

**A READER'S OBSERVATION ON *FOUR DIPLOMATS*
BY DR. MADAN KUMAR BHATTARAI**

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In the current century, marked by unpredictable and uncertain foreign affairs and diplomacy, books that delve into the experiences of senior diplomats play a crucial role in enhancing, grooming, and excelling in the realms of international relations, foreign policy, foreign affairs, geopolitics, geostrategy, and diplomacy for a country like Nepal. These books provide invaluable insights into the intricate world of diplomacy, shedding light on the challenges, successes, and failures faced by seasoned diplomats who have navigated complex international landscapes. By studying these experiences, aspiring diplomats and policymakers in Nepal can gain a deeper understanding of the intricacies and nuances involved in conducting successful diplomacy.

A book on senior diplomats' experiences offers a pragmatic perspective on the decision-making processes, negotiations, and strategic thinking involved in foreign policy formulation—*Four Diplomats* (2023), scribed by one of the bona fide foreign secretaries and exalted ambassadors of Nepal, Madan Kumar Bhattarai (PhD, D'Litt.), has shed adequate light on Nepal's recent diplomatic history. It provides a wealth of knowledge and practical wisdom that can be applied to contemporary diplomatic challenges. In an era characterized by shifting alliances, emerging power dynamics, and unconventional threats, the wisdom shared by experienced diplomats can help Nepalese policymakers navigate the changing landscape with greater agility and foresight.

Furthermore, the book offers valuable historical context and analysis of pivotal diplomatic events, giving readers a deeper appreciation of the factors that shape global affairs. By studying the successes and failures of senior diplomats, Nepalese diplomats and policymakers can learn from past experiences, identify patterns, and develop effective strategies for promoting national interests and issues of strategic interests.

In addition, the book serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for

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the younger generation of diplomats in Nepal. They provide role models and mentors who exemplify the qualities of leadership, adaptability, and diplomacy. By learning from the experiences of these diplomats, aspiring Nepalese diplomats can gain invaluable insights into the practical aspects of diplomacy, such as negotiation techniques, cultural understanding, and effective communication skills.

Moreover, the unpredictable nature of contemporary foreign affairs and diplomacy requires diplomats to be agile, innovative, and adaptable. By studying the experiences of senior diplomats who have navigated complex and uncertain situations, Nepalese diplomats can learn valuable lessons on crisis management, conflict resolution, and maintaining national interests amidst global uncertainties.

In fact, books on senior diplomats' experiences hold immense significance for Nepal in the current century characterized by unpredictable and uncertain foreign relation dynamics. They provide a treasure trove of knowledge, practical wisdom, and historical context that can enhance, groom, and excel in international relations, foreign policy, foreign affairs, geopolitics, geostrategy, and diplomacy. By learning from the experiences of senior diplomats, Nepalese diplomats and policymakers can navigate the complexities of the global stage with greater insight, adaptability, and strategic thinking, ultimately contributing to Nepal's diplomatic success and its pursuit of national interests in an ever-changing world. Hence, former diplomats can play several key roles on behalf of Nepal to navigate geopolitical traps. Some of these roles include:

Strategic Advisers: Former diplomats possess extensive experience and knowledge in international relations. They can serve as strategic advisers to the government, offering insights on complex geopolitical issues, emerging international trends, analyzing risks and opportunities, and formulating diplomatic strategies to safeguard Nepal's interests.

Negotiators: Former diplomats can be engaged as negotiators in international forums and bilateral or multilateral negotiations. Their diplomatic skills and understanding of diplomatic protocols can help Nepal in resolving disputes, advancing its agenda, and securing favorable outcomes in negotiations.

Diplomatic Envoys: Former diplomats can be appointed as special envoys to represent Nepal in diplomatic missions or other countries with specific responsibility. They can engage with foreign governments, international organizations, and key stakeholders to promote Nepal's interests, address

challenges, and build diplomatic alliances and network and express the position of Nepal abroad.

Track II Diplomacy: Track II diplomacy involves informal, non-governmental dialogues and discussions to facilitate better understanding and resolve conflicts. Former diplomats can initiate and participate in Track II initiatives, fostering dialogue, trust-building, and conflict resolution between Nepal and other nations or regional actors.

Public Diplomacy and Advocacy: Former diplomats can engage in public diplomacy efforts, representing Nepal at international conferences, seminars, and events. They can communicate Nepal's positions, promote its culture, tourism, and economic opportunities, and advocate for Nepal's interests on global platforms.

Capacity Building and Training: Former diplomats can contribute to enhancing Nepal's diplomatic capacity by providing training, mentoring, and sharing their expertise with current diplomats. This can include conducting workshops, seminars, and specialized training programs on diplomatic skills, negotiation techniques, and crisis management.

Policy Advisers: Former diplomats can serve as policy advisers to the government, offering recommendations and guidance on foreign policy formulation and implementation. They can contribute insights on regional dynamics, emerging trends, and potential opportunities or threats to Nepal's geopolitical position.

Conflict Resolution and Mediation: Former diplomats can leverage their experience in conflict resolution and mediation to assist in resolving internal or external disputes involving Nepal. They can act as impartial facilitators, helping parties find common ground and peaceful solutions to conflicts.

Cultural Diplomacy: Former diplomats can promote cultural diplomacy by showcasing Nepal's rich heritage, arts, and traditions abroad. They can organize cultural events, exhibitions, and exchanges, fostering people-to-people connections, and enhancing Nepal's soft power on the global stage.

Crisis Management and Emergency Response: Former diplomats can provide valuable insights and guidance during times of crisis or emergencies. They can assist in coordinating international assistance, managing diplomatic communications, and ensuring the protection of Nepal's national interests in challenging situations.

Development Diplomacy: Former diplomats have a good understanding of both sending and receiving countries including the knowledge of global context. They can play an important part on trade promotion, tourism expansion, aid assistance programs among others.

It's important to note that these roles can vary based on the specific expertise and interests of former diplomats, as well as the priorities and needs of the Nepalese government.

In this light, *Four Diplomats* has shed adequate light on Nepal's recent diplomatic history. The four diplomats in this volume are no other than Ram Prasad Manandhar, Shobhagjang Thapa, Padmabahadur Khatri and Jharendranarayan Singh.

This volume hardly carries pure biographical details of these veteran diplomats. They, of course, share some common diplomatic prowess they had earned and honed in long course of time through the posts they achieved, through missions they were assigned to and through the line of duties they were deployed for. However, they were the stalwarts of different spheres. Among the four senior diplomats, Ram Prasad Manandhar and Major General Shobhagjang Thapa represented the beginning of a formative period in the political background of the 1951-59 period government and the modern perspective of Nepal's foreign policy. Two other foreign secretaries, Major General Padmabahadur Khatri and Jharendranarayan Singh entered the service during the Rana period, but they were diplomats who played a special role during the non-partisan system. There are many similarities and differences between these diplomats in Nepal's foreign relations.

Thapa, who served as Defense Secretary, Foreign Secretary and Chief Secretary twice, retired as part of the administrative reorganization in early 1961 with the demise of the multi-party system. He was solitary and fun-loving and did not take any public responsibility after his retirement. Not only that, he did not show any thought or activism to handle any political or constitutional responsibility except for the symbolic position of a member of the Raj Sabha. And spent a long life in complete retirement. He did not participate in any public event except the felicitation program given in his honor.

The author has tailored his prosaic eloquence and mosaic renderings to emphasize their contributions, to underpin their sacrifices, to exalt their rhetorics and to retribute their impact between the lines. All the four diplomats, Bhattarai portrays, represented Nepal's diplomacy as a bridge

between the administration of the Rana period and the post-democracy period. All four had the experience of serving in the first embassy of Nepal in the embassy in London. Manandhar was in the United Kingdom as a counselor for a few years from 1949 and as an ambassador from 1956. Thapa was initially the head of the Nepali mission in British India when his father Chandrajang Thapa was the head of the mission and later became the head of the said office. In 1934, he was the head of the Nepali Mission until he was upgraded to the Consulate General of the Nepali Diplomatic Office in New Delhi. Later, he became the first military attaché at the Nepali Embassy in London. Khatri was the military attaché of the Nepali Embassy in London, which was opened at the beginning of the reign of Prime Minister Juddha Shamsheer (1932-1945), and was the liaison officer (liaison officer) on behalf of the Government of Nepal at the liaison office of the British security unit, the Brigade of Gurkhas in Malaya at the time.

All four foreign secretaries had a deep understanding of the period known as the “special relationship” in the context of Nepal-India relations. To some extent, Manandhar and Thapa, who held the position of foreign secretaries for a brief period, were involved in shaping this relationship. Khatri's involvement, on the other hand, was associated with his senior position in the Ministry of Defence. Despite being at a junior level, Singh has consistently been engaged in the various ups and downs of this extensively discussed and even controversial relationship, including participating in high-level exchanges between the two countries. Following the conclusion of the special relationship, both Khatri and Singh continued to actively contribute to diplomatic endeavors as foreign secretaries. The extent of Manandhar's diplomatic work as an ambassador was extensive and far-reaching. During his time as a non-resident ambassador of Nepal to Europe, the United States, including the then Soviet Union, his responsibilities encompassed maintaining relations with the United Kingdom. This exceptional record is one that only a few diplomats in the world can boast of.

Manandhar held various important positions such as counselor, foreign secretary, and education secretary. However, his reputation primarily stemmed from his exceptional academic prowess and enlightened perspectives rather than his administrative skills. While he fulfilled his roles within the government, Manandhar's intellectual pursuits and deep knowledge were what truly distinguished him. His contributions to academia and his profound understanding of a wide range of subjects

were widely acknowledged.

Thapa and Khatri, on the other hand, were distinguished military veterans who had previously served as defense secretary and military assistant respectively. Despite their similar levels of education and extensive experience in military administration, their personalities and inclinations diverged greatly. Thapa was known for his directness, frankness, and occasional bluntness. He was unafraid to speak his mind and express his opinions openly, often providing a straightforward and no-nonsense approach to situations. In contrast, Khatri exhibited a more reserved demeanor. Bhattarai takes a closer look at the historical accuracy and meticulous researches on how they catered their tasks to their respective deployments. He spoke less, listened attentively, and was meticulous in observing people's emotions and adhering to proper etiquette. Khatri's preference for reading and contemplation allowed him to approach matters with thoughtfulness and introspection.

Singh, though not necessarily recognized as an intellectual or an administrative figure, possessed a moderate level of knowledge and expertise in matters of etiquette, cuisine, clothing, and traditional diplomacy. His familiarity with these cultural aspects played a significant role in his diplomatic endeavors. It is worth noting that Singh held a unique distinction among senior Nepalese diplomats as the only one who had the opportunity to work closely with four different kings: King Tribhuvan, King Mahendra, King Birendra, and King Gyanendra. This experience provided him with invaluable insights into the intricacies of Nepalese monarchy and its impact on diplomatic affairs, contributing to his understanding of the historical and cultural context in which he operated.

Overall, Manandhar's reputation rested on his academic excellence and intellectual pursuits. Thapa and Khatri, despite their shared military background, possessed contrasting personalities, with Thapa being forthright and frank, and Khatri being more observant and introspective. Singh, while not an intellectual or administrator in the conventional sense, possessed knowledge and expertise in cultural matters and had the rare distinction of serving under four Nepalese kings. Together, these individuals brought diverse perspectives, experiences, and skills to their respective roles in the Nepalese government and diplomatic sphere.

Thus, Bhattarai takes the readers to explore the captivating world of four prominent diplomats through the chapters he has organized. He dives

into the thought-provoking themes and messages conveyed in the book. The art of writing a book on diplomats' experiences lies in capturing the authentic essence of diplomatic life. The author must conduct thorough research, drawing from firsthand accounts, interviews, and historical events to provide accurate and realistic portrayals of diplomatic challenges, negotiations, and cultural exchanges. By incorporating genuine details, the book can transport readers into the diplomatic world, making them feel immersed in the experiences. One effective approach is to weave personal narratives throughout the book.

By sharing individual diplomats' experiences, readers gain insight into their motivations, dilemmas, and emotional journeys. These personal narratives create a human connection and allow readers to empathize with the diplomatic professionals, making the book more relatable and engaging. Ultimately, the art of writing a book on diplomats' experiences lies in presenting a nuanced and compelling narrative that combines authenticity, personal narratives, insightful analysis, and engaging storytelling. By capturing the essence of diplomatic life and offering readers a glimpse into this unique world, Madan Kumar Bhattarai has excelled his art of illustration in this book which can both educate and inspire, shedding light on the challenges, triumphs, and importance of diplomacy in our interconnected global society.

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