

**SECTION-5:  
BOOK REVIEW**

## **Asian Journal of International Affairs (AJIA)**

(A Peer-Reviewed, Open Access Journal and Indexed in NepJOL)

ISSN : 2822-1958

Volume 1, Special Issue, December 2021

<https://ksl.edu.np/subcenter/asian-journal-of-international-affairs>

Published by

**Kathmandu School of Law**

**Suryabinayak-4, Dadhikot, Bhaktapur, Bagmati, Nepal**

Email: [ajia.journal@gmail.com](mailto:ajia.journal@gmail.com), [ajia@ksl.edu.np](mailto:ajia@ksl.edu.np) URL: <https://ksl.edu.np/>

### **Book Review**

## **Book Title: Nepal India China, Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**Book Author: Shambhu Ram Simkhada**

*Book Reviewed by: Purushottam Poudel\**

Corresponding Reviewer: **Purushottam Poudel**, Email: [poudel.purushottam7@gmail.com](mailto:poudel.purushottam7@gmail.com)

DOI: Available at NepJOL

Copyright 2021© The Publisher and Author/s.

---

\* Purushottam Poudel is fascinated by Geopolitics and International Politics. His articles on the same topics have appeared in a variety of national and international media. Email: [poudel.purushottam7@gmail.com](mailto:poudel.purushottam7@gmail.com)

# Book Title: Nepal India China, Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*Purushottam Poudel*

## **Book on the vitality and complexity of Nepal's foreign relations**

Not every disciple is Arjuna, who can put his Guru, Dornacharaya's wisdom to the test by reviewing the Guru's work. Even though the expertise is vastly superior, the moment the Guru personally summons the student to stand along with him is incredibly exhilarating. I find myself in that position in reviewing the book titled Nepal India China Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by professor Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada.

As a scholar-diplomat Shambhu Ram Simkhada is a well-known name in the articulation of Nepal's position in regional and global affairs. This book, first published in 2018 and the second edition in 2020, is useful reference material for understanding the vitality and complexity of Nepal's International Relations (IR), Foreign Policy (FP) making, and conduct of diplomacy, especially as the trans-Himalayas and the world undergo far-reaching changes. Besides his diplomatic experience, the author displays the academic strength and power of new ideas by approaching the subject matter without ambiguity and articulating them convincingly.

Nepal India China Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is, however, a bit of a misnomer as the four sections span beyond the academic scope and geographical boundaries of its title. The first chapter presents the author's reflections on some important themes of contemporary IR from its theoretical to methodological evolution. The second chapter contains his reflections on the vitality and complexity of Nepal's IR, FP, and diplomacy. The third and fourth chapters are devoted to Nepal's relations with its two immediate neighbours, India and China.

Inserted in between are the author's reflections on many issues. For example, Nepal's Relations with Switzerland, where he served as Nepal's Ambassador, "The US and China destined for war?", "My Expedition of Diplomatic Mountain Climbing", "Post Doklam Reflections", "New Dimensions of Diplomacy" cover wider spectrums of the author's worldview and critic of IR based on his academic work and experiences gained after personally presiding over debates in vital organs of the United Nations as the world was trying to adapt to the post-Cold War years. Overall, the book is an interesting window on what the writer calls "the disconnect between the tremendous transformation in science and technology but the continuing reliance on outdated thinking and behaviour on politics and governance". Thus, he justifies his call for "transformative thinking and practice of IR consistent with the dynamics of time and technology."

This book is a compilation of articles, research papers, and papers presented by the author in seminars in and out of Nepal on a variety of topics at different times. Such a collection makes the book somewhat repetitive. However, the author's power of new ideas is reflected in the relevance of his thoughts even in today's highly altered setting.

International politics is in such a state of flux that today's analysis can turn out to be irrelevant tomorrow. But the scribe's prognosis and predictions as far back as the early 1990s when the world was celebrating the end of the Cold War, his warning on the risk of the Cold War returning in a new and more serious form give powerful credence to his call for transformative thinking and actions in IR.

For Nepal, for instance, in page 324, the scribe characterizes a small nation between two big powers as the revenge of geography, the term itself credited to Robert D Kaplan's book "The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate," published in 2013. Turning the idea around Simkhada argues, dynamics of time and understanding of space can help transform revenge into Reward of Geography. But to be able to do so, he stresses, Nepal needs political leadership and diplomatic skill to manage relations with the emerging and current superpowers cooperating and competing at the same time. Internal division over the US-funded Millennium Challenge Compact project entangled with FP, bringing the US and China face to face over Nepal's handling of the mega project is a clear commentary on Nepal's internal political role affecting its diplomacy, about which the author had cautioned in his articles long back.

On Nepal-India Relations, the author claims that the problem has arisen due to the over politicization of relations on one side over bureaucratization on the other. His idea of the paradox of proximity, the closer the two countries, the more vital but also complex and sensitive the relationship gives a good cue for both sides in restoring the historically important relations (p. 231). On China's rise, the book fails to explore how China has embraced its responsibilities in international politics. The author's view that while China has made miraculous economic development, it may have a long way to go politically (p.293) is however noteworthy.

One issue, his writings on IR in general and relations with India and China and between them give the impression of the author's dilemma between intellectual idealism (what should be) but also the realism of having been involved in diplomacy and personally seen what is possible and happen. Post-Doklam Reflections, for instance, shows the author's wish for closer India China ties as good for Nepal and IR, overestimating its effects either on relations with Nepal or in shaping the new world order.

As he often said before his lectures "The professor doesn't need to think as hard as a diplomat when expressing opinions." While writing his book also, I assume the professor "took off the diplomat's coat". As a student of IR and now a journalist writing on international and regional affairs, one of the best parts of the book I enjoy the most is the fusion of Oriental wisdom with Western methodological rigor, intellectual audacity with diplomatic skill in the collective search for knowledge to correctly understand and explain current IR and provide the intellectual direction for practitioners to follow to avoid in the future the tragedies of history.

*Publication: Sanrab Publication, Kathmandu*

*Page: 360.00*

*Price: NRs. 999.00*