

## **Book Review**

# **NEPAL WORLDVIEW: FOREIGN POLICY AND DIPLOMACY**

**Author: Madhu Raman Acharya**

■ **Rudra Nepal**

British diplomat and author Sir Harold Nicolson observed way back in 1953 that in the British Foreign Service, ‘the man of letters has always been regarded with bewildered, although quite friendly, disdain’. His observation could perhaps be equally true for other foreign services as well. In our own context, the glaring absence of books, journal articles and memoirs written by Foreign Service officers and former career diplomats is a numbing reality which has no attributable reason as such. There are, of course, some excellent books written by former career diplomats and heads of our diplomatic organisation. But they are few and far between.

Out of such an environment of intellectual complacency prevailing in the circle of retired career diplomats, the advent of the year 2019 brought a surprise gift in the form of a marvellous book entitled “Nepal Worldview”. It is a massive work on Nepal’s foreign policy and diplomacy, running to a marathon length of over 800 pages.

Mr Madhu Raman Acharya, former Foreign Secretary, a career ambassador and former Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations in New York is the author of the book. It has appeared in a boxed set of two consecutive volumes- Vol. I: Foreign Policy and Vol. II: Diplomacy. The two are organically linked by sequentially numbered chapters, continuous pagination from one volume to another and a combined index appearing at the end of Vol. II. The books bear a dignified look consonant with the gravity of the subject they propose to handle.

Mr Acharya has had widespread experience not only in Nepal’s foreign policy, diplomacy and public administration but also as a UN volunteer as well as at various UN missions in different countries and continents. He has authored several books already.

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■ He was Nepal’s Ambassador to Australia (2012-16) with concurrent accreditations to New Zealand and Fiji. He served in Nepal’s diplomatic missions in Calcutta, Tokyo, Washington D.C. and Tel Aviv as a career diplomat. At the Foreign Ministry, he headed the UN and International Organizations Division.

The first volume of *Nepal Worldview* deals with the foreign policy of Nepal and is divided into four parts and 23 chapters. Part I: Foreign Policy Environment begins with a chapter which takes us as far back as the days of myths and legends about the continued existence of Nepal since prehistoric times, and gives a fleeting glimpse of our early and medieval socio-political history as well as the emergence of Nepal as a modern nation and the making of the Nepali worldview, which together set the scene for more substantive later chapters. Part II: Nepal in the Region covers the two immediate neighbours, neighbourhood policy, various regional cooperative architectures, etc. Part III: Nepal's Relations with Major Countries of the World throws light on bilateral relations with the US, the UK, the European Union and some other major countries. Part IV: Nepal in International Organisations and Issues deals, among others, with Nepal's role in the UN peacekeeping operations, non-alignment, human rights, disarmament, international commitments, humanitarian issues, etc.

Most of the chapter titles are catchy, communicative and indicative of the thrust of the author's narratives and arguments. For example, in the third chapter entitled "In the Jungle of Theories", he creates the imagery of a plethora of theories expounded to explain and interpret the crux of international relations and diplomacy. Another chapter entitled "The Elephant in the Room" evokes the image of a giant creature with formidable power whose proximate presence is physically intimidating and psychologically unnerving.

Likewise, the second volume- *Diplomacy*- is divided into two parts and 15 chapters. Part V is entitled *Nepal's Diplomacy* and Part VI: *Economic and Development Diplomacy*. As in the first volume, the second volume also carries imaginative chapter titles such as "From Munsis to Mandarins" (25), "Exiting the 'Poor Man's Club' (30), "Begging with a Golden Bowl" (37), etc., suggesting an early indication of what they would encompass.

In the preface to the first volume, Mr Acharya says he uses 'the concept of worldview to explain and articulate the outward-orientation of Nepal' and also to explore how others see us. This suggests that it is not just a one-way affair-how we see others, but also how others see us. And his focus of discussion would be on the areas of 'foreign policy, security, economy, and opportunities and challenges in global, regional and international disposition'. And he adopts a broad-based approach to explore the 'issues and options, problems and prospects, and strategies and principles' in Nepal's foreign policy and economic diplomacy'.

The author is aware of the formidable nature and scope of the task he has taken in hand and his limitations as well. He is under no illusion to have mastered all aspects and intricacies of Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy. 'As a humble messenger of Nepal's diplomacy in which I had a brief stint', writes

Mr Acharya, 'I gathered some interest in inquiring the outreach and intricacies of Nepal's foreign policy and its outward orientation. This book is an outcome of that quest'. He sanitises the whole book with an overarching statement that it only reflects his personal views and interpretations of 'historical antecedents and contemporary phenomena', which have nothing to do with the official views of the position he once held.

The book stands out as the most elaborate undertaking of a former career diplomat so far. In the past also some diplomats with similar practitioner's background have written books on Nepal's foreign policy at various times. Prof. Y. N. Khanal is foremost among the few that naturally come to mind at this point. He was indeed the intellectual trailblazer in this field and a practitioner himself, although he had never thought of getting involved in Nepal's foreign affairs before he was suddenly called upon to embark on this profession. He wrote extensively, elaborating on the foundational principles as well as the existential needs and priorities of Nepal's foreign policy.

Separating foreign policy from diplomacy might look a bit tricky, but it has a British scholarly lineage behind it. In his classic book *Diplomacy* (1939), Sir Harold Nicolson regrets the confusion created by mixing diplomacy with foreign policy and advocates keeping them apart. Another British diplomat Sir Douglas Busk echoes the same view in his book *The Craft of Diplomacy* (1967) where he says 'policy is not diplomacy'. The trend of mixing the two is more noticeable in the American scholarly works. In his book *Twentieth-Century Diplomacy* (2008), Prof. John W. Young says 'diplomacy' is frequently used as a synonym for 'world affairs' or 'foreign policy' by American authors and scholars and cites Henry Kissinger's *Diplomacy* (1994) as an example, which to him 'is really a history of international relations since the Congress of Vienna'.

The author of *Nepal Worldview* says it was just to manage the bulky content that he separated foreign policy and diplomacy in two volumes, which means it was not his conscious effort to separate them as if they were dichotomous subjects. Interestingly, in the words of one of the most perceptive recent reviewers, Mr Acharya has 'taken a bold step, in the sense that he has attempted a dangerous, if not impossible, task of breaking the realm of foreign affairs into two seemingly water-tight compartments of foreign policy and diplomacy.' (MK Bhattarai, *The Kathmandu Post*, February 15, 2020). And in the opinion of another reviewer of no less repute and recognition, the author 'deserves to be congratulated for conjoining foreign policy and diplomacy.' (Prof. Lok Raj Baral, *The Kathmandu Post*, April 7, 2019). As they say 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'.

With these preliminary observations, let me begin my exploratory foray into the first volume- Foreign Policy. The author proceeds with the argument that

Nepal is the only nation state in South Asia which has a documented history of more than 2,000 years and obviously the oldest one in the region with its own unbroken existence throughout. He traces the evolution of Nepal's international identity, from the earliest times to the present, in a swift assessment of history and tries to identify the factors that have shaped its worldview. Mr Acharya includes among them Nepal's 'location and a unique mix of cultural values and civilisations' as well as 'historical experiences, economic compulsions and an increasing exposure and contact with the outside world'. He considers it factually misleading to call Nepal a 'small country' while accepting Nepal's unification by King Prithvi Narayan Shah as 'a historical necessity'. He identifies, among others, the 'Hindu-Buddhist worldview' as Nepal's soft power and appears to lament the loss of its Hindu identity in spite of its being a predominantly Hindu country.

Mr Acharya proceeds to explore the changing world order and its multifarious impacts worldwide, which make him, feel that Nepal is also at a 'crossroads of realignment in its traditional worldview.' He says adapting to a rapidly changing external world is among the main challenges of Nepal's foreign policy because geopolitics allows only limited maneuverability to Nepal in its foreign policy options. Mr Acharya advocates eschewing the limiting psychology inherent in the conceptualisation of Nepal as a 'yam between two boulders' and start taking advantage of the immense economic opportunities arising from its strategic location between India and China- the next 'superpowers in the making'. He also foresees political and geopolitical implications for a Hindu majority Nepal when Hindu nationalism rises in India. The author believes that graduation from the LDC group would give Nepal a 'new international economic personality', and for that Nepal needs to 'improve its bargaining power and negotiating skills' and build 'national consensus on foreign policy matters'.

The author refutes the view that 'the concept of international relations (IR) developed almost entirely in the West' and cites the Hindu epic Mahabharata and the Arthashastra in support of his argument. He makes a quick review of international relations theories such as realism, institutionalism, idealism, constructivism, liberalism, neoliberalism, etc. and having acknowledged the absence of a unifying theory, and suggesting that 'no theory of international relations is right or wrong' as these only serve as 'analytical tools for understanding state behaviours in the international arena', he finally refers to the concept of postmodernism as having strong 'influence in all spheres of Nepal's national and international relations'.

In the chapter "Foreign Policy in a Flux", the author dwells on the evolution of Nepal's foreign policy and its inherent qualities of dynamism and adaptability. He takes us back to the ancient moral precept of *basudhaiva kutumbakam* to

trace the guiding philosophy of Nepal's foreign policy. In modern times, the characterisation of Nepal by King Prithvi Narayan Shah as a 'yam between two boulders', especially in relation to Nepal's geopolitical location between India and China, remains deeply entrenched in the Nepali psyche, and according to Mr Acharya, it 'still reverberates in Nepal's foreign policy'. He argues that after the unification of Nepal, a threefold strategy of isolation, resistance and appeasement was adopted by the Nepali rulers to preserve national independence up until the end of the Rana era. Only after the advent of democracy in 1951 did the country emerge 'out of the cocoon' of long isolation and opened up to the external world. Bilateral relations began to expand gradually, and Nepal's efforts to get into the United Nations materialised in December 1955.

The author regrets the lack of consensus among the political leaders on foreign policy matters and also the lack of a consensus building mechanism in foreign policy. He considers parliamentary oversight on foreign policy to be weak, and highlighting the existence of 'increasing external interest, influence and meddling in Nepal's internal affairs', he calls upon the foreign policy establishment to draw a red-line to stop that. The author gives a quick review of the evolutionary history of Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy in the erstwhile unitary state structure and dwells on the likely complications that might arise in the implementation of foreign policy in a newly adopted federal set-up of Nepal. The author believes that a practical review of our foreign policy needs to be undertaken and that a broad-based foreign policy advisory committee headed by the foreign minister could be formed to act as an institutional consultative mechanism. He sees no value in the parliamentary 'hearing' process of just a routine nature, considers the 'yam syndrome' an unrealistic perception in the present context, highlights the need for a transformative overhaul of foreign policy, and calls for ensuring an interest-based, independent, integrated, institutionalised and inclusive foreign policy. He sees the need for energising the Institute of Foreign Affairs as an 'effective' think tank with 'emphasis on academic publications and debates on foreign policy issues'. He believes in the efficacy of 'quiet diplomacy' to resolve issues in Nepal-India relations and says that the EPG's work can be a stepping stone to proceed with the revision of the 1950 Treaty, for which 'Nepal should take the initiative to float a revised draft' as sought by India. He also notes the absence of 'a coherently articulated official foreign policy document' of Nepal. The author presents a background and evolving security and strategic situation in the regional context on account of the rise of India and China as new economic powers with competitive and rival ambitions, which invite increasing interest of the United States as well. The very fact that three of Nepal's neighbours- India, Pakistan and China- happen to be nuclear powers with deep-rooted rivalries, unresolved boundary issues and a history of wars between them enhances

the likelihood of unexpected flare-ups at any time. International terrorism, a common enemy of all, and a host of other traditional and non-traditional security threats as well as global concerns about the broader agenda of human security also call for closer cooperation in the region. The author analyses the potential security threats to Nepal and highlights the importance of 'defense diplomacy'. He credits the Chief of Nepal Army with making 'the final and decisive persuasion' to get the five-month-long Indian economic blockade lifted in early 2016. He considers the National Defense University proposal a 'timely and important move', supports the concept of 'minimum deterrence' capability for Nepal, recommends having a 'comprehensive defense policy', and maintaining 'strategic autonomy' vis-a-vis India and China through a 'combination of national security and foreign policy', which he says are 'two sides of the same coin'. In his view 'the foreign-policy establishment underestimates the significance of defense diplomacy' and calls for building an 'organic link between the foreign policy and national security institutions'. The new constitution identifies Nepal's national interests, and it is the foremost objective of our foreign and security policies to safeguard them. In pursuing this objective, the author says, the 'legitimate security interests' of our neighbours should not be undermined. He approvingly quotes Prof. Y. N. Khanal: 'Our foreign policy will break down at the point where either India or China loses faith in us and concludes that her vital national interests and sensitivities do not receive proper recognition in our conduct of relations.' He observes that lack of consensus on issues of national interest because of the 'polarised worldview' of the political parties should be corrected by adopting a broadly agreed-upon set of national goals and priorities in foreign policy based on national interest.

Moving on to the region, Mr Acharya says 'India matters for Nepal in almost everything' and likens it to a 'kalpabriksha' (a proverbial wish-fulfilling tree) at the best of times. He acknowledges that managing relations with India is one of the most challenging aspects of Nepal's foreign policy, but dismisses it to be 'Indo-centric' any more. The author extensively covers the complex and multidimensional nature of Nepal-India relations, making it the longest chapter in the book. Mr Acharya says the search for a separate identity is one of the reasons behind Nepal's insistence on the review of the 1950 Treaty. He quotes King Birendra's historic Newsweek interview of 10 September 1973 which highlights Nepal's quest for this separateness: 'Nepal is not a part of the Indian subcontinent; it is really that part of Asia which touches both India and China'. He presents three sets of interests between Nepal and India: converging interests (e.g. trade, tourism, investment, economic cooperation); overlapping interests (e.g., security, transit, water resources, peoples' movement); and diverging or conflicting interests (e.g., disputed boundaries). After considering

the pros and cons, the author advocates a 'managed, not restricted' open border between the two countries. He holds the view that 'Nepal and India need politically discrete and economically integrated relations' in a forward-looking framework, which the EPG could perhaps spell out and recommend. He says 'India is already a global power and is poised to become a superpower soon' for which it 'should take its neighbours into confidence, showing magnanimity without demanding quid pro quo.'

With China, the author gives a brief narrative of ancient connections through pilgrims, traders and travellers and the historical importance of Tibet to Nepal for trade and also as a 'buffer between Nepal and China'. He gives a historical glimpse of the clash of commercial interests with Tibet and the several wars fought on that ground. He refers to the Treaty of Thapathali of 24 March 1856 which, among others, led to the establishment of a Vakil office in Lhasa and, a century later, following establishment of diplomatic relations with China, was turned into a consulate. He gives a quick rundown of the bilateral relations that have progressed since the mid-1950s, including the signing of the boundary treaty and construction of the Kathmandu-Kodari Highway in the 1960s. Although Nepal strictly adheres to the One China policy and considers Tibet as an integral part of the People's Republic of China, 'the Tibet factor constitutes one of the sensitive issues in Nepal-China relations' because of 'the presence of 'Free Tibet' supporters among the Tibetan refugees in Nepal'. The author considers the arrival of the Chinese rail to Nepal's border by 2022 to be a 'great game-changer in its geopolitics'. The signing of a transit treaty and other agreements with China in 2016 will have long-term impacts in terms of 'trade, investment, tourism, energy and connectivity'. Nepal has already joined the AIIB and has signed an MOU to join the BRI as well. The author says China's strategic interests in executing some connectivity and other projects in Nepal should not deter us from utilising Chinese aid if it does not drag Nepal in a geopolitical contest between the two bigger neighbours. The author sees prospects for reducing excessive dependence on India and augmenting its 'strategic choices through trade, transit and connectivity' if recent agreements with China are 'implemented in earnest'.

Immediately beyond the Elephant and the Dragon, the author takes the readers to the extended neighbourhood covering Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, relations with which are dealt with serially in the same chapter. Only the Maldives, a fellow SAARC member, remains unmentioned.

'Thanks to traditional intricacies and emerging geopolitical realities', the author says 'Nepal's relations with the countries in the neighbourhood are beset by triangular formations'. He then proceeds to link the three sides of each triangle into six separate formations, as (i) Nepal-India-China (ii) Nepal-India-Bhutan

(iii) Nepal-India-Bangladesh (iv) Nepal-India-Pakistan (v) Nepal-India-the West (vi) Nepal-China-the West, and tries to analyse each combination in a broader context beyond their bilateral limits. One can easily discern the fact that in five out of the six formations, India remains common. This shows the centrality of India in this scheme of triangular orders. It is only in the sixth triangle that India remains invisible. The author quotes Henry Kissinger who appreciates Nepal for having 'skillfully balanced' its relations with India and China for centuries and safeguarded its national independence in his book *World Order* (2014). But Mr Acharya says this is changing and getting ever more complex as the two 'compete for strategic spaces in the region, including Nepal' and 'both do not want Nepal to come under the sphere of influence of the other'. In addition, China also remains suspicious of Western countries led by the US acting against the interests of China from Nepal.

Moving on to the next chapter, the author says 'Nepal does not have a well-articulated neighbourhood policy' and observes that 'the search for a pragmatic neighbourhood policy constitutes the most important quest in Nepal's foreign policy today'. He cites China's 'BRI' and India's 'Look East Policy' (Prime Minister Modi's 'Act East Policy') as examples and says 'although not necessarily exclusive, these policies have elements of geostrategic competition, which Nepal cannot ignore'.

In spite of SAARC being in existence for over three decades, the author says South Asia remains one of the 'least economically integrated and least cooperating' regions of the world. It is no secret that lack of political will and adversarial relations between India and Pakistan have stymied its progress. The Charter keeps all bilateral and contentious issues from the SAARC forum, and non-resolution of such issues bilaterally between the major member countries keeps SAARC moribund. A prolonged state of immobilisation of SAARC only helps set the stage for subregional activation while the regional body languishes in irrelevance. The author gives a comprehensive picture of SAARC as a regional institution with suggestions for making it more effective and result-oriented. The author also throws light on BIMSTEC and its activities, which too are not very impressive. The SAGQ and the BBIN, initiated as subregional initiatives within SAARC, also have tardy performances.

The US has remained engaged in Nepal through foreign aid and other development programmes since 1951. The Peace Corps volunteers have been a well-known feature of US-Nepal relations since the Kennedy Administration. The author says, 'containment' of China was once the main U.S. strategic interest in Nepal. It waned with the end of the Cold War. Now with the rise of China and India as new 'global powers' U.S. interest in Nepal has also revived, says the author. The US has continuing interest in Tibet and the Tibetan refugees. During the Maoist insurgency, the US supported Nepal with



aid and military assistance. Its interest and support for democracy and human rights remain strong.

With the United Kingdom Nepal's relations are more than two centuries old. The author gives a background of this long association and historical events and activities such as the wars fought between the two, British clandestine efforts to recruit Nepali youths in its army, the Treaty of Sugauli of 1815, the Gurkha connection, royal tours and visits, etc. He narrates the visit of Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana to Britain in April 1850 as the King's 'Ambassador' and links it to his full-fledged support to the British in crushing the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and getting some of Nepal's lost territory restored in return. Mr Acharya also gives an account of Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher's visit to Britain in 1908 and the reforms introduced by him in Nepal following the trip. His signing of the 1923 Treaty of Friendship with Britain recognised Nepal for the first time as a sovereign independent nation. Regarding the Sugauli Treaty, in spite of being 'an unequal and one-sided treaty' imposed by the victor upon the vanquished, Mr Acharya says, 'being a boundary treaty, obligations and rights on the boundary between Nepal and India bear international validation' and, therefore, he considers it relevant for 'the delineation of the boundary between Nepal and India'. The significance of the bilateral relations and the support being extended by the UK as an important economic partner have been highlighted with the comment that 'despite the long and enduring relations, the British influence in Nepal is limited' and 'waning' although it 'still matters as an important country in the Nepal worldview'.

The European Union remains the 'largest development partner of Nepal' and also a beneficiary of its unique trade concession measure called 'Everything But Arms' offered to the LDCs. The author says although Nepal is not on the EU's 'list of priority countries for development assistance', 'it regards Nepal as an important 'partner country' and 'has significant engagements in Nepal in the area of democracy and human rights' as well as in 'peace building and conflict resolution'. The author says while the EU adopts a 'soft approach' to aid, it is 'not an easy partner to work with' and sometimes its 'prescriptive approach to Nepal's domestic issues related to democracy, human rights and social inclusion creates controversy in Nepal'. The author observes, 'the Eurozone Crisis and Brexit Vote have exposed the vulnerability of the EU project' and that its influence is in decline in the world.

Nepal continues to reach out to the world by expanding its diplomatic network and relations. The author refers to some of the recent openings of Nepal's diplomatic missions in countries like Australia, Austria, Brazil, Denmark, Spain, South Africa and South Korea and proceeds to give updates on the bilateral relations with France, Russia, Japan, Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Australia, Israel, New Zealand, Belgium, Canada, Denmark,

Norway, Finland and South Korea in that order.

The last part of Vol. I covers Nepal's multilateral relations and its role in the multilateral arena beginning with the admission to the United Nations in 1955 after which, the author says, Nepal was able to reaffirm its 'international identity as an independent nation' and also acquired 'a new space in global politics' which 'heralded an altogether new era of diversification in Nepal's foreign policy'. Nepal utilises 'the UN forum for articulating its positions and views on major international issues' and 'has earned appreciation for its involvement in the UN's various programmes and activities, including in its peacekeeping operations', says the author. He quotes Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar who praised Nepal during his visit in 1989 as 'a shining example of how a small country can make a contribution to world peace'. He gives an extensive survey of Nepal's roles and relations within the UN system and its views and positions on how the organisation could be made more timely, more effective and more encompassing by undertaking some essential reforms so as not to let this 'indispensable common house of the entire human family' get marginalised into a state of irrelevance.

'Helmets from the Himalayas' gives the glorious record of Nepal's long involvement in the UN peacekeeping missions which began with the participation of five Nepali military personnel in the UN Observer Group in Lebanon in 1958. Nepal has so far provided 'more than 120,000 Nepal Army troops' in 42 missions across the world. Nepal has been among the top 10 troop contributing countries and 'as of 2015, some 63 Nepali army personnel have laid down their lives' for international peace. In addition, Nepal has a standby arrangement for 5,000 troops with the UN and runs a peace operations training centre at Panchkhal. Mr Acharya says peacekeeping had to be 'invented out of necessity' as it was not conceived in the UN Charter, and considers Nepal's participation in the UN peacekeeping missions as its 'signature role in the UN'. He gives an updated analysis of the various aspects of UN peacekeeping missions, causes of their successes and failures as well as problems and challenges, doctrinal as well as operational, faced by them. He briefly touches upon the evolutionary history of peacekeeping from the traditional to the robust phase and its multidimensional nature. He also gives a brief summary of various reports which recommend ways to streamline peace operations and make them more effective and efficient. He thinks the peace operations centre at Panchkhal should be developed as a South Asian regional centre in partnership with the UN and calls for more emphasis on preventive diplomacy.

Non-alignment remains an important basis of Nepal's foreign policy. Non-alignment emerged as a movement in the context of the Cold War rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union and their competition to create and expand their respective spheres of influence in the world. Prof. Y. N. Khanal called it a 'historical necessity for all emerging and developing nations'. With 120 member nations, 17 observer countries and 10 observer organisations, NAM has become a huge and 'loosely organised movement', says the author, having neither a charter nor a permanent secretariat. He says Nepal had to join NAM also 'to stay away from the power rivalry of two regional powers', India and China, and to 'maintain 'equidistance' between them. Mr Acharya appears to be holding a somewhat indeterminate position about the continuing usefulness of NAM when at one place he observes non-alignment 'has lost the necessary appeal for Nepal to remain there' and at another he says 'Nepal should strive to utilise the NAM as a forum to enhance its multilateral diplomacy'.

One inevitable outcome of adopting a non-isolationist foreign policy and becoming an active member of multinational organisations like the UN is that such states often have to agree to be bound by an increasing number of international instruments of various kinds. Since the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, successive governments of Nepal were quick to accede to numerous international human rights instruments without thinking much about meeting the obligations arising from them. The author says Nepal often lags behind in implementing the provisions of international treaties and conventions 'to the point of serious embarrassment' to the state. He suggests that hasty accession decisions should be avoided. The state should do serious study before becoming a party to international instruments of a binding nature. And once it becomes a party it should put in place its national implementing mechanism, enact the domestic legislation as necessary, and strengthen the reporting capability.

Being a party to '24 international human rights instruments, including nine core human rights treaties and conventions' puts Nepal on the international radar screen. These require periodic reporting and domestic legislations for implementation. There are some other human rights-related instruments like the ones about migrant workers, stateless persons, refugees, enforced disappearances, etc., of which Nepal is not a party yet. Nepal has also not signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998). Human rights community and NGOs have been lobbying to put pressure on Nepal to sign these instruments. Already there is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which keeps a close eye on the human rights situation in each member

country. Being a recent post-conflict country, Nepal is under the scrutiny of international human rights institutions and mechanisms. Addressing alleged cases of human rights violations and impunity is important as it could also have a bearing on Nepal's peacekeepers. The international community also keeps watch of the status and working environment of national human rights institutions as defenders of human rights within the country.

The author refers to the 'first' case of 'political asylum' in the last quarter of the 18th century when a Tibetan Lama was granted political asylum by Nepal. Although Nepal has not become a party to any of the refugee-related international instruments, including the 1951 Refugee Convention and its Protocol, it has allowed Tibetan and Bhutanese refugees to live in Nepal for decades. The author holds the view that 'becoming a party to the UN refugee convention would strengthen the legal framework for Nepal's commitment to provide humanitarian treatment to the refugees'. He also refers to the extreme sensitivity of the Western countries towards the refugees, particularly of the US towards the Tibetans, which sometimes becomes a bilateral issue as well. He provides an explanation about the so-called 'Gentleman's Agreement' between Nepal and the US on the handling of Tibetan asylum seekers and of the long bilateral process that Nepal had engaged in with Bhutan in an attempt to resolve the issue of the Bhutanese refugees, which unfortunately did not succeed because of Bhutanese intransigence and denial. As a result, more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees have had to move to several Western countries, a majority of them to the US, under a third country resettlement programme.

Nepal is a strong advocate of general and complete disarmament at the UN and other multilateral forums, but the author is probably right in saying that disarmament does not feature in the day-to-day agenda of Nepal's foreign policy'. As a party to the NPT, the author says, Nepal 'stands for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons in a time-bound manner'. Nepal has also become a party to the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Nepal has signed the CTBT in 1996 but has yet to ratify it. The Arms Trade Treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2013 and the Mine-ban Convention of 1997 have, however, not been signed by Nepal yet for some domestic reasons. Nepal stands in support of micro-disarmament or control of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Nepal has been hosting the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific since 2008. The Kathmandu Process initiated by the Centre aims to promote dialogue and initiatives towards regional disarmament. Nepal also supports regional treaties establishing peace zones, including the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

The second volume Diplomacy begins with Part V: Nepal's Diplomacy. Mr Acharya views diplomacy as 'an instrument of national power' and considers foreign policy and diplomacy to be complementary to each other. He refutes the view that diplomacy is almost entirely a Western contribution to the world by citing references from the ancient Hindu epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata, which contain early instances of the use of envoys and messengers as well as the then prevalent practice of personal immunity accorded to them while on such missions. He also refers to an ancient treatise on governance and administration, the Arthashastra of Kautilya, which also elaborates on the mechanics of interstate relations and the use of ambassadors. Giving a brief history of the evolution of diplomacy from ancient Greece to the modern times, including a quick introduction to modern diplomatic law and other relevant matters, he notes 'a huge gap between the theory and practice of diplomacy' and briefly refers to three theories of diplomacy: traditional, nascent, and innovative. He also feels the need for a separate Consular Services Act.

Moving on, he traces an evolutionary history of Nepal's Foreign Ministry from Jaisi Kotha and Munsiri Khana to its present form and notes that 'Nepal's diplomatic machinery is under-represented, under-resourced and under-utilised' adding it is marred by a 'diplomatic deficit' because of scanty and minimal diplomatic presence abroad. He metaphorically likens a Nepali diplomat's functions to a fakir's begging bowl. He sees 'a clear need for a separate Foreign Service Act' so as to meet its specific requirements as a specialised service and its further professionalisation. Mr Acharya decries the practice of appointing people without diplomatic skills and aptitude as ambassadors and recommends forming a selection committee headed by the foreign minister to avoid likely embarrassments from inappropriate ambassadorial appointments. He also says 'in keeping with international practice, Nepal should consider appointing Consuls General from the Foreign Service'. He laments that Nepal's diplomacy is in 'decline', and 'so are its diplomatic institutions'. He sees a clear need for reorientation of Nepal's 'foreign policy and diplomatic machinery'. Mr. Acharya stands for a stronger, more proactive, more resourceful, and more efficient foreign ministry to meet the emerging new challenges and changing working environments, both within the country and abroad.

Diplomacy is all about negotiation, and the author very aptly calls it a 'give and take process'. He gives a bird's eye view of the various earlier bilateral treaties and agreements, not all of which were done either on an equal footing or with an adequate amount of diplomatic and negotiating skills on the Nepali

side. He outlines some theoretical aspects of negotiation and also talks about the skills, strategies and tactics of diplomatic negotiations, an appropriate mix of which can elicit the desired concessions from the other side even by a small and apparently weaker negotiating partner. The author notes a lack of communication and articulation skills in Nepali diplomats in addition to the absence of adequate preparation, homework and team spirit. 'Most importantly', the author says, 'Nepal's diplomats need subject expert skills, and subject experts need diplomatic and legal skills', which he thinks 'are very important in every negotiation'.

The author considers the first Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia in early 1955 as Nepal's first experience in multilateral diplomacy and a precursor to the rise of the Non-aligned Movement. Later that year Nepal entered the United Nations. Then followed a rapid process of Nepal's multilateral engagement. The author highlights multilateral diplomacy's importance in addressing common global problems, often known as 'problems without passports', which require multilateral solutions. He also notes various challenges faced by multilateralism, including the one posed by occasional reversion to unilateralism by the only remaining superpower. He considers multilateral diplomacy as an important tool for promoting national interest by a country like Nepal and calls for creating a multilateral career track in the Foreign Service to build a strong foundation for preparing professionally sound and competent multilateral diplomats.

In Part VI of his book, Ambassador Acharya deals with Nepal's Economic and Development Diplomacy. Narrating the history of Nepal's aggressive efforts to protect and promote its trade and economic interests since medieval times, the author refers to the opening of the Vakil's Office in Lhasa as Nepal's first foreign mission in 1856. Its main function was to facilitate Nepali traders and promote Nepal's economic interests. After eschewing the isolationist policy in the early 1950s, Nepal opened up for tourism, trade and industrialisation to the outside world. With the arrival of a new wave of economic liberalisation, Nepal adopted 'economic diplomacy' as an important component of its foreign policy agenda, which, in Ambassador Acharya's terms, has since become 'a new mantra in the country's diplomatic strategy'. And economic diplomacy now covers areas such as 'trade, investment, foreign employment, tourism and foreign aid'. In spite of the importance given to economic diplomacy by the government, the author says Nepal's economic diplomacy lacks 'strategic direction' and suffers from 'ambitious goals without commensurate resources and action plan'. It is also afflicted with the 'diplomatic deficit' of 'understaffed,

under-represented and under-utilised' diplomatic machinery. He highlights the existing institutional weaknesses in the conduct of economic diplomacy and calls for a revamp of the institutional mechanism for economic diplomacy and reorient it with a programmatic focus in partnership with the private sector. He also proposes making use of diaspora diplomacy in support of economic diplomacy.

The author says since the 1990s, Nepal has adopted several outward-oriented economic policies within an open, liberal and market-friendly economic policy regime. The Foreign Investment and Technology Transfer Act was introduced as early as 1992. Double taxation agreements have been signed with several countries. In 2004, Nepal became the first LDC to join the WTO after its coming into existence a decade earlier. Efforts are also under way to boost trade and economic linkages and benefits under SAARC and BIMSTEC.

Mr Acharya sees a lack of 'strong programmatic backing' in Nepal's vision to graduate from the LDC group by 2022. He dwells on the criteria to be met before an LDC qualifies for full and final graduation. Although he notes some post-graduation pangs in terms of lost benefits, he observes that 'exiting from the Poor Man's Club can be a matter of pride and confidence in Nepal's trajectory of socio-economic development' leading further towards the level of a middle income country by 2030.

The author dwells on the predicaments of Nepal as a landlocked country under the heading 'The Prisoner of Geography' and begins by recollecting the five-month-long 'unannounced blockade' Nepal had to face from its neighbour. The author identifies landlockedness as 'the single most important factor' that shapes the Nepali worldview. He also calls it 'a major barrier to Nepal's development and a major impediment to its outward orientation'. Being both landlocked and least developed at the same time is, to him, a 'double jeopardy'. He characterises the latest blockade as 'apolitical, undiplomatic, uneconomic and inhuman at the same time'. He dwells on a number of international instruments establishing unhindered transit rights to the landlocked countries, but these often turn out to be 'imperfect rights', 'as they depend upon the mercy of the transit states'. He considers transit through China, a new prospect opened following the signing of a new transit treaty in 2016, as 'a distant dream' which will take time to materialise. But the author thinks Nepal's strategic geopolitical location can bring the benefits of better trade and transit opportunities between India and China.

As a member of the G77, Nepal enjoys the benefit of being in the largest forum of developing countries at the UN. The G77 played a crucial role in

getting the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (1974) and the Declaration on the Right to Development (1986) adopted by the UN General Assembly. Being a huge group of 135 countries of many different interests and identities, the author says the group is rather unwieldy and ineffective. North-South Cooperation that began in the 1980s is at a 'crossroads', says the author, because the developed North feels 'aid-fatigue' and nurtures a feeling of competition against the developing countries. More recently, cooperation among the developing countries themselves has taken the form of South-South Cooperation, which would be complementary to North-South Cooperation. The author says so far Nepal has taken a back seat in the G77 and on the agenda of South-South Cooperation, but calls upon Nepal to begin taking a proactive role in the G77.

The author gives an account of Nepal's long association with the World Bank Group, which remains Nepal's major development partner since the early 1960s. Their support has been significant in the areas of poverty reduction, structural adjustment, balance of payments stabilisation, infrastructure development, economic liberalisation, etc. Founded in the 1940s, the World Bank and IMF are often criticised for being dominated by the West and unresponsive to the calls for reform in keeping with the current global context. The author wants Nepal to 'engage the Bretton Woods Institutions more in the areas of infrastructure development and capacity building rather than on softer issues like economic liberalisation or poverty alleviation'.

The author thinks Nepal's economic diplomacy is getting a new impetus by the introduction of a broader concept of development diplomacy. He infers this from the changed nomenclature and focus of the Foreign Ministry's erstwhile Economic Diplomacy and NRN Division, which is now known as Policy Planning, Development Diplomacy and Overseas Nepalese Affairs Division. The author presents different understandings of the term development diplomacy in different countries and himself applies development diplomacy to include 'negotiations, follow up and implementation of the international development agenda, including those agreed at the United Nations'. He discusses the MDGs, SDGs, the right to development and climate change action as important aspects of the development diplomacy agenda for Nepal.

Nepal became the first LDC to accede to the WTO agreements in 2004 following the establishment of the World Trade Organisation in 1994. It pledges to be a 'rules-based' and 'non-discriminatory' multilateral trading framework. But there are issues such as labour mobility under the trade negotiations, which have not made much progress because of differences between the positions



of the developed and developing countries. Given the complex nature of the trade negotiations, the author suggests that Nepal's trade-related negotiating capability be enhanced.

The author presents Nepal's water resources as 'the white gold', 'the best hope for transforming Nepal's economic future' through the export of power to India. But to him 'it is already the most complicated subject' in Nepal-India relations. Given the controversies surrounding most of the past water resources agreements with India as being lopsided, the author suggests Nepal 'strengthen its water diplomacy, focusing on the negotiating capacity and policy environment for investment in the sector' and avoid being in a situation of a 'resource curse'. In his view, 'like all other sectors, the exploitation of Nepal's water resources has been stymied by domestic politics and the inherent weakness in negotiations with India'.

Nepal's long dependence on foreign aid despite of being a resource-rich country is expressed beautifully by the author with a tinge of irony as 'Begging with a Golden Bowl'. Development cooperation constitutes one of the five identified areas of economic diplomacy, and here the author quotes the seasoned view of Prof. Y. N. Khanal: 'Aid is a friend, not a master of foreign policy'. Unfortunately, in the author's view, the problem with Nepal's foreign aid diplomacy is that 'aid is used as a political tool' by the donors and 'is mostly donor-driven'. 'Aid mobilisation remains disjointed from Nepal's foreign policy and its economic diplomacy efforts' observes the author, and suggests that the Foreign Ministry be consulted and involved in all aid negotiations and agreements. He notices a serious lacking in internal coordination despite the existence of several high-level monitoring and coordinating bodies. He also discusses various other problems that afflict foreign aid management in Nepal.

The author's final chapter of the second volume relates to Nepali migrant workers and the diaspora. He begins by linking the inspiration for continuous movement and action to the Vedic counsel of Charaiveti Charaiveti. He takes the readers back to the early 19th century when Nepali youths began to join King Ranjit Singh's army in Punjab and were first deputed to a place called Lahore from whence came the term 'Lahure' in Nepali. The author considers migrant workers and the global Nepali diaspora as an important element in shaping the Nepali worldview. He gives a harrowing account of the experiences of Nepali migrant workers abroad and their exploitation at every step by unscrupulous agents and middlemen. He groups Nepali migrants into five broad categories, of which the most influential category happens to be the Non-Resident Nepalis (NRNs) who have been recognised officially by the government under the Non-

Resident Nepali Act 2007 and even by the new constitution of Nepal. As a major chunk of national income comes from remittance, the author points out the need to improve and strengthen Nepal's labour diplomacy and its diaspora diplomacy to make the most out of the prevalent opportunities. He alerts that remittance benefits are only ephemeral.

The book under review is undoubtedly the most comprehensive of all currently available books on Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy. No small amount of time, energy, effort and experience combined into a ceaseless quest for scholarly excellence could have produced this magnum opus. However, even this impressive work is not completely free from some weaknesses and shortcomings. Notwithstanding its formidable size and comprehensiveness, it fails to give adequate space and coverage to consular relations and diplomatic law.

Typographic errors and editorial lapses abound. Misspelt proper names, misnamed international instruments, misdating of events and activities and misquotations are also found. The text suffers from repetitions here and there. There is also a lack of uniformity on important historical dates, facts and events. Nepal's unification year is not uniformly presented (pp. 4, 5, 19, 82, 319, and 518). Figures about Nepal's diplomatic relations and its residential missions vary at various places (pp. 105, 360, 522, 523, 531). The original sayings 'jasko tarwar usko durbar' and 'charai jat chhattisai varnako phulbari' have both been wrongly presented as 'jasko durbar usko tarwar' (p. 36) and as 'char varna chattis jatko phulbari' (p. 24). The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), from which President Donald Trump had the United States withdrawn, has been misnamed as Trans-Atlantic Trade Partnership (p. 57). President Barack Obama's 2012 announcement about a shift in his Administration's focus from the Atlantic to the Pacific has been wrongly transposed as 'from the Pacific to the Atlantic' (p. 323). George Everest did not name 'Peak XV' nor was it named Mt. Everest in 1965, as claimed by the author (p. 344). The name Everest was proposed in 1856 by Andrew Waugh in honour of his already retired predecessor for 'Peak XV'. The author says 'koot' means poison in Sanskrit (p. 491). Dictionaries don't corroborate it. There are confusingly diverse references about the date of establishment of 'Nepal's first diplomatic mission abroad' in Lhasa and the designation of the office holder (pp. 205, 518, 587, 609). Nepali historians are not unanimous about Bhrikuti being the daughter of Amshuvarma (p.5, 203). In addition to these, there are some other flaws of a more serious nature in the book. Contrary to what the author says on pages 84, 238 and 337-338, Nepal had not agreed to allow Gurkha recruitment by the Treaty of Sugauli.

In fact, the text of the Treaty of Sugauli does not say anything at all about Gurkha recruitment. It was not a 'commercial treaty' under which the first British Resident to Nepal was appointed (p. 331). The author says Article 8 of the 1950 Treaty 'cancels all previous treaties, agreements and engagements' (p. 334). It is a flawed interpretation because it ignores the restrictive clause 'As far as matters dealt with herein are concerned' that precedes the quoted text. The author's claim that the Nepal-Britain treaty of 1923 was the first such treaty deposited by Nepal with the League of Nations in 1925 (p. 337) appears prima facie untenable. Not being a member of the League, it was not mandatory for Nepal to register the treaty at the League secretariat. Even the 1950 Treaty with India was not registered at the United Nations by Nepal. The Final Act of Vienna of 1815 did not establish 'four classes of heads of missions' as the author says (p. 495). It had established only three classes: ambassadors, legates or nuncios; envoys accredited to sovereigns; and charge d'affaires accredited to ministers of foreign affairs. It was at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818 that a fourth class- ministers-resident- was added. In spite of these and some other shortcomings of a more technical nature encountered in the book, there is no doubt that *Nepal Worldview* is a monumental work of its kind on Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy. Its author deserves unqualified admiration for accomplishing such a meritorious enterprise. It has set a certain standard which all future writers on Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy would have to take into account. The great 14th century English poet and author Geoffrey Chaucer had famously observed: 'If gold ruste, what shall iren do?' A revised new edition would be a highly welcome endeavour.