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SEMINAR PAPER

FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

DR. SHAMBHU RAM SIMKHADA

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# **Centre for Security and Justice Studies**

## **Seminar Paper**

### **Foreign Policy and National Security**

by Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada

[sambins@gmail.com](mailto:sambins@gmail.com)

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In his classic book “The Relations of Nations” Frederick H. Hartmann describes international relations as a process by which states adjust their national interests to those of others”.<sup>1</sup> Within the prevailing international relations, nations formulate foreign policies for the protection and promotion of their national interests. In this context Hartmann further writes “National interests cover categories of desires on the part of sovereign states that vary enormously from state to state and from time to time. There is an irreducible core for any state at any time. This core consists of the vital interests-those for which a state is normally willing to go to war immediately or ultimately. Such vital interests include for all states, as a minimum, the protection and preservation of their existing territory”<sup>2</sup>

National Security, on the other hand, is a term that has come into broad usage since the end of World War II and most forcefully in the United States. National security signifies protection of the nation’s people and territories against physical assault, and in that narrow sense, is roughly equivalent to the traditionally used term national defense. National security has however a more extensive meaning than protection from physical harm; it also implies protection, through a variety

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<sup>1</sup> Hartmann, Frederick H. The Relations of Nations, The Macmillan Company, 1957...p5

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p 6

of means, of vital economic and political interests, the loss of which could threaten ....the vitality of the state”.<sup>3</sup>

Foreign policy and national security are thus concepts which increasingly overlap with each other. The above definitions not only underscore their close relationship as concepts but also the significance, complexity and challenges they pose as we begin to contextualize them in relations to our own situation in the contemporary world.

Both Foreign Policy and National Security as concepts and as instruments of policy, involve the notions of national power for the protection and promotion of national interests, vital and otherwise. But then what really constitutes power and who decides what are in the best national interests and how best to protect and promote them? While protection and preservation of national sovereignty and territorial integrity may be constant, other national interests change based on the socio-cultural backgrounds, political outlook, predispositions and worldviews of changing political elites. To quote Henry Kissinger “personality and policy could never be fully divorced”<sup>4</sup> At a time when the country is experiencing far reaching changes in its political economy, especially under leadership diametrically divided on fundamental values, worldviews and policy perspectives, how does a nation-state determine its national interests and formulate policies and programs to protect and promote them? <sup>5</sup>

Just as national interest national power also has different interpretations. Hans J. Morgenthau, one of the principals of the Realist School defines international politics as a struggle for power.<sup>6</sup> So power occupies a central role in any discourse on foreign policy and national security. But power is also a complex notion. Dynamics of time and technology have made it even more difficult to

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<sup>3</sup> Amos A. Jordan and William J. Taylor Jr., American National Security Policy and Process, The John Hopkins University Press, 1981 p. 3

<sup>4</sup> Walter Issacson, Kissinger: A Biography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), p. 344

<sup>5</sup> See Simkhada, Shambhu Ram, Nepal’s National Interest and Foreign Policy , Nepal’s National Interests Foreign Policy International Security, Federalism, Energy-Economy, Eds. Tomislav Delinic and Nishchal Nath Pandey, Centre for South Asian Studies and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Kathmandu 2011 pp 11-24

<sup>6</sup> Dougherty, James E. and Pfaltzgraff Jr., Robert L. Contending Theories of International Relations A Comprehensive Survey, Harper and Row Publishers New York, 1981 p 87

comprehend and use. Bigger nation-states project power through their large territory and vast natural resources, population, size of the economy and military. But for a small state, scholar Annette Baker Fox wrote long ago “diplomacy is the tool of statecraft”. But long periods of internal instability with sharp divisions among the main political actors sipping through to society, people and institutions greatly weaken the nation-state and its diplomacy. So, states become increasingly powerless to provide effective governance internally as well as vulnerable to threats from outside. State failure looms large with bad governance, lack of basic services, economic stagnation and political conflicts degenerating into violence. How do we explain the failure to appoint a few competent professionals in key constitutional positions? How will diplomacy be affected if the government does not appoint ambassadors for a long time even in the most strategic missions?

There is yet another intellectual dilemma that confronts Nepal as we engage in the discourse on foreign and national security policies. Conventional wisdom guiding inter-state relations is based on the notion "in foreign policy nations have no permanent friends or enemies only permanent interests" articulated first by British scholar-politician Benjamin Disraeli but later popularized by Lord Palmerstone long ago. In their general formulation a country's foreign and national security policies will continue to be guided by the need to protect and promote its national interest. But can the same old approaches work in fundamentally different circumstances, South Asia and the central Himalayas emerging as one of the epicenters of the new global paradigm flux, Nepal undergoing significant internal changes and India and China reclaiming their rightful places at the global high table? With far reaching changes, should we not rethink on threats and reformulate doctrines which will determine our strategy?<sup>7</sup>

In their fascinating book *The New Digital Age Reshaping the Future of People, Nations and Business* Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen argue “the most significant impact of the spread of technology is to help reallocate power away from states

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<sup>7</sup> See Simkhada, Shambhu Ram, *Complexities of Nepal's Foreign Policy, Foreign Policy of Nepal "Challenges and Opportunities"*, Institute of Foreign Affairs, Kathmandu 2009 pp 1-15

and institutions and transfer it to individuals”.<sup>8</sup> What will be the impact of this power shift on international relations, foreign and national security policies? The jury is still out. But many problems today are trans-national in nature and need inter-state cooperation and multi-national support to succeed. Narrow nationalistic approach is not enough to respond to new threats posed by trans-national terrorism, crime, fake currencies, climate change, trafficking in goods and humans. Bilateral, regional and international understanding and cooperation could in fact better promote the interests of all states in the region and globally.

**Global Paradigm Flux:** This was the vision of the founders of the United Nations with goals of international cooperation for greater freedom from fear and want, enhancing human dignity and human rights, dealing with threats to peace with collective security interests. Sadly, the Cold War prevented the application of collective security and realization of the peace dividend. With the end of the Cold War nature of conflicts changed but countries like Nepal continued to suffer. With the crisis in Ukraine, Syria, and Iraq, Afghanistan to the East and South China Sea, not only may the Cold War be back but IR journals have started talking of the Third World War or major regional wars. Meanwhile the UN is becoming increasingly helpless. Why did we request the termination of UN Security Council mandate of the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) and take things in our own hand?

The post war international system has failed in its mission of creating a new norm and rules based behavior of the individuals, institutions and states in the new age as many had hoped the UN would be playing the lead role. Fundamentalist-nationalistic-bureaucratic approach has been the main hurdle in realizing a new global paradigm. As a consequence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century humanity exists within perplexing paradoxes, “a bizarre combination of Stone Age emotions, mediaeval institutions and God-like technology”.<sup>9</sup> If this is how scholars in the part of the world we regard as advanced, from which we are inspired and follow think, we

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<sup>8</sup> Schmidt, Eric and Cohen, Jared The New Digital Age Reshaping the Future of People, Nations and Business, Alfred A. Knopf, 2013 p 6

<sup>9</sup> See Sachs, Jeffery Common Wealth Economics for a Crowded Planet, Allen Lane Penguin Group 2008

can imagine the condition of those other parts of the world at the tail end of the spectrum of intellect happy in mimicry.<sup>10</sup>

Influenced by reason and logic, need for new international norms-rules but also growing new demands post-World War II international order started on formal sovereign equality of nations-one nation one vote in the UN General Assembly. But the “veto power” of permanent members of the Security Council also institutionalized the traditional power-hierarchy. Power asymmetry, mindsets that define the use of power, norms-rules and their interpretation through the prism of narrow national interests complicate foreign policy making. Changing perceptions, worldviews and interests of the ruling elites and regional and international demands militate against long term interests. Together they add to the challenges to foreign and national security policies. Concepts like Human Security, Responsibility to Protect and Preemptive Regime Change question the traditional national sovereignty and its inviolability. Yet the world political order remains primarily state centric in the absence of the necessary evolution and devolution of the state system for global governance<sup>11</sup>

So, today post-war order has broken down but a new one is yet to emerge. Powerful pressures of *winner take all* mindsets at the top but demands of more just and equitable sharing of power and resources within and among nations-states amidst the prevailing global paradigm flux further complicates domestic politics and makes diplomacy risky. Mistakes led to situations of Cambodia, Rwanda and Yugoslavia yesterday, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria today. Power can be used to blunt power. For the less powerful only good politics and effective diplomacy can balance the limitations of power.

**South-Asia:** Within this global paradigm flux the 21<sup>st</sup> century is dubbed the *Asian Century*. Japan, China and India are global economic powerhouses. China, India and Pakistan’s nuclear capability give the potential to change contemporary global power configurations. It also makes the central Himalayas most nuclear-

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<sup>10</sup> Pavan K. Varma’s *The Great Indian Middle Class* presents a fascinating view on this

<sup>11</sup> The European Union is an interesting experiment in this idea of the evolution and devolution of the classical Westphalian state system. But the project is far from mature.

locked region of the world. Foreign troops came to Afghanistan to end the *war on terror* which, in the words of one former US Secretary of Defence “started from Afghanistan and must end there”. But they are now preparing to leave with Afghanistan still hanging in the balance. Meanwhile Iraq and Syria are on the brink. Terrorism is taking its toll on Pakistan and many other places in South Asia. The Global Peace Index 2014 shows South Asia as the least peaceful place on earth.<sup>12</sup>

Amidst all this, Nepal is known as the most externally interfered nation in the world and some people go so far as to warn that she could easily become the 21<sup>st</sup> century *Kuruchhetra*. Under normal circumstance such warnings could be seen as over-reaction. But given the global paradigm flux, the tensions in and around South Asia and Nepal’s own traumatic recent past, can such warnings be ignored as unduly provocative? How should Nepal’s foreign and national security policy respond to the challenges posed by our own traumatic transition, turmoil in the region and the world? Within this general contextual framework, I will now like to discuss Nepal’s foreign and national security policy priorities.

Recognizing these challenges Prime Minister Sushil Koirala called for consensus among the political parties on Nepal’s national interest and foreign policy. Government’s Common Minimum Program and Foreign Minister Mahendra Pandey’s public statements seemed to reflect the desire of the political leadership not to allow foreign and national security policy be used as a football in the field of domestic power politics at this treacherous time. With political will coalition of the two largest parties representing the mainstream peaceful national democratic progressive political centre of Nepali politics can indeed address the dilemmas of Nepalese foreign and national security policy and improve the conduct of our development and defense diplomacy.

- Historically Nepal is the meeting point of two great civilizations and today the Central Himalaya has emerged as one of the epicenters of competing interests in an impending global paradigm shift. Managing the vital

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<sup>12</sup> See the Global Peace Index 2014, Institute for Economics and Peace

relations with our two powerful neighbors has always been the major agenda of our foreign policy. Changing political, economic and security relations, increased trans-border flow of peoples, goods and ideas and threats posed by terrorism, crime, fake currencies, drugs and human trafficking make things more complicated. In such a situation, vain debates, unnecessary *name calling and finger pointing* increase the *trust deficit* further exacerbating our vulnerability. But understood and managed well, *the vitality of proximity* with the world's two greatest civilizations, largest nation-states racing to reclaim their rightful places in the global political, economic and strategic *high table* offer great potential for prosperity through increased trade, tourism, investment, employment, infrastructure development etc which in turn contribute to political stability and security at home and the neighborhood. Thus, managing relations with India and China based on trust, confidence and credibility is the topmost priority of our foreign and national security policy.

- Besides skillful management of vital and long term geo-political necessities foreign policy is also guided by changing political and socio-economic priorities. Strengthening relations with the US, EU, Japan, Germany, the Nordics, Switzerland, the P5, G 8 , G 20, BRICKS and other friends in the developed and the developing world, NAM and LDCs, generous support to our national agendas of peace, constitution, stability, development, foreign investment, employment, loan forgiveness, export and tourism are also the other main priorities.
- We Chair BIMSTEC and soon will head SAARC, host the next SAARC and BIMSTEC summit sometime soon. With the adoption of the proposal to strengthen SAARC Mechanisms including the Secretariat and the initiative of the new Indian Prime Minister to invite and consult his SAARC counterparts, as host and leader of the Summit and Secretariat Nepal is in a unique position to inject new energy into the SAARC process. Homework for making these events different from the usual exchange of diplomatic niceties they have often been criticized for in the past are urgent.



- Despite our abiding faith and proactive role in the United Nations Nepal experienced humiliating defeats in the election to the Security Council and the GA. Controversial exit of UNMIN has not helped. Nepal's long and dedicated peacekeeping role has not been rewarded adequately with senior military or civilian posts. Effective diplomacy should try to address some of these issues as well as focus on strengthening our position in the International Financial Institutions and the World Trade Organization.
- With emphasis on economic diplomacy we have expanded our diplomatic presence to support our socio-economic development by promoting trade, investment, tourism, knowledge and technology transfer. To further promote foreign employment and better serve Nepalese workers we have opened embassies in almost all the major labor markets and deputed labor attaches. Has this huge expenses of the government produced the desired results? Why are Nepalese being badly exploited, lowest paid and facing unfavorable treatments in many places? A review is urgent. Following such review, new missions in Vienna, the European and Nairobi, the African headquarters of the UN and several specialized agencies as well as embassies in energy rich and strategically important Central Asia, SAARC members Afghanistan and Bhutan and role in Shanghai Cooperation Organization could be considered.
- To undertake these tasks the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, missions abroad, the Institute of Foreign Affairs and other think tanks related with foreign policy must be strengthened. Coordination between the PMO, MOFA and other ministries must also be improved. Meanwhile ambassadors are directly responsible in implementing foreign policy priorities in the field. Classification of missions and deployment of talent and resources will ultimately determine the success of our diplomacy. With many ambassador posts vacant the initiative of the Ministry to set criteria and create conditions for the new appointees to perform well and maintain the dignity of the post are commendable. Regular reporting and performance evaluation are equally important.

**Classic Dilemma:** Foreign policy is an extension of domestic politics. All political wisdom, conventional or modern, Oriental or Western, accepts power as the primary instrument of politics but justice its end. Capturing State power is one thing, using that power to give justice to people is a whole new *ball game*. Politics of change thrives on slogans against symbols discredited by institutions weakened by inept individuals at the helm; but effective change management needs ability to address the substance of politics-*happiness of the people*. That demands leadership of integrity, understanding and ability supported by a competent, committed and credible team of professionals. Otherwise political changes come and go but people only suffer. In the absence of people to lead it well a better system will not make a better society. Nepal has witnessed several political changes 2007, 2046 and 2062/63 but the transition continues.

Talking about the latest of the political changes, many people have today forgotten the death, destruction and despair at the height of the Maoist insurgency let alone comprehend why the devastating conflict started and how it ended.<sup>13</sup> Deaths of Nepalis in the hands of Nepalis in the cycle of violence and counter violence persuaded some *crying souls* to challenge the *intellectual traffic jam* that resisted long overdue changes perpetuated unnecessary violence. Nepal's local necessities, national priorities and regional-global political-strategic complexities meant ending the so-called people's war, avoiding a larger war would be possible only by conceptualizing a new peaceful, national democratic progressive political centre marginalizing extremists on all sides.<sup>14</sup> Such intellectual audacity combined with political courage of leaders willing to *gamble* their history and dogma to stop the massacre of Nepalis in the name of change or to suppress it created the national and international convergence that ultimately changed the dynamics of the conflict. This intellectual-political-diplomatic blend (*Milan Bindu*), is at the heart of the *Politics of Consensus* that has brought Nepal from there to here, from the 12 Point Understanding, the successful People's

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<sup>13</sup> See Simkhada, Shambhu Ram et al, Causes of Internal Conflicts and Means to Resolve Them Nepal a case study, PSIO Occasional Paper No.3/2004, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, Switzerland ,2004

<sup>14</sup> See Simkhada, Shambhu Ram Bringing Nepal's Politics Back on Track, Restarting the Journey To Peace, Prosperity and Democracy, The Spotlight, Kathmandu July 27-August 09, 2012

Movement, restoration of the dissolved House, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and two elections to the Constituent Assembly, the Declaration of the Republic to the Integration and Rehabilitation of the Maoist Army Combatants.<sup>15</sup>

Having demonstrated extraordinary courage first, after coming to power leaders most responsible for the political side of this *fusion* are themselves overtaken by the power of *de-fusion* leading society as a whole to its current state of *confusion*.<sup>16</sup> People and parties who worked together to bring the peace process to this point are now *going after each other's throats*. But the reasons are all too obvious. Meanwhile, new developments are adding to the political, economic and security complexities. Politics of consensus has changed to bitter competition for power; but, brute contest for power is the principal cause of political conflict and violence. In other words, domestic politics is the biggest challenge to Nepal's foreign policy and national security.<sup>17</sup>

**National Consensus:** As a serious failure, post-1990 Nepali politics could neither forge minimum consensus on national interest nor produce individuals of caliber with whom our international partners, particularly two neighbors felt they could talk *in confidence*. Internal bickering and external interests undermined and undercut rather than support and promote people with potential. As a consequence Post-1990 order crumbled and Old Nepal collapsed. Sadly, Republican Nepal faces the same old challenges, only made more complex by internal political developments and external demands.

As the good news, Nepal is blessed with kindness of Mother Nature, has a large pool of honest and hard working people and enjoys tremendous goodwill of both our big neighbors and the international community. All Nepalese really want is to enjoy the fruits of their own hard work in peace, freedom and security. Our friends are united in their wish to see an independent, stable, democratic,

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<sup>15</sup> The author worked as a member of the Technical Committee and later Secretariat of the Special Committee for the Integration and Rehabilitation of the Maoist Army Combatants chaired by the Prime Minister.

<sup>16</sup> Many of the articles of this author cited above clarify the Fusion, Confusion and De-fusion in Nepali Politics

<sup>17</sup> See Simkhada, Shambhu Ram, Is Nepal's Peace Process in Peril? Transforming the Politics of Consensus to a Culture of Coalition, Shanti (Peace Journal), Year 3, No. 3 Ashad 2069, Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Sigha Durbar, Kathmandu, Nepal

peaceful and prosperous Nepal. In that sense Nepal does not need to *prepare for war to keep peace*. Of course, the nature of our geography is such that our two neighbors and major global actors see developments in Nepal important to their interests. That makes effective management of our internal affairs the principal pre-occupation of our foreign and national security policies so that none of the major players feel that developments inside Nepal are against their interests. This has made Nepal an interesting laboratory of state-formation and nation-building historically and more so today.

Reassuring the two powerful neighbors cooperating and competing at the same time, a superpower in duress, over prescriptive donors and intrusive but powerful non state actors of our policy of amity with all enmity towards none with Nepalis clear about their national interest and deciding their own national agenda will require serious home work. Real integration of the former Maoist combatants who have now joined the Nepal Army, monitoring of others who have been rehabilitated into society, better utilization of the large manpower available in the NA for national development and natural resources use, strengthening the security sector and intelligence services for better internal security and border management are of increasing significance. In this context, rhetoric of some and lethargy of others at the leadership level can complicate things for Nepal and our friends and neighbors. For bigger powers it will primarily be a tactical problem. For the smaller partner it involves vital strategic interests - economic development, political stability, national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

**Conclusions:** In the summer of 2004 12 young Nepalese, fleeing the destitution and violence in their own land, hoping to make a living and save some money so that they could also feed their families back home, were mercilessly massacred in Bagdad. Some of you may remember this tragic incident and subsequently the pandemic that followed in the streets of Kathmandu. Soon afterwards in an article “Crying Soul” in the Kathmandu Post I wrote “If Nepal’s rulers and leaders fail to

demonstrate wisdom and courage, they will preside over changes not only in the course of Nepal's history but also its geography".<sup>18</sup>

A few years after I expressed those views, Nepal experienced change in its history. The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal stands at a new threshold poised to embark on a new trajectory of Democracy, Peace and Prosperity. How to manage the ongoing changes and take the current transition to its meaningful end? This has been a subject of concern and debate. Meanwhile, the plight of some more Nepalese in Iraq has been in the headlines again and someone who has served in important positions of the government in the past and now writes and speaks extensively on Nepal's politics and foreign policy has recently repeated my warning. And the change in geography, if it starts, will be much more painful than the relatively less painful change in history. Robert Kaplan's famous title *The Revenge of Geography* needs to be turned into a Reward. The challenge is to minimize the risks and maximize the benefits arising out of our location. This is the task of Nepal's foreign policy and national security discourse.

Utilizing our own rich natural and human heritage, vital cooperation of our neighbors and support of well wishers in the international community to strengthen peace and democracy, promote prosperity and security at home and enhance Nepal's image outside are the main goals of foreign policy and role of national security. Consensus among the main political forces on national interest, credible policies and capable people, both political and professional, to articulate our foreign and security policy of *amity with all enmity with none* can indeed be effective tools of serving the national interest and enhancing our prestige in the international arena. But this will demand leadership of wisdom and courage.

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<sup>18</sup> Simkhada, Shambhu Ram, *Crying Soul*, the Kathmandu Post 04-08-2004