ratification of 16 instruments and the election to the position of the Chairmanship of the UN Commission on Human Rights, now the HRC, at one of the most crucial times of transition. Government policy and the role of many individuals from Head of State and Government to officials have contributed to nurture Nepal's excellent relations with the UN. Rishikesh Shah heading the Fact Finding Mission on the death of Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, Shailendra Kumar Upadhyaya in negotiations on the Law of the Sea and this author himself as Chairman of the UN Commission on Human Rights are credited for having played the most high profile role in the UN on behalf of Nepal.

- Nepal has deployed close to 100,000 security personnel (from the Nepal Army, Nepal Police and the Armed Police Force) in various peacekeeping missions. Almost 100 Nepali security personnel have laid down their lives in the line of duty. At present Nepal is the sixth largest troop contributing country with some 5,000 Nepali security personnel involved in 12 peacekeeping operations, despite difficult security situation at home. With such dedication Nepal deserves an important role in UN peace keeping. Sadly today not a single Nepali national is in a senior position in the UN's peace keeping work in the field or at the Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO) or the Peace Building Commission.
- Having completed more than six decades of its existence, the UN should invigorate its role in international conflict management and promotion of peace. Based on our own faith and commitment, Nepal invited the UN as a neutral institution to assist us in the peace process, particularly in the management of the monitoring of the Maoist army combatants and their weapons. Nepal's nationally driven unique peace process and the role of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) could have been important examples. But the way the UNMIN had to leave Nepal

created some irritation in this vital relationship which we must try to move beyond now.

- To enhance the faith and commitment of member states there should be further democratization of the UN including the expansion of the Security Council with a fair representation of the developing world including a permanent seat for India reflecting the current global political, economic, social and security situation.
- Nepal chaired the Coordinating Bureau for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and today a Nepali national heads the LDC office in the UN secretariat. While this is a good opportunity, this should however not be at the cost of other important UN positions that Nepal rightfully deserves, including the non-permanent member of the UNSC and the Presidency of the UN General Assembly, both of which Nepal lost badly recently.
- Former Foreign Secretary, PR to the UN in Geneva and NY has become Under Secretary General, the highest ranking Nepali to serve in the secretariat of the UN in the 60 years of our membership. In the past a number of Nepalese were in other senior positions in the UN Secretariat including the Director of the Division of the LDCs in Geneva and SG's Representative to Iraq. More Nepalese deserve and should be promoted to senior positions in the UN Secretariat, other UN organs or specialized agencies.
- Nepal today spends a significant share of its annual revenue in debt servicing which otherwise could be utilized in other deserving development work. Many LDCs have benefited by debt cancellation through various initiatives in the UN, the international financial institutions (IFIs) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). What would be a better gesture of the international community than the cancellation of the outstanding debt at this time when Nepal is passing through a difficult political and economic transition by consolidating democratic transformation and social justice?
- **Non-Alignment:** Fully accepting the principles of peaceful co-existence among nations, Nepal actively participates in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The NAM is still relevant in articulating the independent opinion and analysis based on national interests as well as in promoting friendship, equality and mutual understanding and cooperation among the developing countries. Review of some of its approaches may be needed.

- **Regional Cooperation:** Leadership of both the summit and the secretariat of SAARC and later BIMSTEC should be utilized to strengthen relations with neighboring countries as well as in promoting investment, tourism, exports and trade diversification. With the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu Nepal should be able to play a proactive role in strengthening SAARC as an effective organization capable of assisting South Asia in addressing some of the most serious problems, particularly poverty and political violence.
- **International Donors and Non-governmental Organizations:** Nepal must continue to strengthen relations with international donors such as the World Bank, IMF, ADB and the WTO as well as INGOs. These relations should be strengthened and expanded for assistance of these organizations in Nepal's economic and social development, particularly in areas of Nepal's national priority of infrastructure development, poverty reduction and trade.
- **Economic (Development) Diplomacy:** Cooperation of the rapidly developing two large neighbors as well as the international community in support of the larger national goal of raising the standard of living of the people through rapid economic and social transformation should be the main objective of Nepal's diplomacy. In this context Nepalese action plan to graduate from the LDC by 2022 should be taken up more seriously. Nepal's leadership position in the United Nations' LDC mechanism should be better utilized to further effectively articulate the interests of the LDCs as a whole and Nepal's development agenda with particular focus on foreign aid, expansion and diversification of trade, transfer of technology as well as promotion of tourism, foreign investment and employment.
- **Climate Change and Protection of bio-diversity:** Protecting the rich bio-diversity of Nepal situated in the foothills of the Himalayas from the adverse effects of global climate change as well as compensation for the contribution made in offsetting carbon-emission by Nepal's forestry sector could be one of the new priorities of Nepal's foreign policy.
- While on the subject of climate change and cooperation between India and Nepal on water resources, I recall an old religious book of verses my father used to chant and I used to listen as a child growing up in the mountains of Nepal. Shree Devi Bhagabat was written way back and translated to Nepali also long ago by Pandit Krishna Prasad Sharma. In page 282 of the Ninth Chapter, there are four lines worth reciting here:

बित्ता पाँच हजार वर्ष कलिको दुष्कर्म जाग्ला जब ।
गंगा, सिन्धु, सरस्वती सब नदी बैकुण्ठ जालान् तब ॥
नामै मात्र यहाँ रहन्छ तिनको जो शक्ति हो सो उ ता ।
केही तत्त्व पनि रहेन तिनको होला यहाँ बेपत्ता ॥

- Translated into English it basically reads “after the 5000th year of the Kali, Ganga, Sindu Saraswoti will reincarnate to heaven. Only their traces and names will remain here on earth. All their power will vanish”. What made the author of the Devi Puran, a version of the classic Purans make such a dire prediction so long ago? How is this related with the disappearance of the mythical river Saraswoti mentioned in the Rig Veda or the modern phenomenon of global warming, melting of the Himalayan glaciers and fast drying up sources of water in and around us? What relationship does this myth or prediction have to do with water resource utilization by Nepal and India?
- Just as I recall these verses, we also know that Nepal India cooperation in the utilization of the vast water resources is long over due and the potential is great in terms of what India and Nepal both need and what Nepal has to offer and India can help. But the experience so far has not been so inspiring. Although the Devi Bhagabat may just be a myth, it might be wise for both sides to start thinking big and implementing some of the major projects in the pipeline without further delay, aware of both the myth and the stark reality that every gallon of water wasted is wasting the great potential in India Nepal relations. Those opposing the recent PTA signed between Nepal and India may also need to consider the implication of the recent nuclear material supply agreement signed between India and Australia.
- **Foreign Employment:** One of the most crucial aspects of Nepal's development is foreign employment making information, facilitation and assistance to Nepalese migrant workers as one of the main priorities of our development policy and diplomacy. With this in mind Nepal government took the initiative of establishing new resident embassies in Malaysia, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, the Republic of Korea, Israel, Bahrain and Oman as well as added labor attaches in countries with large number of Nepalese workers. Despite this huge investment by the government why Nepali workers are still the lowest paid and worst treated in many labor importing countries? The cost-benefit of these new arrangements needs to be evaluated and necessary steps taken to improve on them. Meanwhile, in the context of the turmoil in the Arab world, have we done some homework on what will be the impact of some serious disruptions in some of the Arab countries with concentration of Nepali workers?
- **The Middle East Peace Process:** Historically Nepal has taken a firm and principled stand on the Middle East (ME) problem by daring to establish

diplomatic relations with Israel long ago but also firmly supporting the rights of the Palestinian people. All countries of the ME should have the right to exist peacefully within secure borders. In the meantime, Nepal must raise its grave concern at the increasing violence between Israel and the Palestinians and strongly support the peace process between Israel and the Arabs for a lasting peace in that region.

- **Nuclear and other Arms Control:** Despite the end of the Cold-War the large stockpiles of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and other weapons and small arms are matters of serious concern for the people of the world. As the old nuclear powers refuse to rid themselves of their nuclear weapons, the world is heading towards a new risk with more countries trying to develop nuclear weapons. The risks of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction falling in the hands of terrorists, the question of nuclear safety as so clearly shown by the recent Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan make the call for the world to get rid of such weapons and enhance international peace and security very valid, especially for *nuclear locked* Nepal. Similarly Nepal, which has just emerged from violent insurgency, should take up the issue of small arms as a top priority.
- **Bhutanese Refugees:** The continuing plight of the Bhutanese people forcefully expelled and living as refugees in camps in Nepal for so long is one of the most enduring human tragedies of this region and the world. While facilitating their resettlement in other countries, Nepal has supported the fundamental right of the Bhutanese refugees to return to their country with dignity. This has been one of the classic cases of Nepal's failure of diplomacy that despite such a policy in the last 20 years not a single refugee has returned to Bhutan. It is in the best national interests of both Nepal and Bhutan to try to resolve this problem as quickly as possible and not allow this issue linger and affect relations between two closest neighbors.
- **Democracy and Human Rights:** Since the restoration of Democracy and human rights in the 1990s Nepal has been struggling to strengthen and institutionalize these universal values. The strong support and solidarity of all friendly countries and international organizations was also crucial in ending violence and autocracy and reestablishing peace and democracy with the success of the People's Movement of 2006. Nepal must express its sincere appreciation to friendly countries and institutions for their support but not allow HR fundamentalists create discord in our otherwise ethnically diverse and tolerant society.

- With deep sorrow at the ethnic conflicts and violence in different countries of Africa, the turmoil in the Arab world and signs of serious problems in some SAARC countries, Nepal should actively support initiatives for a more peaceful, democratic and prosperous global order. In this context Nepal's unique experience in the peaceful resolution of violent conflicts including the successful integration and rehabilitation of rebel army fighters and combatants could be articulated well in the international and regional forums. If done well this could project a very positive image of Nepal in the international arena.

These issues many revolving around current policies, have been the subject of many of my writings and papers in the past. Let me now turn to some other ideas that may seem philosophical from the perspective of immediate policy application but useful and even necessary in defending Nepal's national interest in the long run. In so doing I want to draw your attention to the following proposition. Despite their long history of hostility a war between France and Germany, Germany and England or England and France is today not only improbable but unthinkable. Can we talk about the US, China, Japan, Russia, India and Pakistan relations with the same level of reassurance? And if not, the question is why not? Why are Journals of International relations, national security, foreign policy and diplomacy today full of scenarios of China-US, India, Pakistan, Japan, Russia confrontation?

There are many reasons for the current state of flux but at the core, in my view, is the irony of how the human intellect has been unable to keep pace with the dynamics of time and technology. As a result, the 19th Century notion "nations have no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests" continues to define inter-state relations in the current globalized and interdependent 21st Century world. Depicting such contradictions a Western scholar writes "we exist in a bizarre combination of stone age emotions, mediaeval institutions and God-like technology. This is, in a nutshell, how we have lurched into the 21st Century". If this is how thinkers in societies we consider developed, from which we are inspired and influenced so much feel one can imagine the condition of societies at the *tail end of the spectrum of intellect* suffering from what an Asian thinker calls "the tragedy of mimicry".

Without a new philosophy of *national interests realized through a global collective good* and with global strategic doctrines still predicated on "si vis pacem para bellum" or its modern version, Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), how can win-win inter-state relations - the foundation of the new global foreign and security policy paradigm, be perceived and pursued? For such a relation to start it first needs conceptual-philosophical innovations and

practical-behavioral adjustments consistent with the *dynamics of technology and time*.

Amity with all enmity with none: A new model of inter-state relations in the *new age* demands a new global foreign and security policy paradigm of *amity with all enmity with none* within an international rules based system. That sadly is the real problem of the current *global paradigm flux*.

- Foreign and security policy based on *amity with all enmity with none* is all the more essential for Nepal as there is no room for enmity in its relations with India and China and a policy of permanent friendship with its two powerful neighbors is in Nepal's best national interest. Such a policy has always been vital in the past and the nature of politics at the current time and location makes it particularly important.
- Today, global power balance is shifting and internal politics is divided, making Nepal vulnerable to undue external meddling. Dealing with simultaneously cooperating and competing regional-global super powers embroiled in their own internal upheavals in a rapidly changing global political and economic order and strategic equation demands ability to observe ongoing events and interpret available information with knowledge, understanding and experience. Historical intricacies and new complexities seen through the eyes of naive convictions, outdated dogmas or vested interests distort comprehension. Policies based on them can have adverse consequences. To avoid adverse consequences understanding the nature of the changes at the international level and appreciation for our own internal developments are essential.

Understanding the nature of contemporary international developments: The *Cold-War* profoundly affected world politics and economics for almost half a century after the end of the two world wars. When the Cold-War ended many hoped of a new era of global peace and prosperity with the attention devoted to and resources consumed by MAD being diverted to feed the hungry, heal the sick, educate the illiterate and unite rather than divide mankind. But the *peace and development dividend* never really materialized. Berlin wall fell but many walls remained and new ones are being built. The Cold-War was replaced by wars of different nature but no less devastating and a new cold war may be starting.

Scholars warned of the dichotomy in the global political and economic management and its adverse consequences long ago. This discord is now manifest in what can be characterized as *rapid globalization of economics*

increasing localization of politics. The world is getting more integrated technologically-economically to the point that some see it as the “death of distance”. And yet the global village is also getting fragmented politically along cultural, ethnic, religious and regional lines. Globalization has created opportunity for some misery for others. The events of 9/11 profoundly changed the nature of threat to global security with a group of individuals in one remote corner of the world were able to carry out the most devastating attack on the symbol of global political, financial and security super-power. Terrorism and trans-national crime have completely changed the nature of threat and hence the exercise of national power in the protection and promotion of what we are discussing, national interest. In the face of growing demands of human security and new doctrines of responsibility to protect or pre-emptive regime change, conventional approach to national sovereignty and national interests are going to be simply inadequate especially for the relatively small and the weak.

The Ideas Deficit: The ideas deficit is most manifest today in the “*disconnect*” between the dynamics of time and technology but the rigidity of human emotions, beliefs and institutions. The pressure of *winner take all* mindsets at the top but popular demands for a just and equitable sharing of power and resources within and among societies is complicating politics, economics, society, foreign and security policies. Conventional wisdom no longer explains nor can be used to resolve current problems. The left-right stereo types are blurring and the role of the nation-state in reconciling the dilemmas of politics between power, its primary instrument and justice, its goal and economics between demand and supply, production and consumption or growth and equity is changing. The new world needs a new political, economic, social security and foreign policy architecture but creative ideas to respond to the *challenges of change* are in short supply.

The ideas-deficit is particularly serious in parts of the developing world under pressure of *restructuring* while politics as an idea to promote the *happiness of the people* is fractured and the nation-state, the principal institution exercising political power to implement that idea is in the early stages of structuring. Competing political, economic and strategic interests compounded by *the sum total of the energy, environment, finance and food crises multiplied by the acute governance deficit, (2E+2F) X AGD*, exacerbate political divisions and radicalism, social disparity-intolerance-extremism, religious fundamentalism and vice-versa. Due to lack of clarity on *individual-society contracts* or *minimum values consensus* within and gratuitous demands from outside, many developing societies are failing in their journey of change and modernization.

Cambodia, Rwanda and Yugoslavia yesterday, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, the Arab world and our SAARC neighbors Afghanistan and Pakistan today are examples.

South Asia in turmoil: The 21st century is dubbed the *Asian Century*. China, India and Japan are global economic powerhouses. But parts of Asia are under stress as events from the Korean Peninsula, Thailand and the South China Sea to the Arab world now demonstrate. In political, economic and social terms South Asia represents the largest number of the *world's hungry and angry*. Strategically, China, India and Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability give the potential to change contemporary global power configurations but it also makes the Central Himalayas the most nuclear-locked region of the world. Afghanistan, the latest addition to SAARC and Pakistan, one of its founding members are the focal points of the global *war on terror*. Sri-Lanka is just emerging from a devastating ethnic war; Bangladesh and parts of India are under strain. With internal turmoil, intra regional discord and extra regional demands South Asia is emerging as one of the most troubled regions in the world. In this milieu some observers ominously warn, South Asia is the flash point of the next global conflict and Nepal the new (*Kuruchhetra*) battleground. How will South Asia deal with the situation after the departure of ISAF from Afghanistan, the growing turmoil in Pakistan and the rise of groups like the Islamic state and Al-Qaida?

Nepal at the brink: Nepal has always been an interesting laboratory of state formation and nation building. Understanding of the profound changes going on in the world and our own neighborhood and appreciation of how our journey of statehood started, on what ground we stand today and what is our vision for the future, collectively as a society, country, nation-state is the most critical part of any discourse on defending our national interest. Pandit Nehru once said, "In the absence of vision a society begins to lose energy and a nation starts to die". Do we not feel as if our society is wasting so much energy, so much potential? And if we do not begin to realize, what will be our future?

In such a highly treacherous milieu, the successful People's Movement of April 2006 brought Nepal back from the brink. Tired of autocracy and violence, people saw hope in the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) road-map to restore peace and democracy. The promise *this will be the last struggle in which Nepalis have to die fighting for democracy* convinced many inside and outside. With sea of people protesting, the King yielded. With the 12 Point Understanding and participation in the peaceful movement the Maoists were supposed to have given up violence and taken the *people's power* path. To be governed democratically under a Constitution written by their own elected

representatives is a long held aspiration of the people of Nepal. With the successful Constituent Assembly (CA) election, building a new sovereign, independent, democratic, peaceful and prosperous Nepal for all Nepalese could have started in earnest. But what happened to the first CA and what is happening now are all in front of us.

Having demonstrated extraordinary courage first, leaders most responsible for the politics of consensus (*fusion*) themselves came under the spell of confusion; the leader and the party leading the People's Movement, after coming to power succumbed to the swings from opposition to any deal with the Maoists to giving-in to all their bargains. As a result instead of reaping the *peace dividend* "He" and his party became the most conspicuous casualties; on their part, the Communist Party of Nepal Maoists (CPNM) mastered the politics of rebellion utilizing the contradictions of Nepali society as well as exploiting the weaknesses of their competitors and goodwill of sympathizers. But gaining political power is one thing, using it to build a democratic, peaceful and prosperous society is a whole new ball game. After the CA election, *vanity of victory* mutated to a self-defeating arrogance of power. What is happening in Nepal now reflect not only a serious discord among real necessities, national priorities, regional and global complexities but also the failure of leadership to manage the process of change which they themselves called for. So, Nepal today stands as a classic case of change mismanagement. Had the integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist Army Combatants not succeeded, we would probably be at war again. If this transition is not complete soon, the *collective march of folly* can push Nepal back to the brink.

Conclusions: Nepal today stands at a critical threshold of history and geography with tremendous opportunities of building a democratic, peaceful and prosperous Nepal for all Nepalese utilizing the goodwill and cooperation of our immediate neighbors and friends and well wishers everywhere. In this endeavor history shows that all prosperous democracies are built on the foundation of individual freedom (happiness of the people as the end of the state) leveraged with social safety and economic prosperity bound by the rule of law but everything subordinated to the ultimate demands of national interests and national security. In the context of the deliberation on defending Nepal's National Interest, the fundamental dilemma lies in what I would call *the sequencing of interests* - interests of the individual, society/community/region or institutions and ultimately national interests. A just society, country, a viable nation-state and a prosperous democracy cannot be built with a reverse sequencing of interests – individual and family interest first, then the interests of the group, community or region with the interest

of the nation-state coming last. Correcting the reverse sequencing of interests has emerged as the biggest challenge to Nepal's society, intellectuals, officials and diplomats and most important of all statesmanship, described as political leadership of wisdom and courage. In this sense the biggest threat to Nepal's national interest may be coming from within rather than from outside.



10. Comments by
Mr. Anand Aditya, Political Analyst,
on Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada's Paper

'Strategy for survival' has marked all efforts by the central Himalayan state of Nepal from the day of its emergence as the 22nd state in the global comity of nation-states in the year 1768. Since four years later it is going to complete exactly a quarter-millennium of its statehood, the time could not have been more opportune and relevant to take a look back at the achievements made so far and to probe the challenges that it faces in the days ahead. That is what Dr. Simkhada tries in this paper with considerable success. Considering the critical import of the theme selected (the cover), the contents included by the author in his well-written paper that offers more food for thought than is usual, and the context, the efforts so punctiliously put into the exercise call for commendation but not without a certain measure of critique.

The value of the kind of interaction that IFA is holding, is of course, hard to overstress. The point is to broaden, deepen, as well as continue it to include as large an audience as possible. While broadening means expanding the range of participants to include more communities and public and professional agencies, deepening implies reaching the audience vertically down to the people and social strata that need to be informed and enlightened for adequate ownership of the national interest(s) which could lend it a legitimacy the agenda cannot otherwise acquire. Continuing, on the other hand, means expanding the time horizon of the effort in a consistent, uniform way to make it regular and periodic over the passage of time so that the output becomes incremental as well as cumulative. While the three ways just mentioned underscore three different approaches to the agenda of national interest, there are two more issues that deserve mention at this point: the urgency of setting the agenda in a proper way and building stakes in national interest(s).

The agenda on national interest(s) has to be shaped in a form that need not evolve spontaneously as in earlier times. Given the times we are in, national interest(s), to a certain extent, can also be modified and modulated through

socialization, education, and mobilization, with the use of media, civil society bodies, IT and science and technology wherein the five global forces at work now – globalization, privatization, liberalization, marketization, and localization – can be of immense value. But since these phenomena often work at cross purposes, the need to converge or synchronize them will be hard to exaggerate.

Another point that deserves mention here is of no small significance. ‘Stakeholding’ is a term in vogue today as is ‘stakeholder’, but we have now to start talking about ‘stakebuilding’ and ‘stakebuilders’. For, isn’t the building of stakes a larger priority to the holding of stakes in the context of National Interest(s) as elsewhere? And, should not one now begin also to think of the various dimensions of that process and analyze them? It is perhaps time now for us to expend time on such an exercise before we can really take up the agenda with the gravity it implies. What are the stakes? How can one start building up national interests? Who builds them? Who are the potential spoilers? What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, risks, and challenges in the course of such stakebuilding? What is our track record so far? How much use has been made so far in using the strategic resources at our disposal in stakebuilding – geostrategic location, proximity to rising Supereconomies, Megadiversity, the Bounty of Natural Resources, our expanding Human Capital, and our Cultural and Martial Heritage? Why has foreign aid, both internal and foreign, become AIDS (Acquired Immunity from Development Syndrome)? What explains our occasional spells of what I call *Historic Amnesia* – the propensity to forget lessons of history and moments that must be celebrated (we never took note of the 1st or 2nd centennials of our statehood and, given the way we are going, may as well bypass the quarter millennium of our statehood which is at our door without so much as batting an eyelid)? What explains our *Defense Nihilism* that is silently creeping in to eat at the roots of the great, almost unparalleled, saga of valor every Nepali can be proud of? Also, what kind of scenario could be imagined in the short-, mid-, and long-term for such a process? Finally, would a mini-max framework be possible for such an exercise? These are some of the questions that come to mind, but they do not exhaust the whole range of curiosities.

Defending national interest(s), in essence, includes defining, determining, developing, as well as, in the present context, democratizing national interest(s). What was a national interest, say half a century ago, is hardly so today: national symbols and icons are fast falling and questions are being raised on the values and principles that were holding their sway over a large span of Nepal’s historical existence. If the skepticism and cynicism that have

crept in pose a challenge, it should be welcome, since a healthy debate on the theme does demand such queries, doubts, and reservations. Questions that were taboo till the other day need to be addressed openly if the skeletons in the cupboard are to be brought into the open through similar debates, discourses, and dialogues. This may render the exercise inordinately complex, even difficult, but can one defend national interest if one can't define it? Can one defend it, if one cannot comprehend the full panoply of issues involved? And, can one defend it if one has no capacity to cultivate it?

In the long-term framework, the lifespan of an evolving state can actually be presumed to pass through three different phases – survival, subsistence, and sustenance, with the second phase as a transitional in-between stage when despite its existential security, a state still may have to traverse some way in its struggle to attain the status of a fully mature and viable state that can sustain itself acquiring the strength of a sovereign and independent polity whose territorial integrity is inviolable and which is capable to protect its physical integrity with its own means. In today's terms, while all this implies what an ideal statehood suggests, each of these three key attributes – sovereignty, independence, and integrity – have undergone a deep massive change in the context of the universal transition of paradigms (the author's term is 'global paradigm flux', p. 11) and what was valid and acceptable even half a century ago in the context of sovereignty, independence, and integrity is hardly so any more. In such a paradigmatic flux when monocratic sovereignty is becoming citizens' sovereignty, a state's Westphalian independence in taking autonomous decisions free from any internal or external checks and interference is being questioned more and more, absolute autarchy is a more or less abandoned ideal, and even physical integrity is becoming far more malleable and less sacrosanct than it ever was, the idea, ideal, and the very ideology of a nation-state's interest faces unprecedented challenges. This is, however, just one problem that an ideal nation-state faces. There are others.

The second problem begs the question: Is Nepal just a state, a nation-state, a state-nation, or something different putatively and more probably, a *nation-in-the-making*? Since the answer to each of these queries differs, the agenda of understanding, defining, and deciding on the 'national' interest(s) is bound to be different. In the context of the pluralistic aspirations now underway on behalf of the dozens of communities who are vociferously on march with their demands and aspirations, settlement of the plurinational agenda will need a certain time horizon before many of the nationalities' interests crystallize into a clearer, more generic and united shape and form. This does not mean we have to wait indefinitely for the process to finalize. But, imposition

of monocratic, even oligarchic, interests will not do. It has to become an omnibus approach that physically and structurally represents at least the interest of a predominant majority of the mass public (if not everyone), that is responsible to them in a collective sense, and that also responds to their legitimate interests and demands which means substantive representation. This, in essence, constitutes the key problem of the day in defining the national interest(s) of Nepal in an internal context. Since all this is hardly possible in the short term, one can understand why political instability and social insecurity remain the chronic issues in Nepal's body politique. But, the fact also remains that without consolidating the domestic national interests, it is not possible to conceive of promoting national interest abroad.

A third element that needs to be factored into a salutary framework of national interest is the morphology of the Nepali nation-statehood. In other words, the rationale and relevance of comprehending and determining on the issues that are a part and parcel of a state which is still in flux, and whose fundamental law (constitution) is yet to be drafted. Restructuring the state, remodeling the society, reforming the government, redesigning the electorate, and reconfiguring the idea of the land and the country – these are the parts of the new agenda and process which has just started, but will take time to assume a distinct form. It is for this reason that defining and understanding national interest(s) becomes a much more demanding exercise than it has ever been so far.

Despite such difficulties, the author of the paper covers a fairly large ground, with a definite sense of history-in-the-making, and informs the reader on a number of issues. Particularly revealing is what he regards as the 'reverse sequencing of interests' in his concluding paragraph. The perversion of contemporary political leadership he regards as the biggest challenge today and this observer could not agree more with his conclusion that the biggest threat to Nepal's national interest(s) comes not from outside, but from within.

Exploring and elucidating the various aspects of national interest and challenges that go along with the various dimensions, the author also enriches his observations with some experiences and academic contributions of his own, including in that context the contributions made by Nepal, particularly in the regional and global context. Separating regional from the international dimension, however, is not always easy and often it becomes difficult to say exactly where one begins and another ends. In one way or other, this same logic applies to the internal context. For drawing a distinctly clear line between the internal, regional, and global (international) may prove a tricky exercise, particularly when the issue and agenda happen to belong to borderlines,

expanding frontiers, religion, ideology, ethnicity, human rights, equity, terrorism, and ecology that recognize neither state nor regional borders, particularly so when IT and Science and Technology have for most practical purposes, killed distance making the world not just a village, but an organic family recalling the sage dictum of the ancients *Vasuidhaiva Kutumbakam*.

Given the tempo and tenor of the four processes at work now – globalization, liberalization, privatization, and marketization – it would be quite difficult to divide the three categories of challenges into water-tight compartments. It may be misleading, sterile, even dangerous to maintain such divisions, for no one can be sure when and how issues and agendas transcend the boundaries of one category to suddenly mutate into another higher level. Such *transmutability of the levels of challenges* poses no small difficulty to a state like Nepal where political competence and resources at the state's disposal are not amply available.

Such difficulty notwithstanding, one positive way to evaluate the efforts made would have been a critical appraisal of the approaches taken to the challenges at various levels, both historically and comparatively, with a more or less objective assessment of the outcome achieved and the lessons learnt. The pedagogical value of such exercise cannot be denied, which is hard to discern in the paper under discussion. The policy value for future decisions too is obvious even if the cases can differ from country to country and from context to context.

This is where the age-old strategy for survival looks outdated. If the challenges are to be taken full steam, a holistic, integrated, long-range inter-generational approach is the choice for the century. Nepal does not lack in *strategic resources* – geopolitical location, megadiversity, natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unparalleled saga of valor (martial history). The challenge lies in using each of them optimally, not just for survival but for the peace, prosperity, and happiness of every citizen here.

Among the key issues on theme that the author presents is a minimum consensus among the main political forces on the vital issues of national interest(s), and there is no reason to quarrel with that argument or even with what he calls 'Idea Deficit'. Still the text ignores certain risks that the state now is facing – risks of cooptation by foreign powers under hidden agenda and by agencies in the form of cultural and religious penetration through projects that come unmonitored, work unseen, leaving the state with challenges whose invidious impact may take time to unfold, but by that time the water may have gone past our heads.

Two rays in this bleak scenario, however, give hope that all is not lost. One is the growing internationalization of the Nepali state in the global comity of statehoods; another is the window of opportunities that are now opening from both the North and the South. The role of the Nepali peacetroopers in the UN and Nepal's nationally driven peace process after a decade of full-fledged insurgency are two other windows of success, as the paper underscores. A nuclear-locked Nepal can and must certainly adopt the mantra of *Amity with All, Enmity with None*, as the author rightly proposes, to get the maximum out of the peace dividend. But if the national interest is to flower up to its best bloom then it has to become a nation that is not just sovereign, but also democratic; a state that is not just territorially secure, but offers security to all its citizens; a government that not only governs but delivers good governance; a country that every citizen can call their true home; and a society where everyone can walk with heads held high in freedom and without fear.

But, for far too long, the people here have remained pawns of history; for far too long, they have been reading what others have written for them; and for far too long, they have been following agenda set by others. It is now time for citizens of this *nation-in-the-making* to wake up to the new challenges and begin writing their own history. Defining national interest, comprehending it, and debating and discoursing on it would be the first right step in defending it.



11. Remarks by **Chairperson, Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, Former Foreign Minister of Nepal**

Presentation is very illuminative. I have very few remarks. When you stop to see lights in the end of the tunnel or when you ascertain your past bright then a worry for the future of a nation is significant in this uncertain and delayed transition period. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has to arrive for Nepal's endorsement –how to go through this event, I leave on participants. Now what feature I've seen is that, in my 54-55 years of attachment on handling economic affairs, we have done some task on Nepal's foreign policy 8-10 year after abolishment of Rana regime, election indoors with challenges and although politicians were not fully prepared, after profound study and research and all through exercises, our UN entry through Non-Aligned Summit and our active participation in different conventions was possible. Although there was major deviation in operating the state, the direction was established on fundamental matters of foreign policy and they are representing national interests from Rana regime to secular republic of Nepal. To define and to draw that line was done by that generation and now why responsible people are behind the curtain in Nepal's mainstream?

I remember after 1960s changes, as a secretary of state, there were foremost conversations, dialogues and profound deliberations on past mistakes. Which is the right way forward? To find skilled generation to adhere with rest of the world to represent the nation were perused. But following activities turned out to be 'sequence of interest' like former PM Surya Bahadur Thapa wrote. Problem is not with identifying destination but with to find a way forward. Due to competition for that, due to internal arguments, we were not able to find consensus for national set point from differentiations. We are all opposed in this exercise. But at that time when Nepal was just emerging as a nation in the world, we were representing her with dignified determination.

I remember Army Chief's request to King Mahendra for increase in budget. King asked me to do so. I questioned him "with whom we have to fight for?" King Mahendra replied that, "we have to fight with no one but If anyone comes against us we should be prepared until we say 'aayee' and after that if rest of

the world did not hear us, then that is different proposition". Such thoughtful views, devotion for nation and affection for nation were in those days. The way Nepal was presented, those intellectual exercises and intense hard works washed away all those exercises done at those reluctant circumstances. We have history of solidarity with the rest of the world forming foreign policy of Nepal.

Secretary General Kofi Annan in a meeting said, "UN received Noble Prize for stabilizing peace. Blue Hat Nepalese contribution is acknowledgeable". We have contributed where we can. But now in this unpleasant situation we are trying for political leap but we don't know where we will land and where this exercise ends is a considerable topic. We are still beyond the process where intellectual courses are implemented in political transaction and still we have not seen any consensus on vital national issues. But academic cooperation to give pressure should be continued and I see this IFA/FES seminar on that course.

Thank You!!!



12. Summary of the Seminar by **Mr. Chandra Shekhar Adhikari,** **Senior Diplomatic Correspondent, Kantipur Daily**

Institute of Foreign Affairs, (IFA) in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (FES-Nepal) organized a seminar program, 'Defending National Interest in the Emerging Internal, Regional and International Challenges' on September 9, 2014 at Hotel Radisson, Kathmandu. The program was separated into three sessions: Inaugural Session and two Paper Presentation Sessions from two different distinguished Experts.

Inaugurating the seminar, Chief Guest Hon. Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, Minister for Foreign Affairs described on Nepal's foreign policy giving emphasis on the internal policy reflecting on foreign policy. Nonetheless, he frankly put his view on the problem of foreign policy caused by the interest of different political parties rather than the voice of a state. He added, "single foreign policy should be prioritized and maintained as every political party must stand for the foreign values". He further added, "We need to work hard tactfully to catch up the emerging opportunities at the global level. We must be clear on neighboring policy before analyzing in-house foreign policy."

"As the Foreign Minister of the country, defending Nepal's national interests in relation to international community in a broader sense is my primary responsibility", he further said. Moreover, Nepal faces a number of challenges, many in the context of the recent developments, in meeting its foreign policy objectives. In this sense, discussing and analyzing the challenges the country is facing, or is likely to face in the days ahead, and trying to find out possible measures to effectively address the challenges is a timely and important initiative.

In addition to these, he further focused on Foreign policy. It is guided and dictated by a number of factors both internal and external. Other peculiarities such as the country's location, diplomatic traditions and aspirations of the people play equally important roles in deciding the country's foreign policy. Besides, every country has its national philosophy which provides inputs in

the formulation and implementation of foreign policy. This is true in Nepal's case as well.

Ever since Nepal took the shape of a united country, especially after the period of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, its foreign policy has largely been guided by geopolitical factors. Located as we are between the two big neighbors, our foreign policy orientation has been to maintain the best of relations with both countries based on the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence and mutuality of benefits.

We have been maintaining balanced relations with our neighbors; have been advocating the rights of the developing countries in general, and those of the least developed and land-locked countries, in particular; have expressed our unswerving commitment to the principles as enshrined in the UN Charter; have been playing active role as a NAM member; and have been making exemplary contribution to maintaining world peace.

Internally, Nepal is in the process of drafting new constitution for the country to institutionalize democratic gains achieved over the years. We have to meet the ever growing expectations of our people, especially in the aftermath of the successful People's Movement-2. Besides, we have to reduce poverty and unemployment, provide essential services to our people, and have to guarantee law and order in the society. From the outside, these issues seem not to have any bearing on foreign policy. But, they have. Needless to say, foreign policy is the extension of domestic policy. We need moral and political support from our neighbors, friends and well-wishers in the international community to accomplish the vital task of constitution writing and generous material support to meet our socio-economic development needs. In this context, I would like to mention about our commitment to achieve developing country status by 2022.

Our immediate neighbors, China and India, for example, expect Nepal's active cooperation in not allowing our territory to be misused by elements inimical to them. The international community expects Nepal to be a truly democratic country, marked by respect for human rights, rule of law and social harmony. Thus, as we can clearly see, the interests of our country and that of many others coincide and converge.

He further said, "I have tried to briefly outline Nepal's national interest, and the Government's plans to defend them. I would like to stress that national consensus on foreign policy issue is absolutely essential for us to be effective in pursuing our enlightened national interests."

Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi, Acting Foreign Secretary:

Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi, Acting Foreign Secretary said that the core objective of foreign policy is to promote and safeguard national interests. Parameters of national interest define a boundary within which every government has to seek external engagement. For any state for its survival and growth, nothing is more important than preserving and promoting national interest. National interest cannot be pursued in isolation or in vacuum. Every government operates in a maze of complex challenges and has to address them effectively. Challenges and complexities abound at national, regional and international levels. Indeed, circumstances and contexts under which we attain foreign policy objectives are not as simple and predictable as we would wish for.

The growing shift of power to non-state actors has created both opportunities and challenges. On the positive side, transnational non-governmental organization, civil society groups, faith-based organizations, multinational corporations, other business bodies and interest groups have greater role today at reframing issues and mobilizing public. On the negative side, hostile, non-state actors such as criminal organizations and terrorist networks all empowered by new technologies can pose serious security threats and compound systemic risk.

International security has become multi-dimensional. Terrorism and cross border crimes are on the rise. The international community is yet to find amicable solutions to various crises around the world. However, premature of a concept it may sound, the world is abuzz with the 'onset of second cold war'.

Prime Minister Modi has given priority in relations with neighbors which has generated tremendous enthusiasm across South Asia. SAARC member states, given huge potentials, must cooperate in a meaningful way to assert South Asia's rightful place on the world stage. We are expecting the 18th SAARC summit in Kathmandu later this year to be an important milestone in the evolution of SAARC.

Our balanced relations with India and China; great faith in and active participation in multilateral diplomacy; steadfast commitment to and involvement in non-alignment; dynamic engagement in regional diplomacy under SAARC and BIMSTEC; our consistent support and involvement in UN peacekeeping; our focus on economic diplomacy are among the activities we have been carrying on with full vigor. With this in mind, he put forward some suggestions -'6Cs'- for consideration. These are consensus, critical and

creative thinking, clear, consistent and credible cooperation and collaboration, comprehensive and cooperative and constructive diplomacy.

Dr. Rishi Raj Adhikari, Executive Director of IFA:

Dr. Adhikari, focused in the current situation of Nepal. Nepal, recently, at a cross road of various issues is especially in the grueling and never ending exercise of constitution writing. All important factors and apparatus of state conduction are in a fluid state.

We witnessed the death of CA I amidst multi-sectoral and multi-regional cataclysm and are wary about the fate of CA II, though there are glimmer of positive sign and symptoms on the horizon. We believe a constitution, the mother of all laws, will pave the way for avenues wherein we will be able to defend ourselves from any impending internal and external threats to our national objectives.

Internally, protecting national interests encompasses software such as freedom from all kinds of fear, poverty, marginalization, unemployment and exclusion etc. We also have to start imagining the chaos to be created if our youth, battered as migrant workers, and angry, start returning back from abroad in hordes due to labour problem in destination countries and seek their right to be employed! This could be another manifestation of weakening the national interest.

Partisan politics prevailing over vital issues such as national political system; politicization of national institutions including judiciary, educations, bureaucracy, and criminalization of politics; internal cultural conflicts including inter-religious; inter-ethnic/racial and inter-regional are other factors to be considered while planning for defense of national interest.

Dr. Adhikari raised mainly two issues; national and international challenges. Nepal is in a very sensitive geo-strategic position as a bridge between two physical, economic and military giants. They are competing with each other for world attention and leadership. It is a delicate matter for Nepal to play a balancing role as a physically, economically and militarily small country. Nepal needs to urgently develop a coherent foreign and defense strategy which ensures protection of our national interest and also caters the need of our neighbors.

With the welcome remarks, Mr. Yadav Prasad Khanal, Resource Person of IFA, highlighted the issues on today's discussion. He emphasized on the gravity of this subject and also informed that IFA is organizing this discussion forum with an objective that the outcome of this discourse will add value to a

desirable resolution of our vital transitional moment. Nepal, like any country, has many challenges at the international level. Though we are landlocked country, we cannot be left isolated from the world due to globalization effect and expansion of information technology. The west is heading to the east and our neighbors and the entire East Asia have become the focal point of today's global politics. Together, the world is interconnected amongst the number of issues like environment, resources, terrorism, diseases and so on.

Paper Presentation:

After the inaugural session, the experts presented the paper on different perspective of defense of national interest of Nepal.

The first session

The session was chaired by Professor Dr. Lok Raj Baral and Madhuraman Acharya, Former Foreign Secretary, had presented on the topic '*In Defence of Nepal's National Interests: Internal and Regional Perspectives*'.

He emphasised that there is no agreed consensus on national interests. This owes to the polarized and divided positions among the political parties on many issues related to foreign policy. Nepal's political parties have a sharply polarized worldview, which is often irreconcilable to each other. For example, some extreme left groups categorize the foreign powers as pursuing "hegemony" to "expansionism", others are seen as pro-certain countries. They are divided not just on ideological frame, but are also divided on specific foreign policy issues. The recent example is divided political opinion about the signing of *Power Trade Agreement* with India. Some political parties, including those in the government are for it, while others are campaigning against the same. Both blocs have their own interpretation of national interest on this issue. Thus, it gets blurred as to what constitutes the national interest. If there was clear view on the national interest, no political party could have stood against such national interest in any issue.

There is a need for a broadly agreed national goals and priorities on foreign policy based on clearly defined national interests. Many countries have clearly defined national interests. Others have national interests academically articulated well. For example, Kumar and Kumar (2010) articulated the national interests of India to be threefold: Securing the country against the external and internal threats to territory, populations and vital economic interests. Obtaining the external inputs necessary to achieve economic prosperity as represented by sustained gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate between 8 and 10 %; and in Nepal, we do not have such well-articulated

national interests. The foremost of tasks in defending the national interest is the need to agree on national goals and priorities on foreign policy. Nepal's foreign policy must develop a clearly defined strategic objective linked to its national interests.

First of all there is a need to agreeing on such *national security interests*, such as (i) protecting country's national independence and territorial integrity (defense against external aggression; securing international boundaries); (ii) protecting the country's national unity (stopping disintegrating forces internally); and (iii) protecting the general well-being of the people from external threats (e.g. terrorism, transnational crime, unconventional security threats). Usually, national security interests are achieved through alliances or coalitions, on which Nepal has adopted non-aligned policy. Then it is built around the policy of national defence, on which Nepal has doctrine of minimum deterrence. Yet another instrument in protecting national security interests is to create harmony in the security interests with the neighbours, so as to avoid friction.

Any country's national interests may have interface with another country's interests. Sometimes, the national interests of two or more countries can be *competing or mutually exclusive* (e.g. territorial claims), while in others the countries may have *competing but compatible* interests. In other cases, the national interests of two or more countries can be *converging* or even *complimentary* to each other. Safeguarding the security interests of neighbours comes within the parameter of national interest. Nepal's premier diplomat Yadu Nath Khanal said some time ago, "Nepal's national interest can be undermined if the security or vital political interests of either of big neighbours are undermined in Nepal". Despite the declared policy of not allowing the Nepalese soil against the security or political interests of the neighbouring countries, including India and China, the continued activities inimical to such interests poses a strong challenge to the Nepali state. For example, there is continued allegation of the Nepali territory used by anti-China activists and by the elements posing terrorist threats to India, including through the covert support of the intelligence activities of yet another neighbouring country. With case of the Tibetans seeking refuge in Nepal there is distinct dichotomy of humanitarian and political policies that Nepal has adopted. Politically, Nepal has always supported the "one-China policy" and pledged not to allow any anti-China activities in its soil. On humanitarian grounds, Nepal has always given asylum and safe passage to the Tibetan refugees. Nepal does not recognize the political authority of Dalai Lama, but is not against the spiritual and religious sentiments behind His Holiness, who has strong following among the Buddhist communities in Nepal.

Intelligence constitutes an important aspect of national security strategy and can play an instrumental role in information/analysis of threats and challenges to national security. It is commonly understood Nepal cannot afford to build capability to fight against any of its big neighbours in the event of being attacked. Nepal's army draws its military doctrine primarily aimed at maintaining a capability to defend and deter any hostile element against Nepal's security interests and Nepal's territorial integrity.

Nepal does not have an actively thinking strategic community of its own. So the country's strategic decisions are left to those who occupy the government at the time. Though India and China compete on strategic space in the region, they have similar positions in most of the global issues, including on climate change, the doctrine of "responsibility to protect", preference of UN role in solving global threats to peace and security, greater say for developing countries in multilateral financial institutions (hence formation of BRICS). They have converging stake on the continuation and promotion of trading and economic relations, which is growing.

Basically, a country's national interests fall under three broad categories, namely political, security and economic interests. Politically, the core national interests include preservation and protection of the country's national independence and territorial integrity. Economically, each country seeks to achieve economic edge from the comparative advantage in relation to other countries. At political level, leaders use the term national interest without much clarity. They pledge to work towards promoting national interests, often without specifying them, just as they do for working for the people. In every country, there is considerable debate or difference as to what constitutes a national interest. Often politicians use the term national interest to justify their action or inaction.

Yuba Raj Ghimire, Editor-in-chief, Annapurna Post Daily, has presented his opinion on the paper of Madhu Raman Acharya, as the commentator. His view has reflected National interest which can not be defined. However, it can be challenged. Nepal's foreign policy can be reflected with the behavior of immigration officers to Nepalese Citizens' passport at airport of foreign countries. While observing bureaucracy in the world, it has to be progressed from buttering to service, and government service to national service. However, it has not been practised yet in our country. Bureaucracy has not been reflected in public service yet.

India had an objection while China and Russia had opened their embassy

in Nepal. The problem was settled during the period of King Mahendra. Nonetheless, no leaders can stand to protect the foreign intervention in these days. It can be said that there is lack of foreign policy, while Nepal is acting as if it is fulfilling its duty. Mr. Ghimire further added that foreign policy must protect the country's legacy whilst providing the example of "Jai katak and Jhiki Katak" policy of King Prithivi Naraya Shaha. It's been already clear in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the diplomat having a messenger of a party or the representative of leaders can not contribute to the country more than they expect. Foreign policy should not be followed by the parties.

Political parties have changed the mindset of public. It is not the situation that public can totally trust towards the state. People have the mindset that foreign policy is run by the foreigners; as a result the rescue is possible only from them. Mr. Ghimire also raised the issue of Public Security. Former Indian Ambassador Shyam Sharan disclosed the fact that Indian Ambassador himself tried to intervene Nepal to make Republic. To suppress Republic Movement 2062/2063, Nepal Army attempted to suppress the movement by firing Nepalese people and the King Gyanendra protected his people. However, this fact couldn't come out rather people believed upon the external power.

Professor Dr. Baral as the Chair of the session remarked the paper had touched all issues related on politics, diplomacy and economics. He thought the paper has delivered opinions in different perspectives. He was highly impressed by the paper of Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya. He suggested to keep his paper in the course book of Tribhuvan University. The topic of Nepal India relation itself seems very common in his view. Nevertheless, while we go to depth, it has profound meaning. We don't have any sound understanding of the subject. Treaty of 1950 is not the issue to be raised. The slogan must not be repeated rather people must understand how geography matters to define national interest. It is well known that Nepal India relation has rumor rather than ground reality. Both countries should sit together to find out the solution even in border encroachment. The decision of 1950 treaty taken by the then government was right in one hand. On the other hand, the political parties' leaders take this issue as a big issue while they are out of government, whereas, they normalize the same issue after they join the government.

He also talked about China boarder. Neither we have similar language nor do we have similar culture with China. Therefore, there should not be any doubtful relationship with China.

Credibility, leadership and commitment are three major elements to address National Interest in Foreign Policy. According to him, Nepali political leaders work in a very low profile. For instance, it is very difficult to fix the appointment

with Foreign Minister in India, whereas, Nepal itself keeps in a very low profile.

The Second Session

The session was chaired by Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa. During the session Dr. Shambu Ram Simkhada, Former PR to UN, Geneva, presented his paper on "Defending National interest in the Emerging International Challenges".

The world is changing profoundly and Nepal is undergoing deep rooted changes internally. In this process of transformation, Nepal's political parties and leaders are divided on almost every important aspect of national politics, economic management and international affairs, making Nepal vulnerable to internal division and external influence.

Hans Morgenthau, one of the champions of the Realist School of International Relations suggests that statesmen think and act in terms of national interest defined as national power. In this sense national interest constitute the vital core of a nation's domestic politics reflected in its foreign policy. This is fairly straight forward. But how do you determine and who decides what is in the best interest of a nation-state, itself in a state of transition internally in the midst of a region and the world all undergoing profound changes?

Is it politics or economics that determines the course of inter-state relations? The debate is long and the truth perhaps lies somewhere in the middle. Historically the view of the founder of modern Nepal as a "yam between two boulders" made cautious relations with India and China a vital strategy of Nepal's survival. Such prognosis helped Nepal remain independent while the rest of South Asia was overwhelmed by the onslaught of colonialism. The unprecedented rise of China and India in the post Cold-War global paradigm flux has created opportunities for changing this "revenge of geography" into a *reward*. Besides the challenge of managing the *vitality and complexity of proximity*, good relations with other international actors is equally important for Nepal's peaceful transformation to a prosperous democratic republic. Within this overall policy framework the following could be some of the critical issues in the protection and promotion of Nepal's national interest in the context of emerging international challenges.

Nepal is the meeting point of two great civilizations and South Asia and the central Himalayas are emerging as one of the main epicenters of the impending global paradigm shift. Nepal India relations are deep rooted and wide ranging encompassing the entire spectrum of history, geography, politics, economics, language, culture etc. Today India is emerging as a major global power with rapid economic growth and growing political influence. The tremendous

economic transformation of the last few decades have already established Nepal's northern neighbor China as the second largest economy and one of the major global players. Strong friendship with the two neighbors must not mean relations with other important players in the International Community should not be a priority.

One of the most crucial aspects of Nepal's development is foreign employment and making information, facilitation and assistance to Nepalese migrant workers as one of the main priorities of our development policy and diplomacy. With this in mind Nepal government took the initiative of establishing new resident embassies in Malaysia, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, the Republic of Korea, Israel, Bahrain and Oman as well as added labor attaches in countries with large number of Nepalese workers. Despite this huge investment by the government why Nepali workers are still the lowest paid and worst treated in many labor importing countries? The cost-benefit of these new arrangements needs to be evaluated and necessary steps taken to improve on them.

Anand Aditya, Professor:

Prof. Anand Aditya, as the commentator on Dr. Simkhada's paper, addressed on state building, value, vision and policy planning to be connected to the conscience of national interest. Critical consensus can address national interest. He also focused on the current situation in Nepal. Compared to many countries on the map in this perspective, Nepal may certainly look small, but is not yet too small to house a medium-sized population. What it lacks in territorial depth, its geography makes up in topography. The location of the land may today look precarious, but this same location between the two emerging large markets can prove a blessing tomorrow. The nation today imports all of its fossil fuel bespeaking its heavy dependence abroad on that material. But some of the physical endowments that it has - historical, religious, and cultural heritage, martial tradition, natural beauty, and hydro potential, for instance - would be the envy of any nation-state. Nepal may have been too small, too poor, and too vulnerable so far to demand and win the liberty to determine its own future. But this means neither that it is destined to remain so in the future nor that the scope for growth will remain as tantalizing as it has always been so far. Growing out of its century-old chrysalis, it is a society with a glorious past, a hospitable present and a bountiful future, waiting for its true potentials to be realized.

Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, Former Foreign Minister, commented as chair on Dr. Shambhu Ram Singkhada's Paper, and said, "When past becomes more praise worthy than the future in the context of a state, then it becomes a failure state". To admire the tenure of Prithivi Narayan Shah in the present context itself is a disaster. It signifies that there is no any good initiative taken by later leaders in our country. While talking about Foreign Policy of Nepal, we remember King Mahendra and B.P Koirala but not any other political leaders. Political leaders do not seem to have seriousness towards the country. Lack of international homework is seen in the present context. Internal conflict has also directly affected it. We need the cooperation of intellectuals and also consensus of all political leaders to reach to a goal.

We must keep smooth relation with our neighboring countries and always try our best to give continuation in it. Nonetheless, it depends upon the political leaders who directly deal upon this. Such leaders seem to be rare in the coming days who can really sacrifice for the nation. However, it seems that there is no such political leaders and appointee who are born for the sake of nation.

Floor Discussions

Dr. Gopal Pokharel, Former Executive Director, IFA

Mr. Gopal Pokharel, former Executive director of IFA, provided his opinion in this way that the national interest can be pointed out in numerical order. Further he raised the issue of ethnicity. One should identify his/her own issue and promote.

Kedar Bhakta Shrestha, Former Foreign Secretary

Mr. Kedar Bhakra Shrestha, former Foreign Secretary remarketed that we must find out the emerging challenge in the present context. Emerging regional challenges in next 20 to 30 years must be found. Collaboration, completion, confrontation and conflict are four steps of the upcoming challenges. Regional challenge is to promote regional cooperation. People are aware that SAARC will celebrate its 30th years; however, people are also familiar with its functions. Not only SAARC but also BIMSTEC is the hot issue these days. The most important thing for us is to think about our role to play in it.

Dr. Bishnu Uprety, Security Expert

Mr. Bishnu Uprety, Security Expert, has focused on European Countries' concern on Nepal's ethnicity and inclusiveness and the reason of more concern

after 2006. He also showed his concern on the frequent hot discussion on the issue of ethnic and federal system and its impact in National Interest. Besides them, he raised the issue of non-functional attitude of SAARC and its orientation.

Kosh Raj Koirala, Senior Correspondent, Republica

Kosh Raj Koirala, Senior Correspondent, Republica has opined that China is blaming Nepal for providing opportunity to enter US Army for disaster preparation in Nepal. China has drawn attention to the Nepal government that US Army is functioning in Mustang district of Nepal. His concern was whether foreign military should penetrate within our security agency or not. It has lost the confidence within neighboring countries.

Shiva Ram Khanal, Student

Mr. Shiva Ram Khanal, a student of Master's Program in International Relation and Diplomacy, TU has opined that the development model of Nepal is disastrous itself. It would be highly appreciated if the paper of Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya would also raise the issue of development paradigm; however the reality exists in haphazard development practice in our country.

Purna Silwal , Brigadier General

Mr. Purna Silwal, Brigadier General portrayed the clear picture on Nepali Military Service. This is the first time that Nepal Army has released Nepali Army Doctrine. The doctrine has come from Nepalese law and it is the Security Policy. Though the Security Policy is not mentioned in Nepal's Constitution, it has come according to the discussion on Nepalese law. And, the doctrine has been brought out based on constitution. The issue of inclusiveness within Military section rises very often. The similar question was asked in the visit of Mr. Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, former Prime Minister, in India during 90s. The Indian government had also recruited Gorkhali rather than recruiting the people from Bihar. The response given by the former Prime Minister is far enough in the issue of inclusiveness in Millitary Section. The certain parameter and standard has been maintained by Armies. Inclusiveness policy has been much utilized by them. Nepal Army has bilateral military relationship with many countries not only with US. Therefore, no other countries should be scared of it.

Dr. Khadga K.C., Coordinator, Master's Program in International Relation and Diplomacy (MTRD), TU

Dr. Khadga K.C, Coordinator, Master's Program in International Relation and Diplomacy (MTRD) TU has provided the recent example of US Government. He has focused on the recent issue of a U.S. journalist killed by the terrorists. U.S Government challenged *Iraq* for only one of its citizen, whereas, Nepal government is even unable to bring the dead body of Nepali Citizens who die in Gulf countries every day. It resembles the picture of our Foreign Policy. Not only the matter of National interest is the solution, but also to find the defending part of National Interest is the major part. It would be highly appreciated if Ambassador Acharya's paper could raise the same issue in a numerical order, he suggested.

Rajendra Thapa, Major General

Mr. Rajendra Thapa, Major General Nepal Army says that on the base of country, time and situation, National interest matters in the context of Nepal. Central Point of the country must be found in the beginning. We are not free from the period of Kautilya till now in the matter of National interest. In his view, sovereignty is not the perfect model. Power sharing is the only one major issue for the political leaders, therefore, they cannot play major role to protect national interest.

Mohan Lohani, Former Executive Director, IFA

Mr. Mohan Lohani addressed his view that Nepal is unable to protect national interest unless it solves its internal weakness and keeps itself strong. He also emphasized on poverty and backwardness of people.

Toya Nath Bhattarai, Former cabinet secretary

Mr. Toya Nath Bhattarai, Former cabinet secretary says consensus must go to citizen level. It is not only the matter of certain political leaders but also the matter of Nepali citizens. Information and research are two major elements for it. The information accumulated only from Foreign Minister and Foreign Secretary are not enough and strong. The culture of having expert in Europe and America is very common, whereas, we don't have practice in Nepal. Institute of Foreign Affairs must be strengthened and the experts and think tanks must be recruited in Parliament and in necessary places.

Madhav Ji Shrestha, Former Foreign Joint Secretary

Mr. Madhav Ji Shrestha talked about soft power and hard power. We must have capacity to utilize soft power. National interest should be promoted not only defending it.

Buddhi Narayan Shrestha, IFA Board Member

Mr. Buddhi Narayan Shrestha, Boarder Expert, raised the issues of boarder management. Crime is always somehow attached with boarder management, therefore, it must be managed from both sides.

Gopal Bahadur Thapa, Former Joint Secretary and Chief of Protocol, MoFA

Mr. Gopal Bahadur Thapa, former Joint Secretary, MoFA kept his view in this way that multiparty system should have selected a perfect person instead of selecting own person, however, it has not come to the practice yet. National identity has a very important role in International challenge. Evaluation cannot be done based on the past; rather it must be based on present context. Age and generation is enough to develop the country whereas it can be destroyed any time.

13. List of Participants in the Seminar

- 1, Hon'ble Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2. Mr. Shanker D. Bairagi
Acting Foreign Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 3 Mr. Buddhi Narayan Shrestha
IFA Board Member, Border Expert
- 4 Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa
Former Foreign Minister & Ambassador
- 5 Prof. Dr. Lok Raj Baral
Former Ambassador
- 6 Dr. Shambu Ram Simkhada
Former Ambassador to EU
Geneva, UN
- 7 Yubarj Ghimire
Senior Journalist
- 8 Mr. Madhuraman Acharya
Former Permanent Representative to UN
- 9 Prof. Ananda Aditya
Chelsea Academy
- 10 Prof. Dr. Mohan P. Lohani
Former Executive Director of IFA
- 11 Dr. Nishchal Nath Pandey
Former Executive Director of IFA
- 12 Prof. Dr. Gopal Prasad Pokharel
Former Executive Director of IFA

- 13 Mrs. Ambika Devi Luitel
Joint Secretary, MoFA.
- 14 Mr. Khaganath Adhikari
Joint Secretary, MoFA.
- 15 Mr. Kali Prasad Pokharel
Chief of Protocol, MoFA
- 16 Mr. Nirmal Raj Kafle
Joint Secretary, MoFA.
- 17 Mr. Khaga Raj Pandey
Section Officer, MoFA.
- 18 Mr. Sundar Nath Bhattarai
Former Ambassador
- 19 Mr. Kedar Bhakta Shrestha
Former Ambassador and Foreign Secretary
- 20 Mr. Leela Prasad Sharma
Former Ambassador
- 21 Dr. Dinesh Bhattarai
Foreign Advisor to The PM, Former PR to UN, Geneva
- 22 Mr. Mohan Man Saniju
Former Ambassador
- 23 Mr. Keshav Raj Jha
Former Ambassador
- 24 Mr. Madhuban Paudel
Former Ambassador
- 25 Dr. Durgesh Man Singh
Former Ambassador
- 26 Mr. Madhavji Shrestha
Former Joint Secretary
- 27 Mr. Gopal Bahadur Thapa
Former Chief of Protocol, MoFA

- 28 Mr. Narayan Dev Panta
Former Joint Secretary, MoFA.
- 29 Mr. Ashbin Pudasaini
Public Relations Advisor to Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 30 Dr. Govinda P. Kusum
Former Home Secretary
- 31 Mr. Rajan Bhattarai
Member, Constituent Assembly
- 32 Dr. Lhamo Sherpa
Researcher, OSLO
- 33 Dr. Arjun Karki
LCD Watch International Coordinator
- 34 Dr. Dev Raj Dahal
Resident Director, FES-Nepal
- 35 Dr. Rajendra Shrestha
NCWA, Chair
- 36 Prof. Dr. Shreedhar Gautam
NCWA, General Secretary
- 37 Mr. Ramesh Singh
NCWA
- 38 Mr. Chandra Shekhar Adhikari
Kantipur Daily
- 39 Mr. Kosh Raj Koirala
The Republica
- 40 Mr. Sharad Chandra Bhandari
National News Agency
- 41 Mr. Parshuram Kafle
Nayapatrika
- 42 Ms. Dela Prasai
NTV, News Anchor

- 43 Mr. Toya Nath Bhattarai
Parliament Secretary
- 45 Mr. Pawan Ghimire
Army Head Office
- 46 Brig. Gen. Devendra Bahadur Medhasi
No. 1 Brigade Commander, Nepalese Army HQ
- 47 Maj. Gen. Victor JB Rana
Directorate General, Military Training, Army HQ
- 48 Lt. CoL Mr. Anup Jung Thapa
Nepalese Army
- 49 DIG. Mr. Ram Sharan Paudel
Nepalese Armed Police Force HQ
- 50 Brig. Gen. Ishwar Hamal
Liaison Officer, Nepalese Army HQ
- 51 Brig. Gen. Purna Silwal
Nepalese Army HQ
- 52 Mr. Sanat Kumar Basnet
IG (Rtd.) APF
- 53 AIG Mr. Krishan Kumar Tamang
Nepal Armed Police Force
- 54 AIG Mr. Durja Kunwar Rai
Nepal Armed Police Force
- 55 DIG Mr. Singh Bahadur Shrestha
Nepal Armed Police Force
- 56 DIG Mr. Prem Kumar Shah
Nepal Armed Police Force
- 57 Mr. Prem Rana
Nepal Armed Police Force
- 58 Mr. Dinesh Thakur
Nepal Armed Police Force

- 59 Mr. Suman Raj Karki
Nepal Armed Police Force
- 60 Mr. Rajan Pandey
Nepal Armed Police Force
- 61 Mr. Suresh Tamang
Nepal Armed Police Force
- 62 Mr. Ashok Kumar Lamichhane
Nepal Army
- 63 Maj. Gen. (R) Rajendra Thapa
Nepal Army
- 64 Brig. Gen. Shamsheer Thakurathi
Director of Military Intelligence, Nepalese Army HQ
- 65 Dr. Khadga K.C.
Coordinator, Master's Program in
International Relation and Diplomacy, MTRD, TU
- 66 Ms. Sweta Khadka
Student, Master's Program in
International Relation and Diplomacy, MTRD, TU
- 67 Mr. Shiva Ram Rijal
Student, Master's Program in
International Relation and Diplomacy, MTRD, TU
- 68 Mr. Bhuwan Ojha
Student, Master's Program in
International Relation and Diplomacy, MTRD, TU
- 69 Mr. Shailendra Sharma
Student, Master's Program in
International Relation and Diplomacy, MTRD, TU
- 70 Mr. Balkumari Ale
Biswas Nepal
- 71 Mr. Bijay Lama
Biswas Nepal

- 72 Ms. Seema Pandey
Intern, IFA
- 73 Mr. Nimesh Mishra
Intern, IFA
- 74 Ms. Vishnu Kumari Tandan
Intern, IFA
- 75 Dr. Rishi Raj Adhikari
Executive Director, IFA
- 76 Mr. Yadav Khanal
Resource Person, IFA
- 77 Mr. Sanu Raja Puri
IFA
- 78 Mr. Mahendra Joshi
IFA
- 79 Mr. Subhash Lohani
IFA
- 80 Ms. Binita Shrestha
IFA
- 81 Mr. Rajendra Magar
IFA
- 82 Mr. Nish Magar
IFA
- 83 Ms. Mina Magar
IFA

14. Annex: Photos



National Anthem during Inauguration of Seminar



Inauguration of Seminar by Hon. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, Minister, MoFA assisted by Dr. Rishi Raj Adhikari, Executive Director, IFA



General participants at the Seminar



Nepalese Army Participants at the Seminar



Hon. Minister Chatting with Acting Secretary, Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi and Former Ambassador Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya



Before the start of seminar



Commentator Mr. Yuba Raj Ghimire, Chair Prof. Dr. Lok Raj Baral and Paper Presenter Mr. Madhu Raman Acharya



Commentator Mr. Anand Aditya, Chair Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa and Paper Presenter Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada