

Foreign Policy: From the Perspective of People’s Multiparty Democracy

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ABSTRACT

The term “national interests” generally refers to priorities, aims, and goals that a nation-state intends to accomplish in its foreign policies and interactions with other nations. These interests might differ greatly based on the nation, its resources, history, location, and present geopolitical climate. In order to examine foreign policies, some theories are used in research papers and scholarly works. These include constructivism, Marxism, neo-Marxism, offensive and defensive realism, internal and domestic theories, and system theories. In the context of Nepal, national interests have been formed by its geopolitics. Nepal should have embraced the non-alignment strategy since ancient times and maintained cordial relations with its immediate neighbors due to its strategic placement between China and India, two Asian giants and large economies. Following the restoration of democracy in 1990, globalization and liberalization appear to have had a major impact on Nepal’s foreign policy developments. Nevertheless, the most striking deviations from Nepal’s foreign policy norms following the 1990 political change are the country’s adoption of a more liberal multiparty democracy, the dominance of Marxist political parties, and actions and beliefs of the Marxist movement. Through a multiparty electoral system, the People’s Multiparty Democracy (PMPD) is a political system that guarantees the people’s control over governmental authorities. PMPD is a political theory that combines democracy and multiparty systems. As a PMPD idealist, Madan Bhandari fought for Nepal’s national interests. In particular, he criticized modern global capitalism and unconditionally supported Nepal’s independence, territorial integrity, and sovereignty.

Introduction

National interests typically refer to the goals, objectives, and priorities that a nation-state considers important and seeks to pursue in its interactions with other countries and in its foreign policies. These interests can vary widely depending on the country, its geographical location, resources, history, and current geopolitical situation. Some of the common

categories of national interests include security, internal stability, political economy, political influence, territorial integrity, and political influence. Security includes safeguarding the nation from external threats such as military aggression, terrorism, or cyber-attacks. It also involves maintaining internal stability and law enforcement (Burchill, 2005). Nations often prioritize economic growth, trade relationships, access to resources (such as energy or minerals)

and stable currency and sound financial system. Protecting and preserving the sovereignty and territorial boundaries of the country is a fundamental interest for most nations. In the meantime, many of the countries seek to increase their political influence regionally or globally, either through alliances, diplomacy, or international organizations.

The concept of the national interest is used in both political analysis and political action. As an analytic tool, it is employed to describe, explain, or evaluate the sources or the adequacy of a nation's foreign policy. As an instrument of political action, it serves as a means of justifying, denouncing, or proposing policies (Rosenau, 2006: 247). Cultural and Ideological Values: Promoting and protecting cultural heritage, values, and ideologies can be important, especially in terms of national identity and soft power. Humanitarian concerns: Some nations prioritize promoting human rights, providing humanitarian aid, or participating in global efforts to address issues such as poverty, disease, or environmental challenges. Energy security: Ensuring a stable and reliable supply of energy resources (like oil, gas, or renewable energy sources) is critical for many countries' economic and strategic interests.

Environmental sustainability: Protecting the environment and addressing climate change have increasingly become vital national interests, as environmental degradation can have significant economic and security implications. Alliances and Partnerships: Forming and maintaining alliances and partnerships with other countries can enhance a nation's security, economic prosperity, and geopolitical influence. Diplomatic and military capabilities: Developing effective diplomatic and military capabilities enables countries to protect and advance their national interests through negotiation, deterrence, and, if necessary, military action. These interests are not fixed and can evolve over time in response to changing domestic conditions, international developments, technological advancements, and

shifts in global power dynamics. Understanding a country's national interests is crucial for analyzing its foreign policy decisions and predicting its actions on the global stage.

Scholars and political thinkers have described "national interest" in terms of the goals and aspirations of sovereign entities in the international arena ever since the founding of nation-states. In line with this argument, prominent authors of internal security, including Charles Beard, Hans Morgenthau, Joseph Frankel, and Joseph Nye have stated that "the national interest is the perceived needs and desires of one sovereign comprising the external environment" (1934, 1951, 1970 and 1973). Vital national interests of a nation-state include sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity which would apply to the people of a developing as well as a developed country.

The following are known as the fundamental national interests of any nation-state (i) Defense interests: the protection of the nation-state and its citizens against the threat of physical violence directed from another state, and/or an externally inspired threat to its system of government. (ii) Economic interests: the enhancement of the nation-state's economic well-being in relations with other states. (iii) World order interests: the maintenance of an international political and economic system in which the nation-state may feel secure, and in which its citizens and commerce may operate peacefully outside its borders. (iv) Ideological interests: the protection and furtherance of a set of values that the people of a nation-state share and believe to be universally good (1973). An equally genuine concern related to national interest is the survival issue. The question of survival always remains indispensable for any country when the very existence of a nation-state is in jeopardy due to multiple factors. It can result from an overt military attack on its own territory. Or it can be under threat of attack if an enemy's demands are rejected. When it comes to this differentiation,

the determining factor for whether a problem is survival-related or not is whether there is an imminent and real threat of serious physical harm from one nation-state to another.

The Vital issues: Unlike survival issues, a vital matter may involve not only defense issues but also economic, world order (alliance and national prestige), and in some cases ideological issues. Major Issues: The political, economic, and ideological well-being of the state may be adversely affected by events and trends in the international environment and thus require corrective action to prevent them from becoming serious threats (vital issues).

Methodology

Foreign policy comprises: (i) political goals, especially the national interest', (ii) The 'foreign policy' constitutes a form of behavior, and more particularly, a form of behavior emanates from, or at least ascribable principles of action, (iii) set of orientations, (iv) ideology, (v) foreign policy acts (i) institutional machinery, (ii) outputs or decisions, and (iii) motives of men. Finally, policy effects are defined in terms of (i) role or (ii) process of adjustment (Rosenau, 1968). James Rosenau identified five sources that influence a state's foreign policy: i) the international system, ii) the societal environment of a nation-state, iii) the governmental setting, iv) the bureaucratic roles played by policymakers, and v) the individual characteristics of foreign policy elites. There are some specific theories that analyze foreign policies: system theories, internal, and domestic theories, defensive and offensive realism, neoclassical realism, ideologies; the Cold War and the New Cold War (global power relations), and grand strategies.

This paper applies qualitative research methods and uses the international relations theories: realism, Marxism and People's Multiparty Democracy as tools to draw conclusion. I have also consulted theories of foreign policy and international relations.

Results and Discussion

Nepali foreign policy ideals, regimes, and idiosyncrasies

Nepal's geopolitics has shaped its national interest. With its geographical location between the two large powerful countries, India and China, Nepal should have not only maintained friendly relations with its immediate neighbors but also adopted the policy of non-alignment ever since ancient times. When the soft power-led relations with northern and southern neighbors come into discussion, we have the history of classical foreign policies of Anshubarma, the trading Route of British East India with China through Nepal, and iconic images of Sita, Bhirkuti, and Budhha. Similarly, Prithvi Narayan Shah's description of Nepal as "a Yam between two boulders" "referring to the Celestial Empire of China to the North and the "Emperor of Sea 'to the South, i.e., British India, unfolded Nepal's position around the unification period of Nepal. It was the first major statement on Nepal's foreign policy which has not only entered the psyche of the Nepali people but also guided foreign policymakers, indeed. More importantly, Prithvi Narayan Shah's foreign policy of non-alignment and balanced foreign relations with neighbors have consistently been relevant to shaping foreign relations and diplomatic ties with other countries.

Janga Bahadur Rana's isolationist-cum-appeasement policy was the Nepali Premier's survival strategy in those geopolitical dynamics. Similarly, Chandra Shamsher persistently exerted his stance against the British or the recognition of Nepal's sovereignty from the British Empire through the 1923 Anglo-Nepal 1923 Treaty. Nevertheless, the 1950 Peace and Friendship Treaty with India, however, signaled the end of the appeasement policy and the beginning of the BUFFER STATE era. The period of 1950-60 could be considered the era of 'supra-dependency', 'Controlled Regime', stating Maharaj Krishna Rasgotra: "by giving asylum to King Tribhuvan

and his family in the Indian embassy in November 1950, and arranging for them to fly out to India in defiance of the Rana Premier Mohan Shamsher's protests and threats, Indian ambassador to Nepal, C. P. N. Singh had changed Nepal's history. "On his triumphant return to Kathmandu in February 1951, the King, for a while needed and relied on C. P. N. Singh's advice and support in several critical decisions he had to make on issues of political importance, such as cabinet formation and the creation of a new administrative framework for the country" (Rastgotra, 2016, p.94).

Since 1956, when Tanka Prasad Acharya was appointed the prime minister, Nepal had been diversifying its foreign policy to strike a balance between its two neighbors and others. The first democratically elected Prime Minister Bisheswar Prasad Koirala had also demonstrated his credibility by pointing the finger at Nehru when the latter bluntly said that "the Himalayas are our border and India is always behind Nepal's security sensitiveness." BP also took the initiative to sign a Peace and Friendship Treaty with China in 1960 to counter-balance Nepal's relations with the southern neighbor. From 1960 to 1971, Nepal's foreign policies underwent a paradigm shift under the autocratic Panchayat regime. King Mahendra made every effort to diversify Nepal's foreign policies, except for signing secret security agreements to facilitate India's 1965 arm supply to Nepal. King Mahendra secured the UN membership, initiated the Non-Aligned Movement through Bandung initiatives, forged diplomatic ties with nations beyond South Asia, fought for the rights of landlocked nations in international forums, began Nepal's participation in UN peacekeeping, strengthened its ties with its northern neighbor, and even decided to build the KODARI highway while remaining neutral in the 1962 Indo-China War, and secured Nepal's non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council in the late 1960s.

Similarly, King Birendra accomplished vital missions, including the Zone of Peace Proposal to ensure Nepal's permanent neutrality, active participation in the NAM process, the Landlocked State's Rights Movement, the Group of 77 and the LDC, and becoming the non-permanent membership of the UN in the 1980s his reign from 1971 to 2001. The defensive realist approach to Nepal's foreign policy first emerged during the 1979 and 1989 economic blockades. Such recurring embargoes prohibiting imports and exports of daily use goods and services, including medicines and oil, resulted from the offensive realist foreign policy of one of our neighbors. Also, as a founder member and one of the SAARC process's pioneering nations, Nepal established the organization's Secretariat in Kathmandu. Being a small power situated between geographically giant and emerging economic power, Nepal diversified its foreign policy, increasing its engagements bilaterally, regionally, and globally from 1960 to 1990, which were guided by survival and fostering foreign policy strategies of Nepal.

Nepal's foreign policies after the 1990s

After the restoration of democracy in 1990, Nepal's foreign policy trends seem to have been primarily influenced by globalization and liberalization. Ironically, the left parties with the Marxist-Leninist ideological orientations have either been in the government authority or the main opposition ever since 1990. Nepal's participation in the multilateral diplomatic fora, including the UN, and its agencies, the World Bank and IMF, NAM, and Group of 77 has often neither deteriorated. Nepal could not even obtain a non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council in the early 2000s. Nevertheless, Nepal became a UNOCHR member and WTO member in 2004.

Paradoxes and Success he guiding principles of foreign policies are idealism, realism, Marxism, neo-Marxism, constructivism,

system theories, the nature of regimes, and idiosyncrasies. However, in the post-1990 and post-republican context, and more specifically in recent days, Nepal's foreign policy has appeared to be misguided, imbalanced, under-prioritized state affairs, and monolithic inconsistent behavior of certain political demagogues. In these lights, it is important to note that Neo-Marxist perspectives vary in their interpretations and policy prescriptions, and they have been influential in shaping critical theories within international relations, particularly in addressing issues of global justice, economic inequality, and the impact of capitalism on global politics. Despite remarkable accomplishments with the smooth transition of peace process during the 2000s, Nepal has been facing multiple obstacles on its way to institutionalize democracy and desired economic progress and social transformation.

Nevertheless, certain reservations with the political dynamics during the insurgency and the post-insurgency, the 12-point agreements between the then-agitating political parties and Maoists could have been possible with the Indian engagement. At the same time, the elected Constituent Assembly promulgated a post-modern inclusive democratic constitution in 2015 under deliberate external pressures, and thus, endorsing a new map of Nepal that included Kalapani, Lipulek, and Limpiyadhura of the northwest boundary through a unanimous vote of parliament. Various non-profit organizations, specifically Nepali leaders and political parties have expressed their solidarity in the national interest and historical political events. It could be for the restoration of democracy or promulgation of the constitution from the Constituent Assembly II.

However, the most notable anomalies in Nepal's foreign policy practices after 1990 are the introduction of multiparty democracy, which is more liberal, the predominance of Marxist political parties, and the behavior and practices that follow the Marxist school of thought in

the country. The Constituent Assembly has offered Nepali people the three tiers of the republican government structures, inclusive state mechanism, and people's sovereignty, among others. However, Nepal has been engaged with several power centers, including internal and external from national security perspectives.

Our bilateral and global engagements, such as MCC and SPP private sectors and NGOs' excessive engagements in policy-making sectors are being heavily influenced by liberalization and privatization. At the same time, the World Bank, IMF, and ADB have engaged Nepal, primarily from the perspectives of the capitalist mode of liberalization. Internally, the Marxist leaders entirely deviated from their core socialist values and the left worldviews. The left-leaning political parties and their leaders routinely deviate from our bilateral and international engagements, including MCC, SPP, and BRI, as well as privatization and overzealous engagements of NGOs and INGOs even in crucial policy-making sectors.

Nepali foreign policies from PMPD perspective

The People's Multiparty Democracy is a political system ensuring people's control over state powers through a multiparty electoral system. As a political philosophy, PMPD integrates multiparty and democracy. The former refers to the ruling system, whereas the latter defines the nature of the state. These two words are essential to express people's democratic ruling system through a fair and neutral election system.

"Before considering whether the People's Multiparty Democracy is an anti-new democracy, it is essential to speculate on new democracy. Qualifying democracy with an adjective of quality "new" implies a separate "old democracy" in existence. The old democracy is a capitalist democracy incepted after the capitalist triumphs over feudalism in human civilization. The capitalist-led revolution abolished feudalism. The revolution under the capitalist class

established the capitalist dictatorship leading to monopolizing capitalism and imperialism. Thus, the old democracy metamorphoses into imperialism.” “We not only denounce monopolizing capitalism and imperialism but also oppose the capitalist dictatorship. We do not intend to induct the old democracy that exploits common people in the interest of a few elites. Neither do we expect to establish the old capitalist democracy in the belief that social liberation is not possible simply by replacing ways and means of exploitation. Eventually, we have the responsibility to abolish feudalism even today” (Bhandari 1991, pp 1–2).

Bhandari's analogy of the capitalist's subversion of labor with the imperialist subjugation of the poor developing country embodies the rich people's exploitation of the poor. At the same time, he underscores problems with the rich capitalist countries that have been facing setbacks with contradictions with the capitalist world. Precisely, Bhandari anticipates the inevitability of the resurgence of Marxism on the grounds of an ever-increasing level of conflict within the capitalist empire and rising discontent among the oppressed and exploited people due to pro-capitalist and anti-poor policies imposed in the third world by the capitalist countries. Bhandari in these interpretations of contemporary international order reaffirms the reason this situation has persisted is not because capitalism and socialism have similar views on justice, peace, and equality; rather, it is because both ideologies have accumulated comparable amounts of deadly weaponry and are afraid of the potential destruction these weapons could cause (Bhandari; 2020, p 40). The peaceful coexistence of capitalist and socialist states has been made possible by the stable status of capitalism throughout the world, the continual reformation and restructuring in socialist countries, and the persistent public pressure to limit lethal weaponry. Furthermore, the United States needs domestic peace to preserve and counterbalance its declining influence over the

capitalist nations, while Russia needs peace to further accelerate the process of reform and reconstruction.

Bhandari presented his critical analysis of the post-1990 international order, casting doubt on the liberal ethos behind US liberal foreign policy initiatives. Moreover, he observed that the US has shown its aggressive nature and ill-willed desire for global dominance through its actions such as the invasion of Panama, support for Israeli expansionism and regressive forces in Afghanistan, and the stationing of thousands of troops in Saudi Arabia during the Iraq-Kuwait conflict despite being forced to participate in the peace process and reduce its arsenal by the world's pro-peace public opinion (Ibid;2020, 41). Besides, the UML General Secretary Madan Bhandari bemoaned the fact that the article 126 (4) of the 1990 Constitution was broken when the Tanakpur Barrage Project was signed with India. He advocated for the protection of national interests while forging treaties with India, which Nepal had been tricked into signing in the 1950s with the Koshi and the Gandak Agreements and the Sarada Barrage in 1923 (Bhandari in Parliament in 24 Chaitra, 2049 BS). According to the PMPD theory, modern Nepali foreign policy should resonate Marxism, be antagonistic to capitalism and the new-conservative and new-liberal economies, and promote brotherhood among neighbors and other stakeholders in bilateral, regional, and multilateral diplomatic settings, Reciting the prophetic words of the late Bhandari, “the contradiction among capitalist countries indicates that there will be a multipolar world in the immediate future, especially due to the declining economic power of the USA” (Bhandari, 2021: 37-38).

Bhandari's assurance and assertion on the necessity and rationale of bilateral relations with neighbors, especially with India, guided by national interests and the principle of sovereign equality are being questioned when

his political party was in power. The whole point is that people have raised concerns over the CPN (UML's) performances and accomplishments in line with Bhandari's principles and directives of people's multiparty democracy. There have been sharp differences between rhetoric and reality, and words and actions when applications of PMPD policies and principles are considered relevant. In a true sense, the CPN-UML's actions and initiatives have gone beyond.

PMPD philosophy

In diplomatic practices by the parties and their leaders led the governments from 1996-to-the present, what PMPD seeks is seen the other way around. Those in dignified positions, including Ansu Barma, PN Shah, JB Rana, Chandra Shamsher, King Mahendra, BP Koirala, King Birendra, Man Mohan Adhikari, and Madan Bhandari have been subjected to idiosyncrasies of Nepali foreign policy practices. Therefore, the governments from 1996-to-the present formed with the parties and their leaders, the CPN-UML has constant efforts to remain consistent with its principles and objectives.

Even though Madan Bhandari could not get an opportunity to lead the country as the head of the government, and he could not exercise full executive authority, he had assertively advocated for foreign policies to be based on sovereign equality with special highlights of advancing and protecting national interests. Unaccountability, a lack of transparency in decision-making, a lack of evidence-based policy design (via research), partisanship, entrenched interests in leadership, and a double standard of political leadership, however, have been hindering the development of political leadership. Even though Madan Bhandari himself was not in a top executive position to lead the country, he firmly advocated for foreign policies to be based on sovereign equality in efforts to protect national interests Bhandari had raised voices in the best interest of Nepal and Nepali people in the public sphere, including the House of Representatives.

Madan Bhandari fiercely opposed the Tanakpur Understanding, arguing that it violated both the letter and the spirit of Article 126 and sub-article 4 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047 BS while addressing the House of Parliament (Bhandari in Parliament, 2049 BS). The Tanakpur Treaty was described as an "understanding" until the Supreme Court's verdict made corrections as a treaty, so it should undergo through parliamentary endorsement process. Indeed, it should have followed the proper procedural course only after the endorsement of the parliament under the article of the Constitution 1991. Further, such a treaty of a broader national interest should have been proposed to the parliament for approval. Nevertheless, the then Premier Girija Prasad Koirala had signed it, considering it an issue of understanding between Nepal and India.

Madan Bhandari further argued that the 1990 constitutional provision guaranteed Nepal's territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty and that his party, the CPN (UML), would stop at nothing to safeguard these national interests. Therefore, in diplomatic practices by the UML parties and its leaders led the governments from 1996-to-the present, what PMPD seeks is seen the other way around. Even though Madan Bhandari was not given the chance to hold the reins of power, he advocated for foreign policies to be based on sovereign equality and targeted at advancing and protecting national interests. To apply the true sense of PMPD Perspectives in Nepali foreign policy framing and practices in modern real politik has been hindered by lack of accountability, lack of transparency in decision-making, absence of evidence-based policy framing (through research), partisanship, vested interests' leadership character double-standard of political leadership, and ideological degeneration.

Any sovereign independent nation's foreign policy should safeguard and advance its own interests, and Nepal's foreign policy has so far allowed the nation to continue existing as an

independent, sovereign entity. In this setting, the foreign policy of emerging small countries like Nepal has so far been victimized by global capitalism, imperialism, hegemonic regionalism, and the idea put out by Madan Bhandari, which criticized global capitalism and imperialism. He viewed that global capitalism as a system that inherently creates and maintains inequalities between states. He also emphasized on Class Conflict and economic relations like classical Marxism, neo-Marxist foreign policy theory focuses on class struggle and economic relations as the primary drivers of international politics, Similar to the doctrines of Marxism and Neo-Marxism, Bhandari's People's Multi -Party Democracy criticizes the unequal distribution of labor and resources between the Global North and South.

Conclusion

After the disintegration of Soviet Union, the PMPD perspective vehemently criticized the unipolar world order and made a critical analysis of the contemporary global power dynamics. Madan Bhandari went on to assert that American imperialism makes a concerted effort to establish its lone supremacy in the world when a favourable circumstance arises. He regretted that the US President George W. Bush's "New World Order" slogan was an expression of the same goal. Without the assistance of its allies in the capitalist system, the United States has not been able to bring its ambition to reality. The late Bhandari supported pragmatic foreign policy, which is based on class perspectives and are embraced by PMPD. He valued the existence and promotion of non-alignment as rational. He went on to call for the world to triumph. Nonetheless, contradictions can be found among Nepali Marxists political parties and their leaders; especially after the untimely demise of charismatic ideologue of the PMPD late Bhandari, Marxist hardly remain

even as liberal left or Neo-Marxist in their economic and bilateral, regional and global engagements. The Nepali Marxist forces of the post-Bhandari era have not been aligned with the established Marxist teachings; in fact, they have turned into a weapon for the propagation of rent-seeking economic forces, domestically and internationally, with and without him.

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