

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

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## Abstract

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

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

## Background

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

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

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

### **Rationale of the United Nations**

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

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

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

### **Nepal's Representation at the United Nations**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **The Non-Aligned Movement**

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

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

Since its inception, the NAM has passed through different phases in global affairs. The dilemma that has been seen in the successive years has created a debate on the

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

### **Nepal's Involvement in the Non-Aligned Movement**

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

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

The NAM Summit in Belgrade in 1961 was such an event for Nepal in which the late King Mahendra led Nepal's delegation for the first time abroad to a multilateral forum. From that time onward, Nepal went on to occupy a pivotal role in the nonalignment movement as one of its founding members (Thapa, 2022). In his first participation leading the Nepali delegation at the fourth NAM summit held in Algiers in September 1973, late King Birendra underlined Nepal's unflinching commitment to the NAM simultaneously reflecting Nepal's view on the global situation that had prevailed at that time. He expressed optimistic hope on the border issue between the erstwhile Soviet Union and China that a peaceful resolution would prevail on the long border between the two largest countries of the world. Within less than three decades, the situation turned into an amicable understanding of what King Birendra had hoped in 1973 (Thapa, 2023).

## Conclusion

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

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