REGIME CAPABILITY AND RELATIONAL STAKES IN THE EMERGING WORLD ORDER

Lessons for Nepal

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Abstract

Against the background of an emerging new world order in the 21st century, this paper offers a conceptual frame on the critical role that regime capability can play in modulating the relational stakes of a country. The text in that context offers the case of Nepal as also a few other countries to assess and explain the role and impact of political stability in enhancing relational dividend as well as the pace of democratisation and development. A three-fold typology of governance regimes-survival, subsistential and self-sustaining-is also presented to validate the arguments. The methodology used here is broadly comparative and empirical using ideas conceptualised to facilitate comparison, explanation and elaboration of the arguments forwarded in the course of discussion.

Keywords: *Regime Capability, Relational Deficit, Self-sustaining Regime, Subsistential Regime, Survival Regime, Public Diplomacy*

Setting the Context

After ten cycles of political movements, twenty-four decades of dynastic rule and fifty-seven years of seemingly endless waiting, Nepal has now joined the global comity of the federal order, and the seventh constitution in the country's seven decades of transition has unfolded a new vista of political opportunities. Opportunities, however, hardly arrive alone. In their wake, they bring challenges. Every opportunity also brings its own kind of challenge, often with a complexity that demands an open mind and a fresh approach to burrow deeper to unravel the potentials hidden below.

The maddening melee of conflicts, crises and a possible catastrophe that now invades the Nepali mindset about the impending future render unfolding the potentials of the Nepali polity far more complex, making it the challenge of challenges. Lost in the multitude of crises, fearful of the conflicts threatening

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the new-born republic, confused by the streams of the global process of democratisation and overwhelmed by the pressures of developmental forces, the conventional analyst stands befuddled, for which there are ample reasons.

Right since the day when the Rana fratriarchy ended in Nepal, in 1950, governing regimes in Nepal have come and gone, risen and fallen like the tides of the sea, most of them without leaving a trace of what they did, how and why. In all likelihood, this happened because they could do little worth remembering. But failure often teaches more than success does. And a whole treasure of lessons may have been lost by consigning them into the oblivion of history. There is certainly no dearth of historical accounts about who came and went, when and with what sequence. But a logical explanation of the causes and consequences of their arrival and departure from the scene is missing. There is no comparative, critical study on this theme. This is surprising, particularly considering the fact that governing regimes remain the hub of all political activities; the way they play their role leaves an impact internally as well as externally with implications of crucial significance often destined to influence the destiny of the whole populace.

There is another surprise which is no less consequential. It is the huge deficit in the affairs of the national government left by failures that are both policy-based and strategic. The relational dividend that Nepal could garner with the help of a robust foreign policy remains an ideal left unpursued and abandoned. The achievements in the span of the seven decades of post-Rana governance era appear like the tip of an iceberg-almost *terra incognita*-and there is reason to ask why it has been so.

This paper seeks to fill these two gaps by offering a framework for analysing and appraising the roles of the various governing regimes in a comparative way. Divided into nine sections altogether, it has five objectives in mind. The first of them is to examine their achievements in a historic framework. The second one is to assess their role in establishing relationships near and abroad in terms of the skills essential for setting up networks in the new century. The paper argues that the core capabilities of a governing regime are intrinsically related to its relational capacity. Without the core capabilities a regime can scarcely function, and in the absence of a robust relational capacity, a regime is bound to fail. The third objective is to identify the risks inherent in the outdated mode of clandestine covenants in order to uncover the need to shift from the conventional professional club mode of diplomacy towards public diplomacy. The fourth objective tries to draw lessons for Nepal from its past and the turbulent history of three other countries-Afghanistan, Bhutan and Indonesia. The last objective is to suggest measures that improve the state's

regime capability and consolidate its relational skills to enhance the political stability of governing regimes.

Given the chronic propensity of the ruling regimes of Nepal towards acute dependence on external assistance and their decadence, most of them tend merely to survive. Such an existential risk raises the question on their very *raison d'etre*, also because the relational deficit is piling up. What could explain such a state of affairs? Is this so because the governing regimes have muted into party-regimes? This exercise cannot pretend to answer all the curiosities it raises. But it does attempt to respond to some of them.

One obvious root of the confusion and chaos afflicting Nepal's political order is the political instability of the governance regimes, which is both chronic and acute. Chronic because political instability has now become an enduring feature of virtually every regime installed after 1950 and acute because that malady has seeped down vertically and laterally into every part of the body politique-legislature, executive and judiciary. The most telling indicator of political instability afflicting Nepal's governing regimes is what almost everyone knows today-not a single elected government since 1960 has so far been able to complete its tenure. Another evidence comes from Saptari, a district in the plains of the south, at the local level, which has a history of such a high turnover of its CDOs (Chief District Officers) that in four decades it witnessed no less than two scores of them. How can a government's policy be implemented in such a situation and what kind of strategy would work? Obviously, such internal instability impacts not only on the internal security of the land but also renders vulnerable the external relations.

The two key posers that are closely related to political instability are:

- How do the post-movement regimes here differ from the preceding ones in initiatives on system change, capacity for mass mobilisation and financial upliftment?
- How do the performances of the political parties and governments set up after the elections differ from their predecessors in party practice, leadership behaviour and pledge-performance gap?

Against such a background, this paper attempts to offer a conceptual frame on the role a regime can play in restructuring relations with the institutions at home and abroad and tries to test its utility in the perspective of the rise of a new world order. In that context, the paper also proposes a three-fold typology of governance regime-survival, subsistential and self-sustaining-explaining their role in reinforcing the political stability of the governing regimes and in consolidating policy continuity as also in upholding the rule of law and

rule implementation. The Webster's unabridged Dictionary (2001) defines a 'regime' as a mode or rule of government. A governing regime, however, used in this paper, is regarded as one that has been institutionalised over time in terms of certain norms, values and principles of governance and is different from political regimes that could be classified under different categories of political ideology-authoritarian, democratic, socialist, communist or republican. The theme chosen here bears relevance not just for the democratic evolution of Nepal's developing polity but also in terms of the relational dividend that a robust regime capability can open up to enhance a state's global, regional as well as internal relations by honing up its foreign policy skills.

The conceptual frame presented in this study offers an inventory of ideas to elaborate on one central feature of the governing regimes of Nepal-their chronic instability-which has a direct bearing not just upon their relation-building capability vis-a-vis other states but also upon the twin process of this country's democratisation and development.

Relational Dividend vs Relational Deficit

Statism and *Realpolitik* that followed Westphalia, two world wars and one Cold War cry today for a new paradigm of state-to-state relations. The new paradigm is now essential to address the problems of relational asymmetry whose leftovers are the Sphere of Influence approach, the nightmare of coalitions bred by the Balance of Power mechanism, *Matchpolitik*, growth fetish, bilateralism, hegemonic nationalism, terrorism, groupthink and the propensity towards contest and war for dominance between an established power and a rising one (the Thucydides Trap). State and economy combined in the old order of world relations to produce what Habermas characterises as the *statisation* of the economy and the *refeudalisation* of the state. Party joined as the third element in that nexus, and the remaining gap was filled by the military. Politics then turned to become the only game in town of these four elements producing what could be regarded as an Iron Quadrangle of sorts. The militaristic view of Von Moltke and his exclusive focus on battle in the latter half of the 19th century laid bare the blind spot in his model of civil-military relationship that failed to realise that the civil sector and the military needed to be in constant dialogue. The disconnect such a nexus brought between the military and civil strategy was not only misleading but also fatally dangerous that dominated decades of conflict and war, bringing confrontation, crisis and chaos of catastrophic proportions to states and nations for centuries.

Although the Nepali state is chronologically one of the 22 oldest on the world map, with its age superseding all regional means except the European one, it shows all the symptoms of a captive state syndrome. With chronic governmental instability, its centralised nature and virtual democracy (power to command

and coerce with little softpower to convince, bargain and exchange) combined with the proneness to conflict, crises and violence, weak rule implementation, poor leadership, low level of political capital and a fragile civic culture have rendered the state vulnerable and the nation fragile (Aditya, 2011).

The need for restructuring relations thus emerges essentially from the deficit in relations between states. The tension such a state breeds brings crises as well as catastrophes. One clear example of how relational deficit damages the agenda came recently in the failure of the political decision-makers in Nepal in the course of the second convening of the Constituent Assembly (CA)-their inability, or rather the unwillingness of the ruling regime-to comprehend the crucial significance of inter-constituency relations, and relate to the internal and external domains, the public at large and the trans-border interests. After seven years of exercise, the CA could neither generate a broad consensus on the fundamentals nor could induce mass debate in any form to educate the people on the legitimacy and broad ownership of the law of the land. Still another blunder lay in ruffling neighbourhood relations. This not only brought a months-long blockade in the south, but also polarised hill-plain relations.

Relationship, in fact, is like a chain, which is as strong as its weakest link, and there is more than one weak link in the chain of Nepal-India-China triad. The larger problem is we recognise only a small part of the intricate relations that bind the fate of these three neighbours and the destiny of almost three billion plus human mass. The relational stakes that the triad embodies remain unexplored, bogged down in the quagmire of political mythopoeia, wrong habits of hearts and minds and behavioural inertia, defined or determined by our mutual fixations and phobias that condition, contain and constrain the way we manage our neighbourhood relations. Our relational attitudes, behaviour, interactions, dialogues, discourses and decisions ignore the vast endowment of resources that the three neighbours hold together at their disposal-natural, physical and human capital-neglecting the scope for broadening that relationship and capitalising on it.

The paradigm shift from the conventional exclusionary mode of states' realpolitik-based relations, politics and diplomacy towards a more public-based one would not only make it more representative, responsible and responsive. It would immensely amplify the capacity of the country's political constituencies by transforming the traditional delegatory mode of functioning, borrowed blindly from abroad, into a more effective, efficient and distributive one, through the release of the synergy possible from the interactive plays of actors in the field.

Relational deficit can transform a brimming dispute into a crisis and can be used to manufacture history as it did in Tibet's case in and after October 1962.

Was it a clash of civilisations, as Huntington would like to claim, or a mere skirmish of two ruling regimes?

The breach that the collision brought in the millennia-long communion of two great civilisations was a clear case of communication gap, the then ruling regimes' incapability as well as relational deficit, hinted by Nehru's letter to Myanmar's independence leader U Nu, and confirmed by the notes Wang Hongwei, a recognised author on the issue, has left. Nehru admitted in parliament in 1959 he saw no point in making the border issue public and saw considerable advantage in publicly denying that there was a dispute with China. The cost that such a denial brought was heavy. The change that China's image suffered among Indian students as a consequence of the conflict in 1959 was a drastic one-from a nation regarded till erstwhile as friendly, progressive, honest, nationalistic, brave, cultured and active (before February 1959) to one aggressive, cruel and war-lusting (December 1959).

Differing perceptions of reality can spawn conflict, damaging relations between states to generate crises and wars. This is what social psychology tells us. Allen S. Whiting, in his seminal volume *China Crosses the Yalu,* concludes that the Korean War resulted from the breakdown of communications, as a function of differing perceptions of reality (Kim, 1979).

A closer look at the problematique of what went wrong in the past and what is still going wrong, in short, a post-gnostic as well as a diagnostic probe, thus becomes essential to arrive at a genuine prognosis of the things to come, particularly when the relations between the four major states of the 21st century are going to decide not just the general course of global, regional and internal events but also the pattern of their relationships with countries such as Nepal. In that sense, the quadrangular relationship of these state actors, not just the bilateral relationship between US and China, regarded by Markus B. Liegal as the most important factor of the 21st century, emerges as a critical driver of states' relations in the decades ahead (Liegal, 2017).

The relational agenda is also related to the complex, delicate nature of the Belt and the Road (BR) agenda. The Belt and Road's ultimate justification rests on the policy benefits that could accrue from a comprehensive exercise on the theme of transition of state and parastate actors now underway, their changing relationships and the new values and goals emerging for the regimes in India and China in the context of a redefined mode of India-China relationship, and the ongoing Universal Transition of Paradigms (UToP).

Reframing the role of the quadrangle (China-India-Russia-USA) emerging vis-à-vis Nepal and resetting the terms of that relationship, thus, acquire a prominence that is hard to exaggerate. Unless one uses a framework based on relational restructuring and the capabilities of regimes to mend and mould the

multifold relationships in the light of the issues arising and the challenges rising from the perspective of the four states' advent in the 21st century, two major dimensions would be lost and problems may multiply, in comprehending and correlating the impacts and implications of the Belt and Road. The plethora of historical and empirical evidence available have yet to be matched by an adequate examination in the light of the opportunity-capability nexus between China, India and Nepal as well as the outside world.

National Interest and National Security

National interest can be broadly defined at three separate levels-internal, regional and global-although it is not always easy to distinguish where one begins and the other ends. Despite such constraint, it is now clear that globalisation, liberalisation, privatisation and the forces of marketisation are making states more and more interdependent upon each other, and with advances in IT and Cyberpower, borders are falling, and distance has lost much of its earlier meaning. Environmental pollution is becoming an issue of existential crisis and a global security liability. Democratisation and development are also becoming interconnected, and in many ways the parameters and perimeters that earlier kept national interests bounded and divided are now changing fast. Waves of global migration are breaching former walls between states. In such a context, the capability of modern regimes will lie in setting up as many regional and global networks as possible as also in maintaining and consolidating them.

As far as national security is concerned, defining and operationalising it in the right way can make the difference between success and failure. The outdated mode of defining it in personal, clan and family terms led to multiple failures in foreign policy because the ruling regimes of the old days clung to what could be termed 'Hegemonic Nationalism' (Limbu-Angbuang, 2011). They still do. But in the changing scenario of the new century, the vision, objectives and strategy need a fresh reformulation (see the Table on UTOP for elaboration on how the values and concepts are changing) and a novel approach to operationalising them if Nepal is to ably face the challenges of democratisation and development and successfully navigate its course in the days ahead. This, however, demands bracing up for replenishing its regime capability and refurbishing its outdated relational skills to open up the opportunities that lie ahead.

Apart from the issue of reformulating national interest and national security, the state of Nepal also wrestles with claustrophobia in addition to two other maladies-Historic Amnesia and Defense Nihilism.

If a powerful antidote to the constraint of its landlockedness is the unique strategic position of the country, symmetrically located at the centre of two great civilisations and world markets at its door, historic amnesia-the propensity of forgetting this nation's cultural and historic heritage-could be remedied by reviving and replenishing the ancient roots of two great faith-systems and civilisations that could start a flow of visitors on a stupendous scale here. Calls are often also made to diminish or devaluate its martial tradition, citing the case of Costa Rica's abolition of its army. A more ridiculous analogy could scarcely be forwarded. It is like chasing a goose that does not exist. Israel and Switzerland offer far better models to follow. Can one forget the sagas of valour the heroes of Nepal's army have left on the sands of history? What has been done to capitalise on these icons and to enhance Nepal's platform at home and abroad?

Regime Capability

The term Regime Capability has been introduced in this study to explain the faculty of governing bodies in power to perform certain specific political functions. The analysis of regime capability here differs from the five capabilities of political systems set forth by Almond and Powell in that it is more structured, to make the roles of regime more specific (Almond & Powell, 1996). Capability analysis can improve our capacity to comprehend the ability of a regime to address a challenge and opportunity vis-à-vis other regimes.

What constitutes regime capability?

1. Visioning: Political insight; goal setting and planning; policymaking; building strategy to embody the political ethics, values, principles and rules of a political order at issue; innovation (R&D)
2. Stakebuilding : Formation, cultivation and consolidation of political stakes of various kinds (with integrity, transparency, accountability) at different levels (survival as existential stake: management and promotion of security, power, democracy and development)
3. Governance : Authority and legitimacy in rule setting, implementation and adjudication; ability to command, control and enforce collaboration among the mass public at home
4. Securitising : Ensuring peace, stability and order as well as the rule of law and maintenance of the prevailing political regime
5. Mediation : Managing conflict, crises and political turmoils through negotiation, adjudication and reconciliation
6. Resource use : Ability to utilise physical, natural, cultural, social, financial and human capital in a judicious way
7. Mobilisation : Ability to activate, distribute and deploy as well as use or engage human and other resources during normal times and crisis

situations to achieve or counter specific political objectives as also to shape up issues and frame up and develop agendas

8. Relational : The faculty to cultivate and establish linkages with actors or agencies at home and abroad, using hard or soft diplomacy at different levels through communication, alliances, organisational networks, publication and otherwise
9. Power projection and enhancement : Cultivation, consolidation and use of political power-hard and soft-to sustain and enhance credibility and acceptability of the regime in the pursuit of the goals set
10. Integration : Identity, inclusion, ownership.

Capability Index

If we agree on this list of regime capabilities a sovereign state is expected to hold, a tentative framework to measure the capability gap could be formulated, and a capability dividend could be used. A capability index would then indicate a state's ability to manage issues at stake, set up an agenda, like the Belt and Road, and evaluate the progress made over time and also compare the performance with other state and non-state actors and agencies. Each of these capabilities depends on and influences other capabilities. For instance, the visioning role is a generic capability that influences other capabilities. The ability to manage conflict presupposes a certain base of power; integration implies the ability to mobilise; development capability incorporates a number of other capabilities in the absence of which it would not function adequately; and so on. States in a developed phase execute these roles in an integrated manner, producing a synergic effect. This they do in implementing the rules properly, playing their roles and making other actors involved in the game play their roles effectively, using the resources in an efficient way, exercising the rights properly in a responsible manner, responding more or less adequately to the constituents whose agendas are at stake as well as considering the risks the agenda may bring. A mega infrastructure and connectivity project like the Belt and Road in such a context demands far more improvisation and experiment than a mid-level undertaking. But if the BRI is to be handled maturely, three more elements need to be kept in mind.

First is the process of *Stakebuilding.* Any ambitious agenda like the BRI necessarily calls for strategies to manage new stakes, which will have to be created and shaped up, many of which may not be yet clear, but appear on the scene as the agenda progresses. Building stakes, defining them, shaping them up and modifying imply a certain dynamism in the role of the key players in the game. Resilience and vigilance will then be at a premium.

Second is the role allowed to the principle of *Subsidiarism*: Are the players handling the roles efficiently and adequately proportionate to their capacity?

Obviously, the Belt and Road will bring together actors, investors and stakeholders in a multi-level exercise of projects ranging from infrastructure to interaction on multiple forms of investment where mere stakeholding will not do.

Third is the element of *Efficacy*. How adequately this variable is factored into BRI is likely to decide whether the agenda succeeds or fails.

Before proceeding further, Table 1 presents three types of governance regimes-survival, subsistential and self-sustaining-in terms of the ten forms of a regime's core capabilities and tries to explain how they differ. In most of these variables, the ruling regimes of Nepal fall in the first category, confronting the crises of governance on multiple fronts (of confidence, of trust, of competence, of cooperation and many others) and facing pressures of various kinds at the same time-pressure of globalisation, of democratisation, of human rights, of environmental challenge and of ethnic demands (Aditya, 1996).

Table 1 Types of Governance Regime and Their Core Capabilities

CORE DIMENSION	SURVIVAL REGIME	SUBSISTENTIAL REGIME	SELF-SUSTAINING REGIME
1. Visioning	Based on rulers	Limited to rulers and elite	Citizen-wide
2. Stakebuilding	Primitive	Begins to reach professionals	Mass-based
3. Governance	Autocracy	Oligarchy	Democracy
4. Securitising	Ruler-centric	Middle class	Public
5. Mediation	Primitive	Middle-level	Advanced
6. Resource use	Extractive	Starts to distribute	Efficient/Efficacious
7. Mobilisation	Physical/ Natural capital	human capital-elementary stage	Optimal use of 3 kinds of capital
8. Relational	Realpolitik mode	Club diplomacy	Hard & soft diplomacy, public diplomacy
9. Power	Army-based	Hard power alliances	Soft power plus Three-Track linkages
10. Integration	Physical (Military)	Rulers & elite	Promotion of identity, inclusion and ownership

Source: Author.

Universal Transition of Paradigms (UTOP)

At a time when even the world's food habits are under intense pressure for change (from carbon-intensive meat protein base towards a base with lower carbon footprints), thanks to the enormous impact of dietary choices pushing the Earth's thermometer deep into the red zone, as a UN report

released recently by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) announces, little wonder that a critical shift is underway in a number of areas. In virtually every crucial socio-political sector, be it security, human rights, power or state function, one can notice a fundamental change in the attitudes, outlook and approaches taken in defining and operationalising the issues and agendas. This is affecting deeply and broadly not just the mode of perception but also the definition and interpretation of a whole array of global processes-democratisation, liberalisation, migration, privatisation, marketisation and other forces-which look irreversible. Table 2 presents, in a suggestive vein, only some of these changes underway.

Table 2 Universal Transition of Paradigms[1]

From	Towards
State as a source of sovereignty	People
Nation-State	State-Nation
Nationalism	Humanism
Balance of Power	Balance of Interests
Hard Power	Smart Power (Hard + Soft Power)
Gravitation of Power	Diffusion
Clandestine Agreements	Transparency
Military Security	Human Security
Majoritarianism	Consociationalism, PR
Unitarianism	Pluralism
Elite Conventional Diplomacy	Public Diplomacy
Formal Representation	Substantive Representation
Upward Accountability	Downward Accountability
Stability in Governance	Public Welfare
Stakeholding	Stakebuilding
Economic Growth	Development
Ethnic (Exclusive) Identity	Multiple (Cosmopolitan) Identity
Hegemonic Nationalism	Civic Nationalism
Isolation	Connectivity
Extractive State	Distributive, Inclusive State
Violent Revolution	Civic Transformation
Command/Control mode of operation	Collaboration, Coordination
Centralisation of Power	Devolution of Power
Concentration of Role and Authority	Subsidiarism
Domination	Interdependence

Table: Author.

Relation Building

The crucial significance of the role of building genuine relationship between states is underscored by the fact that among the four criteria of legal statehood established by the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties

1 UTOP: For elaboration on the theme, see Hauchler Kennedy, World Order, pp. 28-36, particularly Table 2 (Structures and Processes in the World of States and the World of Societies). Also refer to Questioning Conventional Wisdom in UNRISD, Box 1.1.

of States was the capacity to enter into relations with other states (Article 1)(Archer et al., 2014). Closely related to the agenda of state-to-state relationship, however, is the agency-state, inter-agency and agency-citizen relationship, dimensions that demand deeper probe than given so far. Such a transformation has to be directed from the rigid mechanical mode of the existing official approach towards a more dynamic, resilient and humane one. Finally, the key to such a transformation of relationships is dialogue nurtured and sustained by the civil society over time in the public space through their interactions and decisions over choices available to achieve their goals. One creative way to restructure relations would then be to adopt a multi-track approach to governance and diplomacy based on three critical elements of the society-state, elite and people at large. Table 3 suggests how it can transform and enhance relationships.

Table 3 Multi-Track Approach to Relation Building

	Track 1 State-Based	Track 2 Elite-Based	Track 3 People-Based
Population Involved	Rulers	Elite	Masses
Strategy for Action	Command	Mobilisation	Participation
Nature of Mechanism	Authoritarian	Patronistic	Democratic
Level of Transparency	Closed	Partly Open	Transparent
Decision-Making	Centralised	Delegated	Decentralised
Nature of Regime	Hegemony	Oligarchy	Decentralised
Social Capital (Trust)	Very Low	Low	Medium to High

Table: Author.

The strategy of building and mending relations, in its essence, may be encapsulated in terms of 5 B's: Bridging (joining hands with a party with whom there is no relationship yet); Bonding (using a glue to link up); Binding (setting up relationship under certain principles); Bounding (fixing up the boundaries over what to do and what not to do); and Bending (conceding in a candid gesture). The last gesture is obviously the most difficult to apply, but not impossible. Chancellor Brandt's apology offered on the crime committed by the Nazis in the course of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was a historic gesture to bend and apologise. The four states in the emerging power quad

could mend and amend their relations at multiple levels if they heed the message Brandt gave.

One major factor in political instability in Nepal in particular, and the region as a whole in general, is the absence of the physical infrastructure so essential for economic growth, the lack of financial investment and an appropriate investment strategy to kick-start industrialisation and sustainable growth. Networking with the Belt and Road agenda and the MCC can bring in resources, technology and the mode of involvement needed by the country. But integrity as well as commitment in handling the resources-human, physical and technological-would be crucial to the success of both the BRI and MCC in view of the traditional inefficiency and corruption that prevail.[2]

In that context, utilising Track 1 diplomacy more skillfully to pull in the unrestricted flow of economic, political and developmental interaction between the diverse partners of the BRI, MCC and other projects at the mega-or macro-level becomes essential. But since states often confine their strategies to Track 1 (see Table 3 on Multi-Track Approach to Relation Building) on all the seven sectors concerned, activating Track 2 and Track 3 would optimise the benefits far more effectively and efficiently than just adopting a single-track approach.

Drawing the correct lessons from one's own or another country's past and present experience in relation-building may not always be easy, as John Spanier explains. A focus on the threat perceived from another country-calculated in terms of the number of troops in uniform, the arms available and overall military capability-*threat analysis* in short, may blind one to what he calls *vulnerability analysis* to bring success in achieving some objectives, but may fail to achieve others. It is an approach that prevents the decision-makers from drawing the correct lessons from such an experience. To illustrate his point, Spanier cites the case of the German General Staff's decision to go for a preventive war in 1914 against the rise of the Russian might, overlooking the latter's vulnerability (defeat in 1904-1905 by Japan, peasant unrest harbingering the revolution there and its economic weakness), as also the American failure to win the war in Vietnam. In this context, he also adds that a better explanation of why a state may achieve success in one situation and face failure in another would be that it may have the right kind of power for one but not the other, explicable in terms of three variables-the *kind* of power used, the *purposes* for which the power is used and the *situations* in which power is used, arguing that only an analysis of the *specific context* in which the r*elationship* (stress added) of the two countries concerned occurred can explain it better. This difference between power as

2 For elaboration on the issue, the reader is referred to this author's report on BRI, Regime Capabiltiy and Relational Deficit, and Resurgent Civilization States: Can Nepal Address China's Belt and Road Agenda? (due for Publication by the Centre for Social Inclusion and Federalization (CECIF), Kathmandu).

a *possession* (implying power as a noun, a quantitative measurement of the components of a nation's power) and power as a *relationship* James Rosenau explains as a process of interaction.

One episode from China's medieval history illustrates how a ruling regime's wrong policy can end up damaging relations, inviting disaster for the regime. Both science and sailing skidded to a stop in mid-15th century China when the bureaucrats banned shipbuilders from constructing seafaring vessels. Each edict, each ban, each embargo separated the government from the people, bringing the Great Wall higher and higher that ultimately eroded people's support for the emperors. The Ming dynasty entered a phase of two centuries of decay, and finding himself betrayed, the last Ming emperor in 1644 hanged himself from a tree as the Manchus forced their way through the Great Wall. The Ming bureaucrats had invited their own downfall by severing themselves from the people, claims Todd G. Buchholz (Buchholz, 2016).

Restructuring Relations

The traditional view of strategy building that dominated centuries of political theory, policy formulation, conflict narratives, state negotiations and diplomatic transactions was essentially rooted in a zero-sum mode of relationship. Transcending the barriers of that conventional paradigm may appear difficult but is not impossible. Here is a set of arguments and propositions that explain why.

One: The first of them bears upon human and national psychology. In the course of formulating their foreign policy, countries often start with excessive hopes and expectations from the premises and potentials of their relationships. Moderating their foreign policy objectives and strategies on the basis of ground reality instead of overextending them or trying to reach too far can prevent the many ups and downs characterising their mutual relations.

Two: The second aspect is hermeneutical-fungibility of Foreign Policy goals, objectives, interests and the interpretations made.

Three: The third one is procedural, related to the definition of competition. Competition in the conventional sense carries a certain negative tone of conflict that is hard to avoid. But this is an over-simplified outlook. Probing deeper, it turns out to be more complex and multi-dimensional; in other words, highly fungible. Depending upon the use one makes of it and the objective one chooses, it can take multiple forms. And, here lies the challenge for the political innovator. Competition can become complementary (reciprocal) when in a game of competition between two partners, say A and B, the two compete, but they also concede roles and benefits to each other under a certain agreement. Competition, moreover, may become collaborative if the two

partners by and large share the benefits and minimise the loss by, say, trading in an area A that fetches gains despite the minor losses accrued in another area B. Competition can also turn out to become a creative exercise if they explore their constituencies in the arena of values where they experiment, sharing the findings and lessons obtained. Finally, there is, of course, the confrontative mode of competition that has dominated the history of states' relations, thanks largely to the hegemonic role large powers usually play to grab resources and deny them to others. But in our cyber era when over-commodification is likely to recede, the hard mode of competition is like to undergo a sustained transformation in its intensity and magnitude in the unfolding mode of interaction between and among states.

Four: Relationship is obviously not something that can be commanded. At the most, it is subject to the mechanism of control. But the mechanism of control too is becoming quite fungible. With the pace of democratisation, the former unitary mode of control is now giving room for a more diversified form that implies separation of powers and roles as well as checks and balances. The increasing interdependence that is now replacing the dependence of states and influencing relationship is becoming far more diverse than it ever has been so far (Table 2).

Five: The next consideration is structural. Obstacles, for instance, to normalisation of relations are not fixed and permanent. They may change. For example: there was the Soviet invasion that hampered the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union, but once the Soviet troops were withdrawn, the relationship improved. Change in the stationing of troops along the Sino-Soviet border is another instance. The subtle, sudden shift that Sino-American relations underwent in the early seventies of the last century is another example.

Six: Threats perceived previously may diminish over a certain period as the Soviet threat perceived by China and the USA did.

Seven: As referred to earlier, a relationship at issue can undergo sustained change in the objectives, interests and intentions as well as the interpretation one lends to them as they become commonalised, convergent or even consensual. The one risk here is that if there is just one such bridge, its collapse, as Levine argues, can jeopardise the whole effort. Optimising and diversifying bonds can become a better safeguard for strong relationship by activating simultaneously or in sequence the five B's of relation-building, for instance.

Clandestine Covenants and Public Diplomacy

The traditional objectives of relation-building apart, treaties have often served at least one more function that tend to remain clandestine: recognition by a third power and thereby enhancement of the prerogatives of a strong state

over a weak one under the *Doctrine of Hegemonic Influence*. In more familiar usage, that doctrine dons the more respectable garb of *Sphere of Influence*. Under the Taft-Katsura Agreement in 1905, for instance, the US recognised Japan's prerogatives over Korea.

One typical example of clandestine covenants was the memorandum annexed to the Korea-Japan Agreement (1907), kept secret because it stipulated not only dissolution of the Korean military forces but also handing over of the Korean courts and police to Japanese management (Korean Overseas Information Service, 1990). Another was the secret protocol signed in the course of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact made in August 1939 between the Soviet Union and Germany. It stated that Finland belonged to the Soviet sphere of interest, allowing the Red Army to attack Finland three months later to unleash the Winter War that continued until March 1940, compelling the Finns to cede a large part of Karelia, a war that resumed itself till 1944, forcing the Finns to cede the Petesma as well as paying great war reparations (Hakli, 1988). The pact between India and Sri Lanka made in the mid-eighties was intended to serve more or less a similar purpose. The dangers of such deals for strategic political games are being slowly, if belatedly, realised today.

History bears witness that the aftermath of such coercive transactions is not without trouble and may prove a prelude to future violence. That the three well-known cases of political vendetta-of Stevens' assassination in San Francisco (1907), of Ito Hirabumi at Harbin (1909) and of Rajiv Gandhi at Sriperumbudur (1991)-were each related to treaty events eloquently affirms the point made.

The notorious nature of such secret deals stems not only from the fact that they are bilateral, rendering it convenient for the stronger state to press its points on the weaker partner, unequal in nature and exacted under duress to consolidate the interest of a regional hegemon, but also from the fact that pressures may be put in all possible forms to disallow registration with the United Nations and publication in full form.

In fact, force in one or another form-be it political power, military threat or economic pressure in the form of a sanction-almost always tended to temper interstate relations until World War I. International relations in those days were conducted between governments alone, largely on the basis of the power they epitomised. Even after 1874 and onward, the year that is said to have heralded the end of *laissez-faire liberalism*, government remained the single central player in the arena of domestic and international politics, and force remained the paramount element-as often the end and quite frequently the means-in most of the state's transactions and their relations inside and outside. It was the nub of the whole problematique of relation-building.

This role of force, however, is now facing challenge as it has never done before; and that on more than one front. If the Bricker Amendment symbolises one form of growing resistance to the traditional domination of the executive in treaty-making, institutionalisation of the ratification principle at a global level poses another. The controversy dogging the series of agreements on energy and other resources initialed by the Nepali government with India after 1989 suggests that even in the developing nations the principle of public mandate for treaty legitimacy is going to become a decisive factor in the implementation of treaties in the future than the sheer power of states or the initiative of governments. It is a mandate rooted implicitly in the people's inalienable right to know about arrangements stipulated by state executives that invariably concern their life and destiny of the nation.

Why public diplomacy?

Public diplomacy is about informing, educating and enabling citizens on the key public issues and agendas of the day, domestic as well as foreign, so that they can comprehend the issue at stake to take rational decisions affecting them in the short and the long term.

Public diplomacy, however, demands a nuanced conversation in the civil space about the fast changing values of foreign and domestic policies in the light of the ongoing Universal Transition of the Paradigms of rights and responsibilities, rules and roles, security and defense, growth and development, hard and soft power as well as the purpose, policy and personnel involved in the process called diplomacy, which is concerned with the destiny of both the public at large at home and in the neighbourhood across the border. The failings of traditional diplomacy in this regard are becoming counterproductive, bringing negative externalities in unanticipated ways, engendering risks of unacceptable proportions that could be avoided and managed if a mechanism for proactive vigilance, monitoring and feedback is put in place in time.

The failure of public diplomacy can bring consequences that remain invisible before but can become devastating later. The Tarai-Madhes movement in the south of Nepal is one telling example in this regard. It can entrench nationalisation of apathy and indifference in the public mind, even habitual inertia as it has done in Nepal, among the media and civil society, neutralising possible positive remedies and rendering the mass partisan and deeply divided. The deep, broad and generational polarisation of the Tarai-Madhes Movement underway poses unprecedented risks for this nation's solidarity and is threatening to rive apart even the close neighbourhood relations between Nepal and India. The second order effects of policies, implemented in a traditional zero-sum way, can, moreover, bring impacts and implications of unimaginable proportions. Nothing better than Nigeria's federalisation proves

what happens when a noble principle and idea is wrongly implemented. Neither foreign policy nor neighbourhood relationship is an exception to this rule: sans capacity building, it becomes a gabardine suit on a beggar's body; in less than a few months the gift turns into the beggar's rags.

For far too long, public diplomacy has been left ignored, or abandoned in sheer neglect, in the annals of the neighbourhood relations of South Asia, particularly India and Nepal. If one familiar consequence is the havoc brought every year by the dams on one side and floods on another, no less familiar is the array of cross-border conflicts plaguing the relations of these two neighbors. The third one is the regional fault line of tectonic proportions threatening to damage their reciprocal relations like never before. The inability of the ruling regime in Nepal to adequately inform the constituencies on both sides of the border brought a constitution which was a damp squib facing amendment even before the ink was dry on the final draft.

Regime Capability and Relational Stakes

Table 3 attempts to present a comparative view of the regime capability of 24 countries, including Nepal. Whereas the figures in the cells on the left column are empirical data on proxy variables for the five components of capability, the entries at right in each column give the ranking orders. Except on the Military Environment Index, Bang per Dollar, and Tradition where Nepal supersedes almost all countries and on governance where it figures in the middle, its capability otherwise fares poorly, particularly in resource use where it is at the bottom.

Table 4 Regime Capability of 24 Countries

	1 Governance		2 Securitising				3 Resource use		4 Mobilisation			5 Relation	
			(a) Military Strength		(b)						Population		
			(000)		MEI	BPD	Tradition			HDI	mn		
1 Afghanistan	-		174	14	4 3	14	11	7 3	1,804	24	.408 20	35.50	16	4.63	21
2 Australia	24	2	58	20	4 3	5	17	7 3	44,649	6	.944 1	24.50	19	2.37	9
3 Bangladesh	11	13	157	15	7 6	48	6	4 6	3,524	22	.608 17	164.70	7	3.27	18
4 Brazil	16	9	334	8	3 2	13	12	3 7	14,103	16	.759 13	209.30	5	3.24	15
5 China	14	10	2,035	1	5 4	28	7	6 4	15,309	15	.752 14	1,409.50	1	2.57	11
6 Finland	25	1	-		4 3	16	9	9 1	40,586	7	.920 6	5.50	24	1.26	2
7 France	20	6	189	12	5 4	10	4	7 3	38,606	10	.901 8	65.00	14	1.00	1
8 Germany	22	4	106	18	6 5	15	10	9 1	45,229	5	.936 2	82.00	11	1.55	5
9 India	16	9	1,395	2	3 2	54	5	7 3	6,427	19	.640 16	1,339.20	2	2.97	12
10 Indonesia	11	13	667	5	4 3	10	14	5 5	11,189	18	.694 15	264.00	4	3.24	15
11 Iran	14	10	523	7	4 3	12	13	6 4	19,083	14	.798 11	81.20	12	4.62	22
12 Israel	19	7	177	13	9 7	36	7	8 2	33,102	12	.903 7	8.30	23	1.95	7
13 Japan	22	5	247	9	5 4	9	15	7 3	39,002	8	.909 6	127.50	9	2.76	13
14 Korea Rep.	18	8	-		3 2	26	8	5 5	35,938	11	.903 7	51.00	15	3.05	14

15	Nepal	13	11	97	19	2	1	112	1	9	1	2,443	23	.574	18	29.30	18	3.91	20
16	Pakistan	12	12	654	6	5	4	42	6	7	3	5,035	21	.562	19	197.00	6	4.63	21
17	Russian Fed.	12	12	900	4	4	3	5	17	7	3	24,766	13	.816	10	144.00	8	3.75	19
18	Saudi Arabia	16	9	227	11	5	4	1	19	5	5	49,045	3	.853	9	32.90	17	2.38	10
19	Sri Lanka	13	11	243	10	4	3	12	13	0	8	11,669	17	.770	12	20.90	20	3.21	17
20	Sweden	24	2	12	21	5	4	70	4	5	5	46,948	4	.933	3	9.90	21	1.41	3
21	Switzerland	23	3	116	17	4	3	75	3	6	4	57,410	1	.944	1	8.50	22	1.60	6
22	UK	23	3	150	16	6	5	6	16	8	2	39,753	9	.922	5	66.20	13	1.47	4
23	USA	23	3	1,348	3	3	2	3	18	6	4	54,225	2	.924	4	324.50	3	2.05	8
24	Vietnam	12	12	-	-	4	3	84	2	6	4	6,172	20	.694	15	95.50	10	3.20	16

Table: Author. Source Notes: Col. 1. Table A 1.1 HDR 2002 (composite of 5 subjective scores of Governance-Voice & Accountability, Political Stability, Rule of Law, Government Effectiveness, Graft); Col. 2a. IISS 2018 and Federation of American Scientists 2019; 2b. MEI (Military Environment Index), BPD (Bang per Dollar), and Tradition: Dunningan & Bay, Chapter 7; Col. 3. GDP per capita (PPP)-HDII 2018; Col. 4. HDI-HDII 2018, T2, Population 2017-HDII 2017, T7: Col. 5. IEP, TC. GDI=Human Development Index; mn=Million; T=Table. Figures at the right side of each column are rankings.

The curiosity that the exercise prompts here is: How did countries like Afghanistan, Bhutan and Indonesia use their regime capability (RC) to handle the various issues that arose in their transition from their more or less authoritarian past toward democratisation and development and with what consequences?

A cursory look at Table 4 enables us to compare the governance, securitising, resource use, mobilisation and relational capabilities of these three countries and shows none of them holds a high position in ranking compared to many others listed. Afghanistan ranks 14th in military strength and 11th in bang per dollar, although it does better in military environment and tradition, is 24th in resource use, 20th in HDI (as a proxy for mobilisation) and 21st in relational capability. Except in the military sector, Indonesia, too, figures poorly in most of the capability domains, compared to the country cases of Europe, Australia and USA where the regimes hold substantially superior positions in stark contrast. In one way or other, each of these regimes (including Nepal's) could be regarded as *authoritarian* regimes when they started their transition. This may go a long way to explain their failures and partial success in the projects of modernisation and democratisation that they later took up.

Table 5 offers a cursory view of the nature and level of interests as also an overview of the kinds of relational stakes of certain countries in Nepal. For obvious reasons, political, historic, economic, ecological, educational and demographic stakes dominate these relations, among which, those of China, India and the United State figure as crucially important. It is equally obvious that partnership in the Belt and Road agenda is likely to modulate the countries' relations at both the mutual and multilateral levels. This, in turn, suggests a restructuring of the prevailing mode of relations in two new ways vis-à-vis the traditional realist school of foreign policy formulation that Nepal must now resort to if it is to turn a new leaf. This it can do by redirecting the conventional structuralist (statist) approach through a focus first on a change in its domestic base of foreign policy and second by starting to concentrate on a change in its foreign policy norms and identity-building (the social constructivist approach to foreign policy-making). In adopting the first approach, domestic institutions become its key strategic resources to formulate the new order of foreign policy, which engages domestic actors (political parties, ethnic and interest groups, formal institutions such as courts and parliaments, politicians, businesses and corporations), in deciding and shaping out the nation's foreign policy. In that context, it would be difficult to overemphasise the role of focussing on identity, interests and shared ideas and values in place of the traditional factors adhered to by the realist school of foreign policy. This would raise new norms of behaviour and culture in Nepal's foreign policy.

Table 5 Patterns of Countries' Relational Stakes and Interests in Nepal

	Country	Political	Historic	Economic	Religious	Social	Ecological	Educational	Demographic	Interest Levels	Threat Seen
1.	Afghanistan	5	+					2			
2.	Australia	3		3,4			(+)		1,2,3		
3.	Bangladesh	2		1,2,5				1	3		
4.	Bhutan		+		+	+		2			
5.	Brazil			2			+				
6.	Canada						(+)	1	1,3		
7.	China	2,4	+	1,2,3,4,5	+	+	+	1,2	1,3	V. High strategic	Encirclement by USA
8.	Finland										
9.	France						+				
10.	Germany										
11.	India	2,3,4	+	1,2,3,4,5	+	+	+	1,2	1,2,3	V. High strategic	Encroachment
12.	Indonesia			2			+		3		
13.	Iran			+							
14.	Israel							1,2			
15.	Japan	3		2,4				1,2	3		

16. Korea Rep			2				2,3			
17. Pakistan			2, (5)			1	3	High strategic	Hegemony	
18. Russian Fed			2,4		+	1	3	High strategic	Superpower dominance	
19. Saudi Arabia			2				2,3			
20. Sweden	3,5		2			1,2	3			
21. Switzerland	3					2	3			
22. Turkey			(2)			2	3			
23. UK	3	+	2,4	(+)	+	1,2	1,2,3			
24. USA	2,3,4			(+)	+	1,2	1,2,3	V. High strategic	SLO Cinterdiction/ China	
25. Vietnam			2	(+)						

Table: Author.

1 Ideological	1Energy, Water	1 Education, R & D	1 Settlement
2 Strategic	2 Trade	2 Didactic (Growth)	2 Employment
3 Constitutional	3 Industry		3 Tourism Flow
4 Security	4 Aid		
5 Peace	5 Transit		

The queries that now come to mind are: How does Nepal's regime capability (RC) figure in handling its conflicts and crises; how successful has it been in shaping up its relational stakes (RS); and what is their scope in the future?

A quick look-back into the patterns of the states' relationship in South Asia suggests the following nine types (Table 6).

Table 6 Patterns of State Relationship in South Asia

Imperial	UK-India
Protectoral	India-Sikkim
Protegial	India-Bhutan
Special	India-Nepal
Equidistant	India-Nepal (1962-1989)
Cooperative	Nepal-Bangladesh
Comparative	India-China
Confrontationist	India-Pakistan
Hostile	India-Pakistan

Table : Author

The relational conflicts and crises that have dogged the history of bilateral relations between virtually each pair of states in the subcontinent suggest the old model of the realist school of relation-building does not work. The professional conventional club approach to foreign policy is an obvious failure not only because the slew of treaties and agreements based on the principle of hegemonic stability are generating not just occasional conflicts in the short-and mid-term, but also a whole set of crises, inviting sanctions and blockades that keep bedeviling the relations between most of the states in the subcontinent. Bilateralism is another factor that keeps the solution of problems at bay.

A look at the map inserted earlier shows how diverse and widely extant Nepal's relationship with the outside world is. But does its relational capability match the relational stakes and interests it has at its disposal? To answer this query, let us look again at Table 4.

In governance, Nepal occupies a middle position (11th in rank), and in relational capability and resource use, it is at the near bottom (20th and 23rd). Even in mobilisation, it fares only slightly better with its 18th position, but the picture changes dramatically when comparing its position on the Military Environment Index (MEI), as also other security subdomains. Here it tops the list in both bang per dollar and tradition. It will be relevant also to recollect here that in the 57 years between 1960 and 2017, Nepal's progress in the Human Development Index superseded the pace of each country in the South Asian

region except that of Afghanistan: a strong empirical evidence that Nepal is not really too far behind other countries in its developmental momentum. That offers hope.

Lessons Nepal can Learn

"A wise man learns from the mistakes of others", says a Russian maxim, but a fool does not even from his own. As far as learning from the past is concerned, there is certainly no dearth of country cases Nepal can learn from. For just a few instances, there is Switzerland's long story of democratisation, Finland's epic struggle for independence, Japan's modernisation, Israel's survival through two millennia and Singapore's swift evolution as an exemplar city-state.

What then can we learn from the Afghan imbroglio, Bhutan's bid for isolation, Indonesia's muddling modernisation and Nepal's erratic past of regime changes?

Taking Nepal's case first, it is important to note that regimes can change in three different ways. The first of them is the kind of transfer of power when a whole system of government alters its mode of operation for another kind of governance. This may be termed *System Change*. This happens in old political orders-such as monarchies, autocracies or dictatorships when lies in the hands of a few persons or agencies. The second form of change occurs in the shift between ideology-based regimes, occurring more frequently in the 20th century and later when most of the governing systems changed their hands between fascist, Nazi, communist and democratic orders. The third kind consists in the internal shifts of power from one set of ruling executives to another. Obviously, the higher the turnover of governance regimes, the larger the political instability and uncertainty that follow. Seen in such a context, the governance regimes in most of the cases that could be considered after the fall of the Rana rule in Nepal in 1950 featured a very high level of political instability, policy discontinuity, misrule and corruption. This certainly was not unique to Nepal but is applicable to most of the developing countries. The benefits-political, economic, social and relational-as a consequence, did not accrue as expected since the average length of tenure of each regime that followed was too short to implement the rules, apply policies and consolidate the regime. Even the will to achieve was missing, and the democratisation project became a fragile process. Too often, the mass public was found becoming nostalgic about the preceding government system that had fallen (Rana rule over democracy and Panchayat/Monarchy over federal governance). The governance deficit in turn explains the *Democracy Deficit* that followed when institutionalisation by and large remained ignored. This is not to say that democratic change in 1950, 1990 or even in 2008 was totally sterile. But the tangible benefits that the systemic shift brought to the average citizen was almost negligible compared to the

people's aspirations that each movement[3]had spiralled up. The confusion and crises that marked the mode of governance as a consequence left their impact also on the relations that Nepal was beginning to build after its century-long isolation from the world outside.

This also forms the base for striking out new roots in relation-building and for navigating Nepal's course in the world order of the 21st century.

As for Afghanistan's abrupt switch in the seventies toward its Soviet neighbour in the north and then West-ward swing in its foreign relations, that about-turn reflects not only its fragile relational capability (rank 21 among the 24 states under analysis) but also affirms that pendular shifts in relation-building can bring disaster. Afghanistan is a singular case in that regard.

If the Afghan experience of the past five decades teaches anything, it is that neither traditional authority nor an external force nor even a whole political party by itself is adequate for social transformation. Afghanistan tried all such measures, and each of them ended in failure. The Afghan case also exposes the fallacy of the theory of spontaneous integration of ethnic groups in traditional society. That process is far from simple or autogenous. Like the development of a nation, it demands intricate, delicate social engineering. The Soviet setback is thus a classic demonstration of not only *where not to intervene* but also a lesson on *how not to attempt change* in a traditional society.

No less important is another lesson that the intervention brought in its aftermath: the ***inertia of mass civil violence***-the difficulty of stopping civil violence once it is touched off. It was in such a mood of premonition that years ago, in the middle of the withdrawal debate, when the world's eyes were riveted on Kabul, a quick scenario analysis prompted this observer to envisage an ominous Thermidorean future following the Soviet withdrawal: "Afghanistan will enter yet another era of violent upheaval, prolonged instability, or civic turmoil". The prognosis he made in the late eighties of the last century for Afghanistan, unfortunately, has come to pass (Aditya and Dahal, 1986).

There is also much for anyone to learn about what happened in Bhutan in the past, what did not, how and why. The logic of isolation is often advanced and added to the tool of traditionalism to hone up its edge. But it is difficult to propose a more deadly potion for a nation's development. A nation cannot advance in isolation. It can only grow into a wasteland. If anti-modernism is the voice of the impotent, combining it with an isolationist policy can only bring prolonged stagnancy as it did not only for Japan and Nepal, but also for China. Centuries of isolation, persisting at a time when virtually the whole of the region was opening to the outside world, left Bhutan at the bottom in the region in most of the development parameters.

3 See Aditya. 2010, Chart 7 for a review of the political movements in Nepal.

The *Shangri-La* myth of Bhutan was rooted in its policy of two-fold isolation-internal and external-to which it clings to this day, with a passion that often verges on claustrophilia. The official reason given is familiar: preservation of its ancient tradition. But pursuing traditionalism for tradition's sake can prove a self-defeating game. Like the nail on the human finger, it protects, but if not shed now and then, becomes ugly, inconvenient to bear, a nuisance, and in time, a source of hurt and infection. Like the ancient Chinese girl's shoes or the Burmese belle's bamboo neck-frame, blind faith in tradition not only binds the human body, it can also fetter the human mind, blinding one to the social realities of the day. Societies can then long remain mired in the mud of stagnant traditions before they become aware of the costs of stagnancy. By the time they awaken, the damage will have been done. If tradition implies only the humility of bowed heads and the safety of silent tongues, such a tradition can, moreover, generate crippled, castrated communities in place of the proud robust nationhood that Bhutan expects to grow into. Tradition can turn even into a trap when the ruling elite starts to invent it into a myth. Political literature informs us that such mythopoesis becomes the order of the day, particularly when the regime is weak. The risk deepens further if somehow somewhere an external source for control becomes active behind the scene and an unholy understanding evolves between the vested interests at home and the power abroad, fuelling inter-ethnic misunderstanding-as happened between the Ngalong and the Lhotshampa in Bhutan.

As for Indonesia, when it emerged in the forties from decades of Dutch colonial rule, it was lacking in three forms of regime capabilities-governance (13th rank), resource use (18th rank) as well as in mobilisation (15th rank), and was hardly better in relation-building (15th rank). The last one particularly explains its pendular shifts in the policies and political strategies adopted by the ruling regime of the day. The policies and strategies adopted by Sukarno brought heavy costs not only for the ruling regime but also for the long-term destiny of Indonesia as a state, as a country and as a nation. Institutionalising peace called for radical changes in the conventional statist approach that refused to renounce *machtpolitik*. In the Indonesian context, most of the successors of Sukarno-Suharto, Wahid, even Megawati-somehow failed to realise that the military apparatus alone could not preserve stability of the Indonesian state (Green and Luchrmann, 2004). If the art of state-building is to become a key component of national power, the traditional military power associated with nation-states needed something else to meet that challenge (Fukuyama, 2004).

Another major problem of the post-colonial rule in Indonesia was that the modernisation that followed brought not just a sense of unification and nationalist feelings, it also sowed seeds of separation and autonomy. Nationalism, in fact, is a two-way process. If it infects the enlightened few

at the top, it also starts seeping downward to the people at the bottom, who sooner or later will demand their share of rights, rules, resources and rulership. That process may be slow, but once it starts, it will not stop.

One more problem with the statist approach in the 1950s among the just liberated countries was their hard power-based strategies. Then there were others, too. No plan of practical action followed the principles announced or pledges given. No details on development came after the declaration of independence. No ideas and feelings substantiated the shell; the contents were missing inside. Once the euphoria of independence had passed, what remained was division and distrust. The planning for a second transition through a radical restructuring of the state and society never appeared to make the state regime more inclusive and governance more legitimate.

Still another problem of the Cold War era in Indonesia was its growth fetish. The real issue at stake then was not mere multiplication of wealth or attainment by the state of roles, powers and resources, but their proper, equitous distribution (Hobsbawm, 1994). Local autonomy and the rise of provincial power, which has meant growth lifting all regions in Indonesia, not just the elite in the capital city at the centre of the archipelago, decline of crony capitalism, and opening of a whole new growth of urban nodes during the post-Suharto years confirm the point just made (Sharma, 2012). If that trend is allowed to continue, Indonesia can reasonably be expected to assert a larger role in the days to come than the one it has played so far in the region's world politics after its independence, as it did in the nineties and may graduate to a status proportionate to its true political potentials.

In Indonesia's context, the method of playing with issues and ideas, keeping then alive but never elaborating was in keeping with Sukarno's style. Imagining Indonesia may have been easy and founding it was possible after decades of struggle, but forging it into a solid nation-state was a long-drawn effort, as he must have found in the days following Bandung, particularly since the world's fourth most populous country had also the world's most fractured population. Even the unity imposed by the government in Indonesia on the four Islamic parties in 1973 is said to have transformed inter-party conflicts into intra-party controversies.

For Nepal, Indonesia thus offers quite a few cases for comparison and lesson. Despite the stark contrast in their size, population and GNIC, the two countries bear uncanny similarities-in political instability, succession of cabinet coalitions, abolition of the party system, centralised Unitarian rule of 30 years, functional organisations (Golkar vs class organisations), rulers' versions of democracy (Panchayat's Guided Democracy and Indonesia's New Order), the government's inability to impose unity as also the failure of the Constitution

Assembly. Particularly striking in this regard is the coincidence of more than one episode.

Diversity in both countries remained a major problem, not only breeding distrust, disunity and division, but also diverting the people from the two key agendas of the day-democracy and development-less because it was a problem *per se* and more because it was not handled astutely. The real problem was not diversity, but managing it.

From Bandung to Belgrade and beyond, narratives abound today in the stories of struggles for rights for self-determination of nations, nationalities and minorities, struggling against assimilation, cultural integration, transfer, expulsion, or in certain cases, even annihilation. In a world that has graduated from the era of the quill to that of computers, superseding the might of cannons, this march of the nations can hardly be curbed. In such a situation, would retrieving political leadership alone be enough, as Gopal Krishna Gandhi assures? (Gandhi, 2013)

If the fall of empires at the end of the First World War failed to expose the Salt Water fallacy (imperial conquest of rivers and mountains is less objectionable than conquest directed at control over the seas), the liquidation of colonies after the Second World War failed to expose the spuriousness of the ideas of both Territorial (State) Sovereignty and State-Nation Identity. The confusion over the use of the terms 'state', 'nation' and 'country' still lingers, a confusion that surfaces clearly in both the Cartagena (1945) and Durban (1998) documents, which use these terms interchangeably. In fact, what Hobsbawm regards as 'Consistently Constitutional States' are just nine in number (Hobsbawm, 1994), and since ethnic and states' territorial boundaries rarely coincide, and since besides ethnicity, other factors also can militate for secession of nations-erosion of political ownership (independence of the USA from Great Britain in 1776), and ideological division (Vietnam, Germany and Korea after World War II)-the premonitions of Eric Hobsbawm about the impending political instability of states in the Third Millennium do not look very implausible (Hobsbawm, 1994).

The problem is thus multifold. Whenever an institution, be it the state, or even nation-state, is allowed to exercise its powers unfettered and unaccountably, fascism does not remain far (Roy, 2010). If nationalism in its fundamentalist form bred most of the genocides of the 20th century, statism, another variant of fundamentalism, is shaping most of the civil conflicts of this century. But if the two somehow combine together, the consequences can be imagined. When the ex-colonial state mutates into a new avatar aligning itself with political parties for power to execute its fiat through government for good or bad, the outcome is *state terrorism*. And there is no terrorism like state terrorism (Roy,

2010). Every strategy for democracy and development can then be cleverly and consistently scuttled. What the states need now is, therefore, a new paradigm of politics, and that means political relations based on robust, sturdy regime capability. This paradigm is concerned with the way political ideas and approaches, experiences and experiments, and the substance and the spirit behind the shell of politics are now beginning to be understood and explained, redefined and redeveloped at various levels of public discourse and practice-local, state and global. This also implies a healthy, positive, creative interaction between both actors and actants incorporating the process of supervenience, the emergence of a set of properties over another. Among others, this approach focusses on a new set of power transition about the roles, rules, resources, relations, rights and responsibilities involved, away from the conventional state-to-state framework of interaction. The non-state, parastatal and trans-national actors and agencies are involved more actively and consciously in the new mode as subjects than as mere objects, clients or beneficiaries of the state.

If colonisation was a "search for gain", as Sukarno contended in 1926, or the *Lebensraum* Adolf Hitler so dangerously tried to pursue, the predominant obsession of the post-war states has been power though political parties, which pushes them toward a form of what Ryser regards as *State-Colonialism*. But in a world where there are as many as six thousand nations totalling a population of one billion and covering 80 per cent of the world's diversity, the power-hungry 200 or so states (among them, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Iraq and Yemen) will find it hard to manage the problem with the outdated real political strategy, let alone resolve it. It is worth remembering that among the 40 others which were in danger of failing, four were Bandung states-Egypt, Iran, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. And, as if that were not enough, 145 of the 250 wars between 1945 and 2010, that is 58 per cent, were 'Fourth World' wars, which, Ryser says, took place between nations and between states and nations (Ryser, 2012) over self-determination, territorial control or use of natural resources. The Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung declared its full support to the Principle of Self-Determination of Peoples and Nations as set forth in the UN Charter, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (2007) was not behind, nor was the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations (1994). Behind was the states' resolve to materialise the pledge they gave a long way back to their people, as Indonesia did, in its motto *Bhinekka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).

Political Parties and Capability Stakes

Table 7 now offers a quick preview of how situations differ in three kinds of political order-Monocracy, Oligarchy and Republic on 13 variables such as Regime Capability (Variable 11) and Relational Status (Variable 13).

Table 7 A Three-Stage Scenario Analysis

Variable		Monocracy Monarchy/ Autocracy	Status Quo Party-State Rule/ Oligarchy	Optimal Governance Federal Republic
1.	Track Used	1	1, 2	1, 2, 3
2.	Issue Awareness	Dormant - Rulers	Weak - Elite	Strong - Mass Public
3.	Agenda Building	Rulers	Leaders	Public-Govt.-Private sectors
4.	Mode of Political Mobilisation	State	Professional Elite	Mass
5.	Political Stability	Very Low	Low	High
6.	Nature of Policy & Strategy	Uncertain	Intermittent	Continuous, Cumulative
7.	Resource Use Mode	Extractive	Top-Heavy Distribution	Judicious Distribution
8.	Election Mode	None; Selective	Delegator	Direct + Delegator
9.	Nature of Governance Regime	Appointed/ Nominated	Delegator Representation	Substantive Representation
10.	Diplomacy	Informal	Club, Traditional	Public
11.	Regime Capability	Very Low (Survival)	Low (Subsistential)	High (Self-Sustained)
12.	Relational Status	Isolated or Narrow (Track One)	Broader (Double Track)	Wider and Deeper, Multi-Track
13.	Conflict & Pol. Violence	Very High	Medium	Low

Table: Author.

The table clearly shows not only what differentiates an optimal mode of governance and relations from other forms, but also what kind of governance Nepal's republican order demands. In each of the 13 dimensions enumerated, the federal polity differs, often distinctly, and striving for a genuine republic also demands political stability as the basic desideratum or a *sine qua non*. Political stability, thus come only if the political parties, the key players in forming and felling governments, make it their key priority. But how do the political parties stand in their overall image at large?

Surveys done from time to time in Nepal on that issue consistently bring up a picture that is hardly pleasing, whether it is the Global Corruption Barometer, the NOSC and Search Survey (1993), IIDS Survey (1994), the Himal ORG Marg Survey of 2001, the NCCS Survey of 2002 or the SDSA Survey of 2008. Most of the party people, particularly the leaders and party executives, may not like to face this kind of reality check. Yet the reality is there, which will not vanish with an ostrich-like approach. Also, of all the institutions surveyed, trust in the political parties ranks at the bottom, and a features analysis done by the author closely corresponds to such a conclusion.

Ultimately, politics, like life, is not only about the values we seek. It is about the values we stand for. With the right kind of vision, will and strategy, politics can become an art of not just the possible but also the desirable. Unfortunately, party politics in Nepal today has made even the possible impossible, and its overall course has turned our potential for near-self-sufficiency into a shameless story of self-deficiency and self-diffidence. If, therefore, war is too serious an issue to be left to the army and the generals, politics, too, is proving too critical an agenda to be left solely to the politicians and their parties. In such a context, the key objective of this presentation was focussing on the role of governing regimes and managing Nepal's relations near and abroad. What happens in the days ahead in this most important battle of all-the battle against political instability from within and without-will be fascinating to watch, but how exactly that is to be done should be left to the citizens, parties and their leaders. What is clear is that there is no such thing as an instant regime capability, nor a cut-and-paste process to achieve it. There will be neither a readymade republic nor the right kind of governing regime we all need. Each calls for debate, dialogue, discourse and decisive action. Each requires interaction, idea inputs as well as investment. Each, moreover, demands conviction, competence and collaboration, as also civic compassion. There are, thus, no choices to be made here, only unavoidable imperatives.

Nepal's experiences in handling crises or even in managing conflict resolution, one key factor behind the chronic political instability here, have not been very encouraging so far. Even the democracy project, like the agenda of development, has suffered quite a few pitfalls. All this is hardly the reason to abandon the regime and relation-building agenda. A closer look at the nation's score sheet reveals quite a few rays of hope: a subtle and steady, if slow, political transformation of the Nepali state from a traditional parochial power order based on birth and blood toward a more rational one; from a subservient judiciary toward a more independent institution; from a culture of silence toward a vibrant civil society with an unprecedented upsurge of the media and NGOs; and also a perceptible decline in the level of poverty. In the decade and half after the Rhododendron Movement for Republican Nepal, considerable progress has been made also in mainstreaming the Maoists and elsewhere through peace pacts, co-governance

and elections for the Constituent Assembly. The dark clouds hovering over the nation are, thus, not without their silver linings, and the situation is not of total hopelessness, as is often portrayed.

Political parties must now come forward with a new frame of mind that yearns to aspire, imagine and dream together with the people at large so that their common interests can be translated into demands tomorrow to materialise into a concrete reality. Development, after all is first a hope, a belief, a vision and a dream asking to be turned into reality. In that regard, bonding of the three policy E's-Policy Effectiveness, Policy Efficiency and Policy Efficacy-through policy legislation, implementation, enforcement and follow-up assumes a crucial role. The impact of dysergy of opportunity costs when these three policy E's are absent or lacking can only be imagined at present. And the consequences of their synergy for the country as a whole, too, can only be imagined now. But they need to be imagined because it is an imagination worth pursuing.

Measures to Gear Up Regime Capability

- Build-up issue and agenda awareness at the mass level.
- Strengthen R&D on the issues at stake.
- Promote public debate and discussion on the agendas of democracy and development.

Measures to enhance relational dividend

- Upgrade public diplomacy.
- Adopt a North-South diplomacy.
- Use the Three-Track approach including soft power.
- Use the various skills of relational management. This means reformulating the roles of the various actors and agencies at work on the agenda in the neighbourhood and abroad as also reconfiguring relations in a vertical, horizontal as well as cross-generational way.
- Engage proactively a broad range of actors, agencies and institutions in building stakes. Stakebuilding is to stakeholding what property building is to property-holding. No stakes, no stakeholders. Stakes do not come from nowhere. Relationship, for instance, is a crucial stake in diplomacy, which must be built, promoted and reinforced before it can be held. All stakebuilders in this sense become stakeholders, but the converse need not be true.

Conclusion

As far as Nepal is concerned, there is an acute need to break out of the trap of the conventional mode of relationship based on the realist school of thought and restructure it on the basis of the domestic and constructive approaches suggested earlier. The discussion can now be rounded up with three key observations.

Firsthly grading the Regime Capability of the Nepali state on a 5-point scale (1 very low-5 very high) does not fetch it scores above the bottom level. Upgrading calls for specific measures on most of the 10 dimensions mentioned earlier. Secondly the country's very low score on Regime Capability explains its heavy Relational Deficit on various fronts-political, diplomatic, economic and cultural. Lastly this offers hope and the reason for bracing up to make the move forward. But the move can be made successfully only if the stakeholders become stakebuilders together.

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