

## PMPD's Foreign Policy Vision in the Evolving Global Dynamics

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### ABSTRACT

*This article assesses Nepal's Foreign Policy 2020 in light of Madan Bhandari's foreign policy vision as articulated in People's Multiparty Democracy (PMPD), which emphasizes nationalism, non-alignment, sovereignty, and people-centric development. Foreign Policy 2020 is the first official document of its kind published after the promulgation of Nepal's new constitution in 2015. It reflects the aspirations of the Nepali people and is intended to safeguard national interests amid shifting domestic and international dynamics. The article also evaluates the relevance and applicability of Bhandari's vision in the context of current global changes. A descriptive-analytical approach is employed, drawing on both primary and secondary sources. The analysis is informed by constructivism and role theory, which help interpret the normative foundations and practical roles envisioned by PMPD for Nepal in the international sphere. The findings suggest that while Foreign Policy 2020 incorporates many elements of PMPD's vision, significant gaps remain in its implementation and contextual adaptation. By examining the alignment between political ideology and foreign policy practice, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how historical political visions can influence contemporary foreign policy in Nepal.*

### Introduction

People's Multiparty Democracy (PMPD) is a homegrown democratic model propounded by Madan Bhandari, a leading Marxist ideologue of Nepal's political transformation. PMPD sought to blend Marxist principles with democratic pluralism. This ideology became the guiding political doctrine of the communist party in Nepal and offered a distinct model, diverging from orthodox communism. It not only reshaped Nepal's domestic political orientation but also outlined a clear foreign policy vision. At the core of PMPD's foreign policy are commitments to nationalism, non-alignment, sovereign equality, peaceful cohabitation, and development based on

the needs and demands of the people (Dhakal, 2023). Bhandari envisioned Nepal's position as a dynamic yet balanced international actor—capable of protecting its interests while maintaining cordial relations with people and organizations around the world (Dhirel, 2024). In his view, Nepal should possess an inherent intent to preserve autonomy in the face of external pressures, aligning with its longstanding pursuit of an independent foreign policy (Dhakal, 2023).

This paper explores the relevance of Bhandari's foreign policy vision amid shifting global political dynamics, which aligns with PMPD. This vision is rooted in the principles of non-alignment, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity,

non-interference in internal affairs, and peaceful resolution of disputes. Nepal aims to enhance national dignity and promote economic well-being while contributing to global peace and security.

In light of Nepal's Foreign Policy 2020, which highlights sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and national interest as guiding principles, the applicability of PMPD's foreign policy vision has come under increasing scrutiny. Although the policy document reiterates the fundamentals of PMPD, it is important to critically examine how these principles can be operationalized in a changing global order characterized by growing multipolarity (MoFA, 2020). The post-Cold War unipolar world of Bhandari's time—dominated by the US—has since transformed into a complex multipolar system, where the geopolitical competition between China and India exerts a significant influence on Nepal's international relations.

Constructivism and role theory are employed in this study as analytical frameworks to examine the applicability and evolution of PMPD's foreign policy vision amid the shifting regional and global environment. Constructivism helps illuminate how identity, norms, and national interest are socially constructed and continuously reshaped in foreign policy behavior (Erbas, 2022). Meanwhile, role theory offers insights into how Nepal perceives and performs its role within the context of competing power dynamics, particularly between its two large neighbors (Thies, 2017). In this context, the study critically evaluates the relevance and application of Bhandari's PMPD in today's multipolar world—shaped by China–India rivalry—through the lenses of constructivism and role theory, emphasizing the evolving nature of national identity, norms, and Nepal's strategic positioning.

This paper primarily aims to analyze the core foreign policy tenets of Bhandari's PMPD, including its emphasis on nationalism, non-alignment, sovereignty, and people-centered diplomacy. Second, it examines how the PMPD foreign policy vision has been incorporated into

Nepal's 2020 Foreign Policy document. Third, in light of shifting global dynamics—marked by closer strategic alignment between the US and India, and growing strategic rivalry between the US and China—the study assesses the current applicability of PMPD's foreign policy vision. Nepal faces both opportunities and challenges in this transition from a post-Cold War unipolar order to an emerging multipolar world, particularly in preserving national sovereignty while navigating external pressures. Through a qualitative research design and descriptive-analytical approach, this study repositions PMPD as a viable strategic doctrine offering both normative and practical insights into Nepal's foreign policy in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape.

## Methodology

Constructivism and role theory are the analytical frameworks used in this study to examine the applicability and evolution of PMPD's foreign policy vision in light of shifting regional and global dynamics. Constructivism helps explain how identity, norms, and national interest are socially constructed and continually reshaped in foreign policy behavior (Erbas, 2022). At the same time, role theory sheds light on how Nepal perceives and performs its role within the context of competing power relations, particularly between its two powerful neighbors (Thies, 2017). In light of Nepal's Foreign Policy 2020, this study critically assesses the relevance and application of Bhandari's PMPD in today's multipolar world—shaped by China–India competition—through the lenses of constructivism and role theory, highlighting the evolving nature of national identity, norms, and Nepal's strategic positioning.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology grounded in interpretive analysis to revisit and critically assess Bhandari's foreign policy vision within the framework of PMPD. It draws on Bhandari's speeches, publications, and political narratives on Nepal's foreign policy. Interviews and official party documents—particularly those of the CPN (UML)—that

articulate the core ideas of PMPD are treated as primary sources and are supplemented by theoretical insights. Secondary sources include scholarly publications, books, biographies, policy documents, and expert interviews. Government and think tank publications, especially those from the Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), and other diplomatic channels, are also analyzed to situate Bhandari's views within the broader context of Nepal's evolving foreign policy.

The study further undertakes a normative analysis to assess whether, and how, Bhandari's vision offers a viable long-term foreign policy outlook for a small state like Nepal amid shifting power dynamics. The analysis is contextualized within broader global developments, such as great power rivalry, regionalism, and multipolarity, and explores how the ideological foundations of PMPD interact with these transformations.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Bhandari's foreign policy doctrine**

Bhandari's political ideology, embedded within PMPD, emphasized that foreign policy should be an extension of national interests grounded in sovereignty, self-reliance, and dignity. His foreign policy vision was structured around several key pillars (KC, 2024). Through the ideological lens of PMPD, Bhandari envisioned a foreign policy that was non-aligned, independent, progressive, and firmly rooted in Nepal's national interest and sovereignty. His vision called for active and conscientious engagement with the international community, based on principles of equality, fairness, and peaceful coexistence (Bista, 2024).

Non-alignment formed the cornerstone of Bhandari's foreign policy framework. It aimed to preserve independence in global relations by avoiding alignment with major power blocs, while still pursuing progressive diplomacy that advanced peace, development, and justice. All secret treaties signed with foreign nations and international institutions were to be made public, and any

unequal treaties reviewed and revised in line with the principles of *Panchasheel*: mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality, and peaceful coexistence (Adhikari, 2021). Bhandari advocated for a people-centered, progressive, and self-reliant foreign policy that aligned with democratic values and national interests, making his approach distinctive within the communist movement.

Bhandari stressed the importance of maintaining balanced and friendly relations with Nepal's immediate neighbors, India and China, based on *Panchasheel* and the principle of good neighborliness. Beyond the region, Nepal's global relations were to be guided by national interest and a commitment to liberty, equality, and mutual benefit. Regionally, Bhandari sought to transform SAARC into a meaningful platform for cooperation and to enhance South–South cooperation as a means of promoting solidarity among developing nations (Nepal Press, 2021). Nepal's transit rights—as guaranteed by international law for landlocked countries—would be safeguarded and rendered permanent and effective, reducing dependency and strengthening economic connectivity (Shahi, 2019).

In the broader global context, Bhandari envisioned fair and reciprocal economic, political, cultural, technological, and commercial relations with countries around the world. He strongly supported reforming and empowering the United Nations, advocating for an independent, impartial, and effective institution capable of maintaining global peace and order (Nepal Press, 2021).

Bhandari's foreign policy was grounded in a clearly defined anti-imperialist and anti-hegemonic stance. He opposed all forms of imperialism, neocolonialism, apartheid, foreign domination, and interference, while advocating for peace, equality, independence, and national sovereignty (Bhattarai, 2023). His internationalist worldview supported the non-aligned movement, socialist and proletarian revolutions, national and social liberation movements, nuclear disarmament, and

global efforts for environmental sustainability and human rights. This vision emphasized national dignity, equitable cooperation, and solidarity with progressive global forces.

### **Foreign policy proposed by PMPD from theoretical perspective**

Constructivism explains how national identity, historical memory, and internal political ideologies shape foreign policy preferences—such as resistance to global power dominance or a commitment to neutrality (Theys, 2018). It is particularly well-suited for analyzing ideologically rooted frameworks like Bhandari's PMPD, which is normative, identity-driven, and value-laden. PMPD proposes a Nepali model of democratic socialism that foregrounds sovereignty, non-alignment, and balanced global engagement as concepts formed through social and historical processes, rather than derived solely from material capabilities (Dhakal, 2023).

As a leading theoretical approach in international relations, constructivism emphasizes the role of ideas, identities, beliefs, and norms in shaping state behavior and the global system. Unlike realism and liberalism, which focus on material power and institutional arrangements, constructivism argues that the international environment is socially constructed. This means actors respond not only to power or interests but also to how they perceive themselves and others—perceptions shaped by historical experiences, culture, and shared understandings (English, 2023). As Wendt (1992) famously put it, “anarchy is what states make of it,” suggesting that international politics is defined by how states interpret their roles and relationships (Theys, 2018).

By highlighting how national identity and normative beliefs influence Nepal's preference for sovereignty, non-alignment, and balanced diplomacy, constructivism reveals that foreign policy is not solely determined by material power, but also by socially constructed meanings and values.

Bhandari's PMPD is more than just a political theory; it is a normative framework shaped by Nepal's sociopolitical identity, historical struggles, and aspirations for sovereign statehood. His foreign policy vision under PMPD was not limited to external alignments or material gain, but sought to express Nepal's distinct identity as a sovereign, non-aligned, and people-oriented nation. His focus on national dignity, ideological independence, and balanced diplomacy represents an effort to define Nepal's international role based on normative ideals rather than power politics (Roka, 2024). In this sense, PMPD can be seen as an effort to institutionalize a values-based foreign policy orientation rooted in Nepal's domestic history and collective political memory.

In today's rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape, constructivism provides a valuable theoretical lens to assess the ongoing relevance of PMPD—not merely as a historical ideology, but as a living foreign policy framework. As Nepal navigates increasing strategic pressures from global powers, PMPD offers a normative basis for foreign policy decision-making that aligns with Nepal's identity as a non-aligned, sovereign, and independent state (Bastola, 2025). Constructivism illustrates that foreign policy is not simply a reaction to external threats or opportunities, but also an expression of how a country understands its role in the world. For a small state like Nepal, PMPD remains a powerful tool for asserting agency and resisting dependency in a competitive international system (Erbas, 2022).

Role theory examines how leaders perceive their country's role in the international system and how these perceptions influence foreign policy decisions. Bhandari's foreign policy perspective reflects Nepal's desired international identity as a sovereign, peace-loving, non-aligned state navigating an increasingly volatile global order (Thies, 2010). In international relations, role theory explores how nations conceptualize and enact their roles, shaped by both internal self-perceptions and external expectations. It focuses on how a country defines its role—whether as a neutral

actor, regional power, bridge-builder, or defender of specific values (Herbut, 2017). By analyzing these dimensions, role theory helps explain how Nepal navigates its foreign policy choices within a complex and dynamic global environment.

The theory emphasizes the connection between national identity and foreign policy behavior, asserting that both self-perception and external perception shape diplomatic actions (Breuning, 2024). Viewed through the lens of role theory, Bhandari's PMPD seeks to define Nepal's unique global role as a sovereign, non-aligned, and people-oriented state. Bhandari did not see Nepal as a passive recipient of global influence but as an active agent in shaping its destiny—prioritizing national dignity, ideological independence, and regional balance (Dharel, 2025). His emphasis on a nationalism-driven, non-aligned foreign policy reflects Nepal's ambition to act as a neutral platform for peace, dialogue, and cooperation in South Asia, free from entanglements with global or regional power blocs (Dhakal, 2023). Accordingly, PMPD shapes Nepal's role conception as a principled small state committed to balancing diplomacy with developmental needs.

In today's evolving international landscape, role theory sheds light on the continued relevance of PMPD by showing how Nepal's foreign policy is still influenced by its pursuit of a balanced and independent role amid growing pressures from India, China, and the US (Koleszár, 2022). As these powers increasingly view Nepal through strategic lenses, PMPD underscores the importance of self-defined roles and the rejection of externally imposed identities. In this context, Bhandari's vision supports Nepal's efforts to sustain a role identity rooted in non-alignment, sovereignty, and people-centered development—demonstrating that even small states can assert agency and actively shape their international roles according to their values and interests. Role theory thus offers a useful framework for analyzing how Nepal defines its international identity and aligns its foreign policy

with internal aspirations and external expectations (Acharya, 2021).

## **Changing domestic and international scenario and PMPD's foreign policy vision**

### *Changing domestic scenario*

During Bhandari's political tenure, Nepal was undergoing a historic transition from a monarchical Panchayat system to a multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy. Following the 1990 People's Movement, early attempts to institutionalize democracy began in the 1990s. Despite this democratic breakthrough, the political culture remained nascent, fragile, and prone to elite domination (Nepal, 2024). The economy was heavily reliant on international aid, subsistence agriculture, and remittances (Khadka, 1993). Industrialization was limited, and poverty was widespread. Development efforts were largely concentrated in Kathmandu, with rural areas lacking infrastructure. The ideological divide between leftist and centrist democratic forces remained stark (Fineman, 1991).

Bhandari's PMPD emerged as a pragmatic synthesis, advocating democratic socialism grounded in nationalism, public accountability, and inclusive development. State structures remained heavily centralized, with limited public participation in governance. Issues such as federalism, identity, and inclusion had not yet entered the mainstream political discourse (Dhakal, 2023). Thus, PMPD developed during Nepal's fragile democratic transition as a response to political instability, economic underdevelopment, and ideological polarization—offering a framework for inclusive growth within a centralized and aid-dependent system (The Himalayan Times, 2018).

Today, Nepal is a federal democratic republic, with a new constitution adopted in 2015. Political pluralism has expanded, though governance is marked by chronic instability and coalition politics. Identity-based movements, decentralization, and calls for greater inclusivity have transformed the

national discourse. Adhikari (2021) underscores the importance of social cohesion and the effective functioning of federal institutions. While infrastructure and connectivity have improved, the economy remains vulnerable—still heavily dependent on remittances, facing a widening trade deficit, and experiencing sluggish industrial growth. At the same time, a digitally connected and increasingly informed youth population, along with a growing civil society, has empowered citizens. However, public trust in traditional political parties continues to decline.

### ***Changing international scenario***

During Bhandari's era, the global order was defined by ideological rivalry between the U.S.-led capitalist bloc and the Soviet-led communist bloc. Countries like Nepal embraced non-alignment to preserve sovereignty and avoid being drawn into great power rivalries. Global trade, investment, and digital connectivity were still in early stages of expansion (KC, 2024). Nepal's international outreach was limited and largely shaped by assistance diplomacy—particularly with India, China, the US, and multilateral organizations (Bhattarai, 2019). Institutions like the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) played crucial roles in the diplomacy of small states. Nepal promoted peacekeeping and non-aligned policies under an equidistance strategy (Yadav, 2025). The country maintained a careful balancing act between India and China, while U.S. influence was primarily economic and ideological. Although strategic competition existed, it was less intense than it is today.

In the present day, the international system has shifted toward a competitive multipolar order, with growing tensions between the US and China. India has also risen as a major power, contributing to strategic realignments across South Asia, including Nepal (Li, 2023). Nepal has become a geopolitical space where rival powers project influence, evidenced by initiatives such as China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, and India's *Neighborhood First*

and security-oriented policies. This intensifies the pressure on Nepal to either align or carefully balance (Gupta, 2023).

The expansion of global trade, digital diplomacy, and transnational challenges—such as climate change, migration, and pandemics—demands that Nepal adopt a more proactive, diverse, and economically focused foreign policy. Institutions of global governance are increasingly under stress from unilateralism, transactional diplomacy, and nationalist agendas (Malla, 2024), limiting Nepal's room to maneuver through traditional platforms like NAM or SAARC. In this context, Bhandari's foreign policy vision continues to offer valuable guidance. His emphasis on sovereignty, non-alignment, and value-driven engagement remains highly relevant as Nepal seeks to assert agency and navigate the challenges of a complex and competitive international landscape.

### **Foreign policy of Nepal 2020 and PMPD's foreign policy vision**

The 2020 Foreign Policy document outlines Nepal's most recent diplomatic orientation, emphasizing sovereignty, independence, non-alignment, and peaceful cohabitation as its guiding principles. Drawing on *Panchsheel* and the UN Charter, it articulates a vision of “amity with all and enmity with none,” reinforcing Nepal's longstanding commitment to neutrality and balanced diplomacy (Gyawali, 2021). The policy asserts that Nepal will not participate in any military alliances, thereby preserving its autonomy and non-aligned status in the international system (MoFA, 2020). It also acknowledges Nepal's geographic realities—situated between two great powers, India and China—and underscores the importance of maintaining balanced and friendly relations with both neighbors without compromising national interests or sovereignty.

Economic diplomacy and strategic hedging are also key tenets of Nepal's foreign policy. Nepal seeks to diversify its foreign relations by

deepening engagement with both established and emerging partners, including the US, the European Union, and regional organizations (Jaiswal & Ranjan, 2022). The policy prioritizes leveraging international partnerships for national development while avoiding alignment in major power rivalries (Ghimire, 2023). Nepal embraces multilateralism to enhance its international profile, attract foreign investment, and contribute to global peace and climate action. This approach reflects a pragmatic adaptation to evolving geopolitical realities while remaining anchored in Nepal's traditional values of neutrality, peaceful cohabitation, and sovereign equality (Malla, 2024).

Nepal's 2020 Foreign Policy incorporates several foundational ideals envisioned by Bhandari in his PMPD framework, including commitments to national independence, non-alignment, and people-centered diplomacy. Bhandari's foreign policy vision emphasized democratic nationalism rooted in sovereignty, equitable participation, and rejection of foreign domination—principles echoed in the 2020 document. The policy's commitment to non-alignment, peaceful coexistence, and autonomous decision-making aligns closely with PMPD's emphasis on sovereign diplomacy (MoFA, 2020). Additionally, its call to reassess foreign obligations in line with national interests reflects Bhandari's demand for transparency and the revision of unequal treaties.

PMPD's emphasis on balanced and respectful relations with immediate neighbors—grounded in *Panchsheel*—is also reiterated in the 2020 policy (MoFA, 2020). Furthermore, the document promotes economic diplomacy, environmental cooperation, and multilateralism, which align with Bhandari's vision of a progressive, inclusive, and development-oriented foreign policy (Bista, 2024). The inclusion of cultural diplomacy, diasporic engagement, and the pursuit of national interest through diplomacy rather than military alignment demonstrates PMPD's people-centered and democratic approach to international relations. In this sense, the 2020 Foreign Policy operationalizes

Bhandari's theoretical ideas in the context of a multipolar world.

Revisiting Nepal's 2020 Foreign Policy through the lens of PMPD reveals both convergence and divergence. While both frameworks share core principles such as sovereignty, non-alignment, and peaceful coexistence, the 2020 policy lacks the normative depth and ideological clarity that PMPD provides (Bastola, 2025). PMPD offers a people-centered, values-driven justification for Nepal's global engagement—one that could strengthen the current policy by rooting it more firmly in Nepal's political and ideological traditions. Bhandari's worldview remains profoundly relevant in an era of intensifying geopolitical rivalry, particularly between the US and China, and amid India's growing regional assertiveness. His vision offers Nepal a balanced, autonomous foreign policy path grounded in national dignity, inclusive development, and long-term strategic interests.

### **Relevance of Bhandari's foreign policy in the contemporary context**

Bhandari's foreign policy agenda—rooted in non-alignment, national independence, and progressive engagement—remains highly relevant amid Nepal's shifting domestic and international landscapes. His advocacy for a non-aligned, autonomous foreign policy complements Nepal's constitutional commitment to neutrality and peaceful coexistence, especially as the country faces mounting pressures from global powers including the US, China, and India (KC, 2024). His call for publishing secret treaties and reforming unequal agreements, based on *Panchsheel*, emphasizes transparency, sovereignty, and fairness—values that remain pertinent as Nepal reevaluates longstanding treaties like the 1950 agreement with India in pursuit of more equitable terms.

Bhandari's insistence on fostering balanced relations with India and China—based on mutual respect and non-interference—is essential to preserving Nepal's strategic autonomy amid intensifying Sino-Indian rivalry (Nepal, 2024).

His vision of global friendship rooted in national interest has guided Nepal's diverse diplomacy, including outreach to the US, the European Union, Russia, and ASEAN. His emphasis on building SAARC and strengthening South-South cooperation highlights regionalism and solidarity among developing nations—an approach still vital to Nepal's regional integration and collective bargaining efforts (Thaha Times, 2025).

He also emphasized maintaining transit rights for landlocked countries—a priority that remains central to Nepal's trade, connectivity, and economic independence. His commitment to expanding economic, cultural, and technological ties for mutual benefit aligns with Nepal's current focus on investment, innovation, and development diplomacy. Advocacy for an impartial and effective United Nations also remains timely, as multilateral institutions face increasing pressure from great power competition (Nepal Views, 2025). His opposition to imperialism, interference, and neocolonialism, along with his support for human rights, peace, and environmental movements, resonates with prevailing international norms and Nepal's global responsibilities (Kendrabandu, 2025). Bhandari's foreign policy vision offers Nepal a principled, balanced, and people-centered framework for asserting sovereignty, expanding global engagement, and navigating the complexities of modern geopolitics—while staying true to national interests and democratic values.

Nepal's domestic political context has transformed significantly since the early 1990s, when Bhandari articulated his PMPD vision. Internationally, the global order has evolved from Cold War bipolarity through U.S.-led unipolarity to today's emerging multipolar configuration marked by strategic rivalry between the US and China. South Asia has become a strategic arena, with India asserting regional dominance, China expanding influence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the US engaging through frameworks like the Indo-Pacific Strategy (Shivamurthy, 2023).

Bhandari's foreign policy principles—anchored in nationalism, people-oriented development, and non-alignment—remain relevant in three key areas. First, in an era of escalating great power competition, his commitment to a sovereign and independent foreign policy helps Nepal resist alignment pressures and protect its long-term national interests. Second, his focus on the welfare of ordinary Nepalis over elite-driven diplomacy remains applicable, particularly as Nepal seeks foreign aid, trade deals, and labor opportunities to uplift economic conditions (KC, 2024). Third, Bhandari's call for principled, cautious engagement with both India and China—driven by national interest rather than sentiment or coercion—has become even more critical amid their deepening influence in Nepal (Bista, 2024). His vision of principled nationalism, non-alignment, and people-first diplomacy offers both a philosophical foundation and practical guidance for managing contemporary geopolitical challenges.

### **Challenges and limitations of Bhandari's proposed foreign policy in the present context**

While Bhandari's foreign policy vision—grounded in PMPD—champions national sovereignty, non-alignment, peaceful coexistence, and people-centered diplomacy, it also faces significant limitations in today's global context. One major challenge is the shift from ideological confrontation to strategic and technological competition. Unlike the Cold War era, present-day rivalries—particularly between the US and China—center on technological supremacy, trade leadership, and space militarization (Mearsheimer, 2019). Although this transition narrows the scope for traditional anti-imperialist discourse, PMPD remains a dynamic doctrine that must be contextualized to meet evolving national needs (Acharya, 2023).

Domestically, Nepal's political instability, fragile institutions, and economic dependency hinder the implementation of Bhandari's balanced and independent foreign policy. While PMPD advocates transparency, treaty reform, and



principled engagement, Nepal currently faces inconsistent foreign policy execution, a lack of strategic consensus among political actors, and growing reliance on foreign aid and investment (Kharel, 2024). Additionally, the global trend toward trade blocs, digital governance, and space alliances necessitates Nepal's active participation in regional and global frameworks—sometimes challenging the rigidity of non-alignment. Given Nepal's strategic location between India and China, foreign policy today demands pragmatic flexibility rather than strict ideological consistency (Bastola, 2025).

Therefore, although Bhandari's vision provides an inspiring philosophical foundation, its effective application requires adaptation to the evolving global order—shaped by multipolar rivalry, technological innovation, and non-traditional security concerns. The PMPD framework, originally forged in a distinct historical and ideological context, must now be expanded to address emerging issues such as climate change, cybersecurity, public health, and migration. In doing so, the PMPD doctrine can evolve into a comprehensive, pragmatic, and principled strategy—capable of guiding Nepal's foreign policy through the complexities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Conclusion

PMPD's foreign policy vision remains relevant in Nepal's evolving domestic and international contexts. At its core, PMPD advocates a non-aligned, independent, and progressive foreign policy grounded in *Panchasheel*, equality, national sovereignty, and people-centered diplomacy. These principles continue to be reflected in Nepal's official 2020 foreign policy document, which resonates Bhandari's call for balanced relations with neighbors, the protection of national interests, and constructive engagement in international forums. The document's emphasis on independence, diversification, and mutual respect exemplifies Bhandari's strategic foresight.

The global shift from Cold War-era ideological polarization to today's multipolar order—marked

by competition in trade, technology, space, and military affairs—has created a more complex and nuanced geopolitical context for small states like Nepal. The ongoing rivalry between China and the US, coupled with strategic cooperation between the US and India, forms a geopolitical triangle that Nepal must carefully navigate to preserve its sovereignty and strategic autonomy. In this context, PMPD's commitment to non-alignment and balance appears not only historically significant but also tactically prudent.

Domestically, Nepal has transitioned from a centralized monarchy to a federal democratic republic, introducing new political actors, decentralization, and increased citizen participation in governance and foreign policy. This transformation aligns with Bhandari's democratic ideals and people-centered approach, demonstrating both the internal legitimacy and adaptability of his foreign policy vision.

Viewed through the lens of constructivism, PMPD underscores the role of national identity, historical experience, and normative values in shaping foreign policy behavior. Constructivism explains how Nepal's self-conception—as a sovereign, peaceful, and independent nation—influences its diplomatic choices amid external pressures. Similarly, role theory helps explain how Nepal defines and performs its role as a bridge, buffer, or balancer between powerful neighbors—a role clearly reflected in Bhandari's non-aligned and balanced foreign policy strategy.

Thus, PMPD remains a viable foreign policy philosophy. It offers both conceptual clarity and strategic guidance for navigating great power competition, managing democratic transitions, and reaffirming Nepal's independent identity in a contested global order. Bhandari's vision provides a normative framework and practical tools for Nepal's diplomacy in the twenty-first century.

However, his foreign policy vision must evolve to reflect changing domestic and international

realities. Bhandari formulated PMPD during the Cold War, a time defined by ideological confrontation. Today's world is shaped by multipolarity, hyper-technological competition, global trade rivalries, space and military races, and non-traditional security threats such as cyber warfare, pandemics, and climate change. Meanwhile, Nepal's internal context has shifted dramatically—from a centralized monarchy to a federal democratic republic with broader political engagement and decentralized governance.

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