Relevance of the Balance of Power Theory and Theory of Deterrence for Nepal's National Security

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Abstract

Fundamental objective of National security is state's survival within an anarchic international system, where the lack of a world government and the sovereign status of states complicate the enforcement of a rule-based international order and compel states into a self-help situation. The Theory of Balance of Power suggests how states behave to bring the power balance in their favour, while the Theory of Deterrence aims to prevent attacks by deterring potential aggressors. Examination of these theories in relation to Nepal's security challenges is a critical research problem in this study. Understanding the Balance of Power theory is crucial in national security policy decisions, as it guides state behavior, while deterrence provides practical defence mechanisms. Even minor lapses can threaten state survival, underscoring the need for strategic understanding. The study aims to identify viable security options for Nepal by examining these theories' relevance and application. Methodologically, the research uses a case study approach, relying on secondary sources like books and journals for data collection, which is primarily qualitative. This paper argues that with the global power balance shifting toward Asia, Nepal's non-aligned stance remains pertinent. However, achieving minimum deterrence requires Nepal to modernize its military through cooperation with global powers and neighboring states. Additionally, developing indigenous military technology is crucial to strengthen Nepal's defence capabilities

Keywords: *Balance of power, deterrence, nuclear deterrence, power politics, national security*

Introduction

Survival in the anarchic international system is the preeminent condition (Antunes & Camisao, 2017, p. 20), as other benefits like prosperity, the state's stability, and the well-being of the people are achievable only if the state survives. As Nepal was established as a modern nation-state after unification by King Prithivi Narayan Shah, there has been consistency in Nepal's foreign policy, which has been guided by the importance of survival for the last two centuries (Rose, 1971, p.vii). The seriousness of state survival is reflected in the Constitution of Nepal,

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the fundamental law of the land, which prioritizes the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of the country as of utmost importance (*Constitution of Nepal*, 2015, Premble). To achieve these ideals, Nepal's national security policy employs appropriate strategies and techniques, including balance of power and deterrence.

The state plays a central role in international relations, shaping the international system through its interactions with other global actors. Domestically, the government serves as the guarantor of security for its citizens, relying on security forces and law enforcement mechanisms to maintain order and safety. On the global stage, the state functions as an international personality. Although supranational organizations and international law exist, member states remain sovereign entities (Dunne & Schmidt, 2014, p. 107). These organizations lack the authority to impose decisions on sovereign states, particularly powerful ones. Consequently, there is no overarching supranational government. From a realist perspective, this highlights the fundamentally anarchic nature of the international system (Giri, 2021, p. 1; Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 30). In this anarchic environment, the survival through self-help becomes the paramount national interest, as each state must independently navigate and secure its position within a system devoid of centralized authority.

The primary goal of every living creature, including humans, is survival, as all other aspirations, such as wealth, education, and family, depend on it. Similarly, the state prioritizes its own survival, employing various strategies to ensure its continuity. Only when the state's existence is secure can it pursue other objectives, such as the welfare and prosperity of its citizens. In the absence of a 'common interstate government' (Grieco, 1988, 497), the international system operate under the Theory of Balance of Power. This theory acts as a constraint on state power, preventing dominant states from acting arbitrarily in the global arena. It accomplishes this by enabling other states to counterbalance powerful actors, either individually or through alliances. As major powers focus on strategies to safeguard their survival, the balance of power establishes a system of checks and balances, ensuring that larger powers cannot unilaterally dominate smaller ones. This equilibrium fosters cooperation and stability among states. However, shifts within the international system can disrupt this balance, weaken deterrence mechanisms, and increase the likelihood of conflicts or wars. Therefore, maintaining the balance of power is crucial for preserving peace and preventing the escalation of tensions in the global order.

National power is crucial for the survival of a nation-state and its national security in a self-help system. The Theory of Balance of Power describes state behavior in an anarchic international system, where states fear one another due to uncertainty about each other's intentions. States feel secure only when they possess more power than their counterparts. This security dilemma incentivizes the accumulation of power to achieve the highest possible standard of security.

Deterrence, on the other hand, is a fundamental aspect of a country's defence policy, serving as a method to keep potential aggressors at bay. Countries employ various techniques, such as armament, possession of weapons of mass destruction including nuclear arsenals, mobilization of soft power, utilization of international institutions and the international legal regime, and forming alliances with like-minded states to deter aggressors and create equilibrium. Deterrence is a critical military strategy, carefully designed with consideration

of an aggressor's risk calculus, including factors such as war objectives, the cost of war, the probability of a response, and the likelihood of success (Snyder, 2015, p.12).

The Balance of Power Theory explains how major powers in the system interact, with each seeking a favorable balance to secure its position. However, miscalculations regarding the balance of power can sometimes lead to war. Conversely, deterrence focuses on preventing attacks by instilling fear in potential aggressors. Historically, Nepal has maintained its independence through a combination of strategies, including confrontation, non-alignment, and appeasement. In this context, this paper aims to analyze key questions: What is the conception of the Theory of Balance of Power and Theory of Deterrence? How do these theories have an impact on Nepal's national security strategies?

Human Nature and the Evolution of National Security Concepts

The struggle for survival is a fundamental aspect of life for all living things, whether plants or animals. Predators typically roam alone in the jungle, as they do not perceive significant security threats, whereas prey animals often live in herds for protection. Due to limited resources and competition, not all individuals can survive and reproduce (Darwin, 2003, Chapter IV). This highlights the inherent vulnerability and the perpetual struggle for security in human existence. For security reasons, humans began living in groups, which eventually gave rise to families, societies, and, ultimately, nations. Unsurprisingly, security has been a subject of study and debate for as long as human societies have existed (Williams, 2010, p.2).

According to Harari (2015), animal-like humankind first appeared over 2.5 million years ago in East Africa as part of a noisy family of apes (Part One). However, perceptions of human nature differ among scholars. Hobbes (1651) emphasized the selfish and brutal nature of humankind, arguing that in the state of nature, there was a continuous state of war where nothing was unjust. Fraud and force were powerful weapons in such a war (p.79). Conversely, Locke & Laslett (1988) viewed the state of nature as one based on equality, obliging every member of the community to practice mutual love, justice, and charity (p. 270). Kant found a middle ground between these two extremes, asserting that humans are neither beasts nor angels but reasonable beings. Humans are sometimes guided by emotional drives and, at other times, by practical reason and moral obligations (Stevenson et al., 2018, pp. 179-180)Twelve Theories of Human Nature has been a remarkably popular introduction to some of the most influential developments in Western and Eastern thought. Now titled Thirteen Theories of Human Nature, the seventh edition adds a chapter on feminist theory to those on Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Plato, Aristotle, the Bible, Islam, Kant, Marx, Freud, Sartre, and Darwinism. The authors juxtapose the ideas of these and other thinkers and traditions in a way that helps students understand how humanity has struggled to comprehend its nature. To encourage students to think critically for themselves and to underscore the similarities and differences between the many theories, the book examines each one on four points--the nature of the universe, the nature of humanity, the diagnosis of the ills of humanity, and the proposed cure for these problems. Ideal for introductory courses in human nature, introduction to philosophy, and intellectual history, this unique volume will engage and motivate students and other readers to consider how we can understand and improve both ourselves and human society.\" -- Publisher's description","call-number":"128","edition":"7th ed.","event-place":"New York (N.Y.. Human history, marked

by conflict and cooperation, serves as evidence that humans are both selfish and emotionally altruistic. Ultimately, humans are rational beings, possessing the judgment to determine the best course of action to serve their self-interest.

Security arrangements are made with the Hobbesian worst-case scenario in mind. While security is defined as the absence of threat, there is no inherent alignment between individual security and national security. The state may provide individual security to a certain extent, but it does so through the use of coercive power (Buzan, 1983, p. 30). Nonetheless, security is a fundamental prerequisite for the survival of all living beings, akin to oxygen. Just as breathing is often taken for granted, the temporary absence of oxygen can rapidly shift priorities, highlighting that life itself takes precedence over all else. Similarly, the absence of security can terminate a person's existence in the same way that the lack of oxygen makes survival impossible.

The primary concern of security studies at the individual level is the elimination of threats to a person's life. At the state level, security involves ensuring the continuous existence of the state within the international system. State security encompasses various aspects, ranging from the traditional perspective of boundary protection to modern concerns like cybersecurity. A new human-centric approach, emphasizing human security, argues that states should prioritize the well-being of living people rather than focusing on material objects like territorial gain or sentimental notions such as national pride. As different forms of security compete for scarce resources Baldwin (1997) suggested leaving the concept of security open, without confining it to specific core values or vital interests (p. 24). However Buzan et al. (1998) warned that broadening the range of security issues too much is a mistake. They argued that the term "security" should remain confined to military matters and the use of force (p. 1).

While various aspects of security may be interdependent across different levels, the fundamental concern remains the survival of the subject. Just as food is essential to prevent hunger, a clean environment ensure healthy life, and healthcare is necessary to combat illness. Similarly, at the state level, safeguarding sovereignty and independence is often the primary security concern. However, long-term aspects such as prosperity and national well-being are equally crucial for ensuring the healthy existence of the state.

The concept of nation can be likened to a garland of people bound together by factors such as ethnicity, language, religion, culture, geographic origin, pride in history, and a shared sense of unity that creates a common identity. In contrast, the concept of the state is more mechanical, defined by criteria such as a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and the capacity to engage in relations with other states (Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, 1933). Nations often strive to establish their own state to ensure their security, while states work to cultivate a sense of nationhood to better unite their populations. Mearsheimer (2018) writes:

> Nations, which privilege self-determination and worry about their survival, want their own state. At the same time, states themselves have powerful reasons for wanting their people to be organized into a nation, which leads them to play a critical role in fusing the nation and the state together (Chapter 4).

The modern concept of state sovereignty resides in the people, with the unification of individuals through a sense of nationalism ensuring the indivisibility of sovereignty. The fusion of state and nation gives rise to the nation-state. Rousseau (1999) explained that people become willing to form a social contract, whereby each individual agrees to place themselves and their abilities under the authority of the general will. As a collective, they recognize each member as an inseparable part of the whole (p. 55).

National security encompasses a broad range of efforts aimed at safeguarding the emotional, physical, and material well-being of a population and its territory. Central to these objectives is the imperative of ensuring the independent existence of the nation-state within the international system. While a state has internal security institutions, such as the police and judicial systems, to protect its citizens' rights to a dignified life and other fundamental rights, no analogous guarantee mechanisms exist at the global level. In the absence of a global government providing such assurances, a self-help system dominates, as there is no external entity to rescue a state in times of need (Antunes & Camisao, 2017, pp. 15-16).

Although the international community can offer moral support through United Nations General Assembly resolutions and similar measures in defence of the territorial integrity of member states, such resolutions are not legally binding. The United Nations Security Council, the most powerful supranational mechanism to date, cannot pass resolutions against the will of its permanent members (P5). While Security Council resolutions are binding, they are often disregarded not only by great powers like the United States or China but also by smaller states such as Israel or North Korea, especially when backed by these major powers. The rule of international law is inherently weak, relying primarily on mutual consent. Consequently, the survival of non-aligned or neutral states often hinges on their own capability and strategic acumen.

Collective security, which primarily relies on the United Nations Security Council, is often ineffective due to the veto power held by the permanent five (P5) members and their frequent involvement as parties to conflicts. In such circumstances, the balance of power acts as an equalizer to maintain international order.

Interplay Between Theory of Balance of Power and Theory of Deterrence

In international politics, the Balance of Power theory serves as a framework for predicting the behavior of states under conditions of anarchy. It captures the dynamics of state interactions and competition for power, aiming to maintain equilibrium and prevent any single entity from achieving dominance. As such, the Balance of Power theory remains a fundamental concept for understanding and analyzing the complexities of international relations (Kaplan cited in Waltz, 1979, p.57).

Morgenthau & Thompson (1991) view the balance of power as a basic law necessary for society to exist. Without equilibrium, one element will encroach upon another, leading to conflict and destruction. At the state level, constitutions establish checks and balances among state actors. In the international system, nations strive to maintain power structures to prevent other nations from encroaching on their freedom (p. 194). States continually make choices to increase their national power to ensure that no other state becomes too powerful and jeopardizes their existence (Antunes & Camisao, 2017, p.18).

Haas (1953) presents the balance of power as a guiding principle for policymaking, akin to Adam Smith's invisible hand in the market. States, represented by their rulers, are rational actors, and their policy decisions are directed toward maintaining or altering the balance in their national interest (p. 455). Long before the balance of power theory was formalized, state behavior was guided by the inherent law of balance. Kaufman et al (2007) found that ancient state systems were a mixture of anarchy and hierarchy, with a predominant hierarchical structure. They argued that Assyria's conquest of Babylonia, later replaced by Persia; Rome's domination over its Mediterranean rivals; the unification of the warring states by the Qin Empire; and the Mauryan Empire's dominance in India are all examples of hierarchical systems, which contrast with the balance of power theory (p. 230).

The modern implication of the balance of power is reflected in the Westphalian system, where arrangements were made to ensure that no single power dominated Europe. The Peace of Westphelia, 1648, negotiated and signed by Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Sweden, established *statera virtutis* (balance of power) as one of its key principles to prevent the emergence of a hegemony that could dominate the European continent (CVETIĆANIN, 2017, 214).

Balance of power is a system of autopoiesis that has the self-adjustment capability to prevent any power from becoming a global hegemon. The notion of a state achieving global hegemony faces significant challenges, primarily due to geographical constraints. The vast size of the planet and the presence of immense oceans make total domination virtually impossible. Instead, a state may aim to become a regional hegemon, exerting influence within its own region. Furthermore, it is highly improbable that any sovereign nation would willingly surrender its statehood (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.41).

The balance of power is a systemic and broader concept, whereas deterrence is a strategic and targeted defence mechanism aimed at discouraging potential aggressors. Realist theory assumes that the state is a rational actor, and deterrence theory is based on the premise that states refrain from attacking each other only when there is a credible threat of massive retaliation. Before initiating war, military strategists of an aggressor nation conduct a cost-benefit analysis to determine the feasibility of achieving victory. Convincing them that the cost of war exceeds the benefits of victory is the essence of a deterrence strategy.

Achieving a favorable balance of power is one of the most effective methods of deterrence, such as through membership in a powerful military bloc. Another crucial tool for deterrence is a strong military buildup. A military establishment serves a dual purpose: offensive and defensive. In times of war, the primary goal of military buildup is to achieve victory. However, in deterrence, military buildup is aimed at defence. Zagare & Kilgour (2000) discuss the concept of perfect deterrence, which relies on a capable and credible threat. Capability refers to the extent and intensity of retaliatory power, while credibility involves effectively communicating this capability and ensuring that it is perceived as rational and believable (p. 289).

Another significant tool of deterrence is the possession of nuclear weapons. Mearsheimer (2018) makes a counterfactual argument that Colonel Gaddafi would still rule Libya today had he not abandoned his plan to develop nuclear weapons in December 2003 (Chapter 6). However, possessing weapons of mass destruction, even for nuclear deterrence, does not

guarantee their non-use. At times, war breaks out due to a failure in the balance of power or a miscalculation of an opponent's retaliatory capability. If such a situation escalates into nuclear war, the consequences would be catastrophic. Therefore, the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction through disarmament is essential not only for the survival of individual states but also for the survival of humanity as a whole. By addressing underlying grievances and resolving conflicts through diplomatic means, nations can reduce the likelihood of violence and mitigate the risks associated with the use of weapons of mass destruction.

Sun-Tzu (2000) argued that the best strategy is to win a war without fighting (Chapter 3). In this context, countries can maximize their economic and overall power by avoiding unnecessary escalation. Economic factors often play a crucial role in wars between states, as nations have historically gone to war for economic benefits, such as seizing a rival country's resources or securing favorable trade arrangements, while overlooking the cost of war. States frequently squander significant resources on armaments, often exceeding what is necessary for minimal deterrence, which ultimately harms their economic stability. Although armament is intended to ensure the survival of the state, excessive military spending that surpasses what the national economy can sustain can lead to internal collapse as evidenced by the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1991.

Nepal's National Security Techniques

To respond to the dynamics of the balance of power, smaller states can adopt policies of alignment, nonalignment, or neutrality. Neighboring small states of major powers should exercise caution when considering alignment as a security strategy, as major powers typically do not tolerate neighboring countries aligning with opposing camps. Great powers are particularly reactive to unfavorable activities in their immediate vicinity (Mearsheimer, 2018, Chapter 6). For example, the United States perceived the missile system in Cuba as an immediate threat, and similarly, Russia views Ukraine's attempt to join a hostile military bloc in the same way. Though Nepal is not a small state by global standards as it ranks as the 40th largest country by population and the 94th largest by economy among approximately 200 countries in the world (Acharya, 2019, p. 6). It does not qualify for membership in the Small State Forum under the United Nations system (World Bank, 2019). However, juxtaposed with the two most populous countries in the world, Nepal is often considered a small country in comparison to its neighbors, India and China. The notion of a "small state syndrome" is unjustifiable, as no two countries are completely equal in all aspects. In many cases, small states can be more advantageous to larger powers when they remain independent, as their independence removes the need for conquest. For example, Canada has never been a military target of the United States, as it poses no threat to U.S. security interests. Conversely, the U.S. has engaged in conflicts in regions like South Asia, such as its involvement in Afghanistan during the fight against terrorism. Nepal provides strategic benefits to both India and China. India benefits from an open border with Nepal, which requires minimal security investments, and China similarly avoids significant security concerns along the Nepalese border. In contrast, both China and India have made substantial investments in security infrastructure along their shared border. Nepal's independent status thus contributes to a sense of security for both of its powerful neighbors.

The concept of equilibrium in Nepali society can be traced back to Gautam Buddha, the enlightened son of Nepal, who introduced the idea of the Middle Way. Keown (2014) argues that the Middle Way is an important method to achieve defensive deterrence. The Middle Way creates a balance between two extremes: victory and defeat, thereby avoiding violence and war. While defeat is undesirable for any state, victory is not without challenges, as it often comes at a significant cost. Avoiding war outweighs the benefits of a victory built upon the loss of human life and economic resources (p. 660).

Nepal employed the balance of power and deterrence as military tactics long before its unification as a nation during the reign of Lichchhavi King Amshuverma. During his time, the Tibetan emperor Songtsen Gampo in the north and the Indian emperor Harshavardhana posed significant threats to the Nepal Valley. Amshuverma mitigated these threats by establishing marital alliances between royal courts. The Naksal Bhansarhiti inscription serves as evidence that Amshuverma never bowed to foreign emperors (Bajracharya, 2030, p. 355).

As Prithvi Narayan Shah unified Nepal into a modern state, he established the foundational principles of Nepal's survival strategy as an independent nation. He famously described Nepal as a "yam between two boulders," emphasizing the importance of maintaining friendly relations with the Emperor of China in the north and the "Emperor of the sea" (the British monarch) in the south (Shaha, 2070). Understanding the balance of power in the Asian region, Prithvi Narayan Shah adopted a non-aligned foreign policy toward major powers like China and British India while pursuing an expansionist policy toward smaller principalities. Shaha (2070) demonstrated remarkable strategic foresight, predicting that the British might one day seek refuge in Nepal. To prepare for this possibility, he advised identifying Nepal's *sandhisarban* (weak points) and transforming them into fortified strongholds. His deterrence strategy focused on creating obstacles along potential routes that the British might use to invade Nepal (Shaha, 2070). Shah was well aware of the cunningness of the British forces and advised against provoking them by attacking first. Instead, he suggested fortifying hill areas by identifying weaker points that were prone to attack.

During the Rana regime, Tibet held an independent status, and China was significantly weakened after the Opium War. This made Nepal's alignment with British India a pragmatic and effective strategy. However, the Ranas' appeasement policy and subordination to the British Indian regime have faced criticism. For instance, Marx (1947) referred to Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana as an "English dog man" (p. 156). On the other hand, Rose (1971) argues that there was no better option available for Nepal at that time, noting that the Ranas' policy was appropriate for the circumstances in which they lived (p. 174). In the present context, unless Nepal's two powerful neighbors join the same military alliance, the most prudent course for Nepal might be to remain neutral. Actively participating in initiatives like the Non-Aligned

Movement could help Nepal safeguard its independence and sovereignty without provoking either side.

Regional hegemons are likely to intervene in their spheres of influence for security, political, or other reasons (Thapa, 1997, p. 5). Since its unification as a nation, Nepal has recognized its limitations and adopted a non-aligned policy to navigate the existing balance of power. Additionally, Nepal has strengthened its military capabilities and successfully defended itself against both Chinese and British-Indian incursions, effectively deterring further escalations. Today, the metaphorical "two boulders" have not only persisted but have grown larger and stronger. Nepal's commitment to non-alignment and minimum deterrence is more relevant than ever as it continues to navigate the complexities of regional and global geopolitics, ensuring its independence and sovereignty in an increasingly challenging environment.

There is a subtle difference between non-alignment and neutrality. After the Second World War, many countries gained independence from colonial rule and chose not to align with either the capitalist or socialist blocs during the Cold War. While both non-aligned and neutral states avoided polarization, their approaches were distinct (Fischer et al., 2016, p.8). Neutrality is often perceived as a passive stance, whereas non-alignment entails an active commitment to discouraging military polarization and promoting world peace. Nepal's response to the 1962 war between its immediate neighbors, India and China, can be described as neutral. However, Nepal's broader position in international relations is one of non-alignment. On the global stage, Nepal aligns itself with small and weaker nations often subjected to pressure from larger powers, while simultaneously maintaining interest-based engagements with all major powers.

Constitution of Nepal (1962) , through its third amendment, officially incorporated non-alignment as the foundation of the Panchayat system's foreign policy. Subsequent constitutions, including the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal (1990) and the Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) also upheld non-alignment as a directive principle of foreign policy. The current Constitution of Nepal (2015) takes a more systematic approach to foreign policy. Article 5 outlines the fundamental elements of national interest, including the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, nationality, autonomy, self-respect, boundary protection, economic progress, and prosperity. Article 51(a)(5) emphasizes the goal of developing security agencies that are competent, strong, professional, inclusive, and accountable to the people. Similarly, Article 51(a)(6) seeks to prepare citizens to serve the nation when required. The Constitution of Nepal continues to uphold the principle of non-alignment as a cornerstone of the country's foreign policy.

Looking back at Shaha's (2070) 'yam' metaphor, nothing has changed even after 250 years. The two boulders are still present, now even more powerful and strong. The role of the "Emperor of the Sea" is currently performed by the United States, which maintains a

significant position in Nepal's external relations. The conflicting interests of neighboring India and China, along with the partnership between India and the United States to contain China, are creating challenges for Nepal in managing major power rivalries (Bhattarai, 2022, p. 175). Disputes over the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) can be understood in this context. Although both the MCC and the BRI are claimed to be development aid initiatives, Blair et al. (2022) argue that development aid serves as an important instrument to advance donor countries' soft power. While Chinese foreign aid is often free of conditionality or ideological strings, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other Western donors explicitly aim to promote liberal democracy through foreign aid (p.18).

The vertical division of political parties, extending to the public, regarding support for or opposition to the MCC has weakened national unity, which is crucial for building national power. The conditions attached to such aid have jeopardized national unity and weakened Nepal's ability to strengthen its position. Therefore, Nepal must exercise greater caution to avoid being drawn into geopolitical quagmires, especially with the "Emperor of the Sea," who remains as cleaver as during Shaha's (2070) time. Although China strictly adheres to President Xi Jinping's 'five-no' principle, which emphasizes non-interference through aid (Blair et al., 2022, p. 18), opposition to the BRI by certain sections of Nepali society can be inferred as a consequence of geopolitical tensions.

"Amity with all and enmity with none" forms the basis of Nepal's foreign policy (Government of Nepal, 2020, p. 2). Addressing the security concerns of major powers without compromising national sovereignty is a crucial aspect of avoiding aggression. Building a self-reliant state that does not pose a threat to other nations can effectively safeguard Nepal's national security interests. Nepal's survival as one of the oldest independent countries lies in its ability to maintain good relations with its immediate neighbors. At the same time, it must deter any attempts at total annexation by powerful neighbors by signaling the capability for a strong retaliation. This dual strategy has been central to Nepal's efforts to preserve its sovereignty and independence throughout history. Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana's conversation with the British Resident in Kathmandu echoes this sentiment: "[w]e know, you (the British) are a stronger power. You are like a lion, we are like a cat, the cat will scratch if it is driven to a corner, but the lion would soon kill the cat" (Husain, 1970, p. 110; Muni, 1973, p.7).

Way Forward

The Balance of Power theory explains the behavior of states, driven by their primary interest in survival. Given that international law is still evolving and the international system remains fundamentally anarchic, only the fittest states can endure. Therefore, all states must carefully consider power dynamics when formulating their national security policies and strategies.

The Theory of Deterrence involves the strategic use of national power by states to discourage potential aggressors through the fear of a powerful retaliation. While the Balance of Power theory focuses primarily on the manipulation and equilibrium of power, deterrence extends beyond hard power, such as modernizing security forces. It also includes elements of soft power, such as fostering people-to-people connections, high-level diplomatic exchanges, adherence to international law, and effective use of diplomacy.

Given Nepal's strategic geographical position between two Asian giants, India and China, and the shifting balance of power toward Asia, Nepal's response to the international balance of power should center on adhering to its policy of non-alignment. Being non-aligned not only frees Nepal from alliance compulsions but also provides room for cooperation with major powers in both development and defense.

Applying the theory of deterrence, Nepal should prioritize military cooperation with major powers such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia, as well as its neighbors, China and India. Such cooperation would not only position Nepal as a non-threat to these countries but also aid in modernizing the Nepal's security sectors. Since survival is a primary condition for the prosperity and well-being of a country, a certain level of expenditure on building minimum deterrence is unavoidable, even when resources are scarce. To achieve this, Nepal can invest in the modernization of its security sector by procuring foreign military equipment and simultaneously developing its own indigenous military technology through investments in research and development.

As national security is a sensitive issue directly tied to the survival of the state, a more comprehensive and in-depth study is necessary, which lies beyond the scope of this paper.

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