

Political and Cultural Challenge of Nepal-India

Lokendra sitaula

*Lecturer Terhathum Multiple Campus.
Aathrai-6, Terhathum*

ABSTRACT

An Indian Cultural Centre was set up in Kathmandu in August 2007 to showcase the best of Indian culture across Nepali cities. The Indian Cultural Centre in Kathmandu has generated considerable goodwill through the various cultural events it has undertaken in the past. Nepal, being a sovereign country would like to deal with India on an equitable basis. Culturally, Geographically and economically, Nepal is closer to India. The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal and the Republic of India initiated their relationship with the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship and accompanying secret letters that defined security relations between the two countries, and an agreement governing both bilateral trade and trade transiting Indian territory. Nepal also realizes that it can't ignore its southern neighbor India for the sake of better relations with China. In fact, Nepal should opt for a balanced approach with both India and China, which would bring economic benefits and stability in the country.

KEY WORDS: Relationship, Earthquake, Operation, Interconnection, Sentiment.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The 1950 treaty and letters exchanged between the Indian government and Rana of Nepal, stated that "neither government shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor" and obligated both sides "to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighboring state likely to cause any breach in the friendly relations subsisting between the two governments." These accords cemented a "special relationship" between India and Nepal. The treaty also granted Nepalese, the same economic and educational opportunities as Indian citizens in India, while accounting for preferential treatment to Indian citizens and businesses compared to other nationalities in Nepal. The Indo-Nepal border is open; Nepalese and Indian nationals may move freely across the border without passports or visas and may live and work in either country. However, Indians aren't allowed to own land-properties or work in government institutions in Nepal, while Nepalese nationals in India are allowed to work in Indian government institutions.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATUR

Nepal and India have special relationship. Their relationship has given mutual benefits to both the countries. People of each countries too have involved them self in each other's economic and social development. Steady proper and understating relation is the main demand of present time, hence studying present relationship between the two nations and checking their status is significant. As a responsible citizen of the country, it is essential to learn about the relation of country with its neighbors. To conserve the national unity and social harmony among the people of Nepal, it is essential to identify the factors affecting international relationship and suggest the ways out to the political leaders and public too. This research will help the Nepali lawmakers, political leaders and responsible citizen to understand the current Nepal India relationship. In recent years, both China and India have become more responsive to changing dynamics of strategic environment of Nepal. The end of monarchy and the Maoists taking the centre stage in Nepali politics meant they are now having to review, adjust and influence their foreign policies in Nepal. The growing Nepal-China nexus should be seen in the context of India-China power competition in Asia. Essentially Nepal facilitates China's security interests in the South Asian region. Nepal also constitutes an important element of China's South Asia policy. Apart from stating a clear policy towards Nepal, China has been systematically pursuing a multi-dimensional engagement with Nepal. Sino-Indian relations will move on a more or less even keel in the foreseeable future. However, at the same time, the complex overlay of geographical proximity and historical memories on the Sino-Indian strategic landscape will make for strong undercurrents of competition and contest between the two Asian giants. This is a new area in academia and an increasing number of scholars are currently focusing on the subject, allowing widespread presentation or publication of appropriate papers. Therefore, the potential for

doing so in exploring new relationships between Nepal and China especially after abolishment of monarchy and addressing the emerging security environment is extremely high.

The findings will be significant for policy makers of Nepal as they formulate foreign and security policies regarding India and China. They will also help others realize the challenges and opportunities in the face of increasing influence of rising powers in the region. The open border between the two countries remains a unique feature of our relations. Frontier without restriction has greatly facilitated the free movements of our people to each other's territory and enhanced interactions (Khanna, 2003 p. 324). The unwavering commitment to the principles of peaceful coexistence, sovereign equality, and understanding of each other's aspirations and sensitivities has been the firm foundation on which our bilateral relations have been growing further. Nepal's solemn desire to cultivate and foster the cordial and friendly ties with its neighboring countries are reflected in its long standing position of not allowing its territory to be misused by any elements inimical to India and also expects same sort of reciprocity and assurances from her. The review of literature related to Nepal, India and China relation shows that numerous studies have been done so far. Firstly the book on "India and China "(1967) by Sudhakar Bhat, has been studied. In this book the writer explained about various dimensions and aspects between the relation between India and China. He has mentioned the historical friendship between India and China. Writer also tells about the annexation of China on Tibet and how dispute arose between China and India. Going through the last chapter entitled as "Sikkim, Pakistan and China", which covers the relation between China and India and also about Nepal. The book "India and Nepal, a Challenging Relationship" (1995) by S.D. Muni was also studied during the research. This book focuses attention on the changing nature of India- Nepal relations with regard to their critical areas of interest. This book helps to explore the relation between India and Nepal. He has critically evaluated that Sino-Indian relation had direct impact to the development of Nepal.

The book Foreign Policy of India, 2003 written by V N Khanna was studied during the research. Instead of dividing book into the chapters, he has divided the book into many numbers. From numbers 1 to 4 he has tried to mention about the factors shaping India's foreign policy, principals and objectives of India's foreign policy, the policy of Non-alignment policy, etc. From numbers 5 to 7 he has explored the India's relations with Pakistan, China Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. This study is related to the improving relations between China and India and its impact in Nepal. For it, first of all we should know the Nepal - India relations, Nepal - China relations and India- China Relations. So some explanations of this book are very useful for the study. For example, in Number 6 he has explained India's relations with China and in number 7 he has explained India's relations with Nepal. This book is very useful to know the triangular relationship among these three countries. In the context of India- China relations, Mr. Khanna has mentioned the historical background of the India-China relations, border issues, the problem of Tibet, India-China war 1962 and the relations after it etc. Similarly, he has mentioned all-round relations between Nepal and India.

2.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

No two countries share a more intimate and complex relationship than India and Nepal. India is where Nepal's go to study, find jobs, plan marriages, invest in a second home and undertakes pilgrimages and vice versa. After two devastating earthquakes that killed 9000 people, Nepal was confronted with another humanitarian crisis, this time due to a blockade at a crucial crossing on the border with India, which has halted oil and other essential supplies landlocked Nepal obtains from its giant neighbor. The blockade, which Nepal's government blames on India immediately, followed the passage of a new constitution by Nepal on September 19. his paper will focus Relationship and political challenge between Nepal-India find answers to the following pertinent questions.

2.2 OBJECT OF THE STUDY

Now we are aware of India Nepal friendship and relation. In modern times country can't prosper alone. With the development in advance technology and invention effect of one country can be clearly seen in other country or especially on neighboring country. Like said we can choose friends but not neighboring country because of geographical presentation. Hence for the purpose of dual benefits there is no other alternative than having good and steady relationship. Objective of the study is to find.

2.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOG

The methodology for the proposed study would utilize both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data would include documents of the government agencies, press release, joint statements and organizational reports and the secondary source of data will include books, news reports, various journal articles, newspaper clippings, and various academic papers.

2.3.1 PRIMART DATA COLLECTION: This Research will be depended both on primary and secondary source of Information. The Primary data will be collected through interview, focus group discussion and seminars. Both qualitative and quantitative nature of information will be obtained at primary and secondary

levels. Structured questionnaires will be used to collect qualitative data from selected Intellectuals and Expertise in Pre determined time and Places.

2.3.2 DATA ANALYSIS : The data collected through different methods will be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. All data will be placed properly as well as data will be processed with tabulations and charts for better and precise understanding. The research is primarily based on secondary data which includes published books, research papers and internet websites related to the problem. Various books, research papers and internet websites has been consulted to understand the Nepal India relationship. For the study of the concerned subject, the researcher has taken a qualitative approach and thus, descriptive and analytical methods have been chosen.

3.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEPAL-INDIAN

India and Nepal share a unique relationship of friendship and cooperation characterized by open borders and deep-rooted people-to-people contacts (Ramakant, 1976, p. 70). There has been a long tradition of free movement of people across the borders sharing family ties and culture. Nepal shares a border of over 1850 kms in the east, south and west with five Indian States – Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The India-Nepal (Glaser, 1993, p. 65). Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 forms the bedrock of the special relations that exist between India and Nepal. Under the provisions of this Treaty, the Nepali citizens have enjoyed certain advantages in India, availing facilities and opportunities at par with Indian citizens. Nearly 6 million Nepali citizens live and work in India.

There are regular exchanges of high level visits and official interactions between India and Nepal. In 2014, Prime Minister Modi visited Nepal twice – in August for a bilateral visit and in November for the SAARC Summit. The Nepali Prime Minister, than Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli, was on a State visit to India from 19 to 24 February 2016. The than Nepali Prime Minister, Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' paid a state visit to India from 15-18 September 2016. Again, the Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' visited India from 15-17 October 2016 to participate in the BRICS BIMSTEC leaders' Summit in Goa. Shri Pranab Mukherjee, than Hon'ble President of India paid a State visit to Nepal from 2-4 November, 2016 accompanied by a high-level delegation included MoS Defence Dr. Subhash Bhamre and four Members of Parliament. The President of Nepal, Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari paid a five day State visit to India from 17-21 April 2017. Shri Krishna Bahadur Mahara (Patnaik, 2004, p.72). Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Nepal visited India on 4-5 July 2017. External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj paid a visit to Kathmandu on 10-11 August, 2017 for BIMSTEC Foreign Minister Meeting. Prime Minister of Nepal than Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba was on a State visit to India from 23-27 August 2017. India and Nepal have several bilateral institutional dialogue mechanisms, including the India-Nepal Joint Commission co-chaired by External Affairs Minister of India and Foreign Minister of Nepal. The Fourth Joint Commission Meeting was held on 26-27 October 2016 in New Delhi.

When a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal on 25 April 2015 (followed by a powerful aftershock of 7.4 magnitude on 12 May 2015), the Government of India swiftly dispatched National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams and special aircrafts with rescue and relief materials to Nepal. India's assistance, which reached Nepal within six hours of the earthquake, included 16 NDRF teams, 39 IAF aircraft sorties with 571 tons of relief material including rescue equipment, medical supplies, food, water, tents, blankets and tarpaulin. Medical teams from India were deployed in various parts of Nepal (Rajan, 2005. p. 89). India helped in restoring 3 power sub-stations in Kathmandu valley. The total Indian relief assistance to Nepal amounted to approx. US\$ 67 million. After the initial rescue and relief phase, India committed US\$ 1 billion (which comprises US\$ 250 million grant and US\$ 750 million concessional Line of Credit) for post earthquake reconstruction of Nepal during the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction (ICNR) held in Kathmandu on 25 June 2015. In February 2016, an MoU on Utilization of the Grant of US\$250 million was signed. Government of India is supporting 50,000 housing beneficiaries in Nuwakot and Gorkha districts, and will reconstruct/retrofit 70 higher secondary schools, 2 libraries over 150 health facilities and 28 cultural heritage sector projects. MoUs for implementation of projects in these sectors were signed during PM Deuba's visit to India in August 2017. Similarly, in September 2016, a Line of Credit (LoC) Agreement for post-earthquake reconstruction projects for US\$ 750 million was signed. The Line of Credit was operationalized in February 2017.

Since 1996, Nepal's exports to India have grown substantially. India is Nepal's largest trade partner and the largest source of foreign investments, besides providing transit for almost the entire third country trade of Nepal. India accounts for over two-third of Nepal's merchandise trade, about one-third of trade in services, 46% of foreign direct investments, almost 100% of petroleum supplies and a significant share of inward remittance on account of pensioners and workers. Main items of exports from India to Nepal are petroleum products, motor vehicles and spare parts, M.S. billets, machinery and spares, medicines, hot rolled sheets, wires, coal, cement, threads and chemicals. The main items of exports from Nepal to India are polyester yarn, textiles,

jute goods, threads, zinc sheet, packaged juice, cardamom, G.I. pipe, copper wire, shoes and sandals, stones and sand (Dutta, 1993. p. 86).

A three-tier mechanism established in 2008, to discuss all bilateral issues relating to cooperation in water resources and hydropower has been working well. Regular meetings are being conducted on and off site. In the area of river training and embankment construction (Muni, 1995, p. 68). Government of India has been providing assistance to Nepal for strengthening and extension of embankments along Lalbakeya, Bagmati and Kamala rivers. Started in 2008, with the present assistance, the total grant assistance already disbursed for embankments construction along these rivers amounts to over NR 4.5 billion.

There are more than twenty 132 KV, 33KV and 11KV transmission interconnections which are used both for power exchange in the bordering areas and power trade. This first high capacity Dhalkebar (Nepal)-Muzaffarpur (India) cross-border power transmission line charged at 132 KV was jointly inaugurated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Nepali Prime Minister Mr. K.P. Sharma Oli, during the latter's visit to India in February 2016, through which 80 MW of electricity is being supplied to Nepal. The line is expected to be ready for operation at 400 KV by August 2019. The two 132 KVA lines between Kataiya-Kushaha and Raxaul-Parwanipur built with Indian grant assistance were inaugurated during PM Deuba's visit to India in August 2017, enabling import of an additional 100 MW of power. At the request of Nepal, in order to alleviate power shortages during winters, an additional 220/132k V, 100 MVA transformer was installed to supply additional 80 MW of power to Nepal from 1 January 2017 onwards from Muzaffarpur-Dhalkebar transmission line. A total of about 350-370 MW of power is currently being supplied to Nepal through different transmission lines, majority of the power import is done through Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur, Kataiya-Kusaha, Tanakpur-Mahendranagar and Ramnagar-Gandak Transmission Lines. Nepal Electricity Authority and NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam (NVVN) signed a supplementary Power Purchase Agreement in May 2017 for importing 160 MW of electricity through the Muzaffarpur-Dhalkebar Transmission Line, extended till December 31, 2017.

An Agreement on "Electric Power Trade, Cross-border Transmission Interconnection and Grid Connectivity" was signed between GoN and GoI on 21 October 2014. Two mechanisms, Joint Working Group (JWG) and Joint Steering Committee (JSC) envisaged under the Agreement have been established and met in November 2014. A Joint Technical Team (JTT) has been formed for preparation of long-term integrated transmission plan covering projects upto 2035. On 5th December 2016, Ministry of Power, Government of India has issued guidelines on cross-border trade of electricity. The Fourth meeting of JWG/JSC was held in Kathmandu from 13-14 February 2017. The next meeting is scheduled to be held in New Delhi (Bhatt, 1993. p. 86).

The Indian Army and the Nepalese Army (NA) have long standing cooperation. Bilateral defence cooperation includes assistance to NA in its modernization through provision of equipment and training (Thapa, 2005, p. 38). About 250 training slots are provided every year for training of NA personnel in various Indian Army Training institutions. The 12th IndoNepal Army Battalion level Joint Exercise was conducted at Saljhandi (Nepal) from 03 September 2017 to 16 September 2017. The 13th Indo-Nepal Army Battalion level Joint Exercise is proposed to be conducted in India in May 2018. The two sides are also working to expand cooperation in the area of exchange of information on disaster management. Gorkha Soldiers in the Indian Army The Gorkha Regiments of the Indian Army are raised partly by recruitment from hill districts of Nepal. Currently, about 32,000 Gorkha Soldiers from Nepal are serving in the Indian Army. During the year 2016-17, pensions in excess of INRs 2796.5 Crores (NRs 4474.4 Crores) were disbursed by the Indian Army to about 1,25,000 retired Gorkha Soldiers and civilian pensioners, who had served in the Indian Army and other Central & State Services. In addition to Military Pension Branch Kathmandu, Pension Paying Offices Pokhara and Dharan, there are 22 District Soldier Boards in Nepal, all functioning under the Defence Wing, Embassy of India, which arrange the disbursement of pensions and organize welfare programmes for re-training, rehabilitating and assisting ex-Gorkha Soldiers and their families. Foundation stone of new Pension Paying Office at Butwal has been laid on 04 Sep 2017 (Glaser, 1993, p. 45). The new Pension Paying Office will benefit approx 45,000 pensioners in and around Butwal. Since 1950, India and Nepal have been awarding Army Chiefs of each other with the honorary rank of General in recognition of mutual harmonious relationship between two Armies.

Over the years, India's contribution to the development of human resources in Nepal has been one of the major aspects of bilateral cooperation. GOI provides around 3000 scholarships annually to Nepali nationals for various courses at the Ph.D/Masters and Bachelors in India, and Bachelors and plus-two levels in Nepal. These scholarships cover a wide spectrum of subjects including engineering, agriculture, pharmacology, veterinary sciences, computer application, business administration, music, fine arts, etc. There are limited number of seats in Self-finance for MBBS/BDS, PG Medical and Bachelor of Engineer, etc. courses for study in India.

Government of India initiatives to promote people-to-people contacts in the area of art & culture, academics and media include cultural programmes, symposia and events organized in partnership with different local bodies of Nepal, as well as conferences and seminars in Hindi. Familiarization visits to India by Nepali

journalists/editors and short term training in India for Nepali editors/journalists/experts/officials in the field of print & electronic media and archaeology are also arranged. An MoU between the Sahitya Kala Akademi (India) and the Nepal Academy is already in operation (Thapa, 2005, p. 48). Four more MoUs have been signed between Doordarshan and Nepal TV, Press Council of India and Press Council of Nepal, Lalit Kala Akademi, India and Nepal Academy of Fine Arts, and an MoU on Youth Exchange between the Governments of India and Nepal. MoUs between the Sangeet Natak Akademi, India and the Nepal Academy of Music & Drama. A MoU between Akashwani (AIR) India and Radio Nepal are under consideration to promote cultural and information exchanges between the two countries. The Governments of India and Nepal have signed three sister-city agreements for twinning of Kathmandu-Varanasi, Lumbini-Bodhgaya and JanakpurAyodhya. India is establishing an E-library system across Nepal (Muni, 1995, p. 98) . The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is involved in the renovation of the Pashupatinath Temple Complex in Kathmandu. Two ASI teams have already visited Kathmandu to assess the work to be done for conservation/restoration of the Pashupatinath shrine (Nicol, 2020, p.65), for which a MoU is under consideration. An MoU between ICCR and Kathmandu University, Dhulikhel (Nepal) has been signed for setting up ICCR Chair at the University and efforts are underway to sign an MoU between ICCR and Tribhuvan University for setting up ICCR Chair at the University (Ramakant, 1976, p. 90). The Nepal–Bharat Library was founded in 1951 in Kathmandu. Its objective is to enhance and strengthen cultural relations and information exchange between India and Nepal (Bhatt, 1996, p. 89).

3.2 POLITICAL CHALLENGE

Around 6,00,000 Indians are living/domiciled in Nepal. These include businessmen and traders who have been living in Nepal for a long time, professionals (doctors, engineers, IT personnel) and labourers (including seasonal/migratory in the construction sector). An Indian Citizens' Association of Nepal (ICAN) was formed on 14 September 1990. ICAN is the only association of resident Indian citizens in Nepal with branches at Pokhara, Damak and Bhairahawa, and provides a platform for discussion on matters pertaining to the legitimate interest of resident Indians in Nepal and works for the protection of such interests. K. Diplomatic Representation Besides Embassy of India which is located in Kathmandu, a Consulate General Office is located in Birgunj (South-Central part of Nepal) and a Representative Office is also located in Biratnagar (South Eastern part of Nepal). Government of Nepal has its Embassy in New Delhi and it also has a Consulate General Office in Kolkata (Ramakant, 1976, p. 90). Indian firms are the leading investors in Nepal, accounting for about 40% of the total approved foreign direct investments. As on 31 May 2017, Indian ventures lead foreign investment with FDI commitments of INR. 5159.86 corers, whereas the total proposed FDI commitments to Nepal from all countries amounts to INR. 13178.15 crores. An additional investment of US\$ 2.5 billion would come to Nepal from the Indian private sector and PSUs for development of two important hydro-electric projects viz. Upper Karnali and Arun III, each 900 MWs. There are about 150 operating Indian ventures in Nepal. They are engaged in manufacturing, services (banking, insurance, dry port, education and telecom), power sector and tourism industries (Muni, 1995, p. 58) .. Some large Indian investors include ITC, Dabur India, Hindustan Unilever, VSNL, TCIL, MTNL, State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Life Insurance Corporation of India, Asian Paints, CONCOR, GMR India, IL&FS, Manipal Group, MIT Group Holding, Nupur International, Transworld Group, Patel Engineering, Bhilwara Energy, Bhushan Group, Feedback Ventures, RJ Corp, KSK Energy, Berger Paints, Essel Infra Projects Ltd. and Tata Power etc. The B.P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation was set up in 1991 through a MoU signed between the Governments of India and Nepal (Dahal, 2064, p. 34). The Foundation's objective is to foster educational, cultural, scientific and technical cooperation between India and Nepal and to promote mutual understanding and cooperation through sharing of knowledge and professional talents in academic pursuits and technical specialization (Thapa, 2005, p. 58).

More than 551 large, intermediate and small-scale projects at an estimated cost of NRs. 76 Billion have been implemented across Nepal under Indian financial support since 1951. The total economic assistance earmarked under 'Aid to Nepal' budget for FY 2017-18 amounts to Rs. 375 crore. During the FY 2017-18, a total of around 18 intermediate and large projects are under various stages of implementation in Nepal. These include creation of a Nepal Bharat Maitri Dharamshala at Pashupati area at Kathmandu; construction of a Polytechnic at Hetauda, providing Indian faculty support to BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences at Dhahran (Muni, 1995, p. 78) . Installation of 2700 shallow tube wells in various districts across Nepal etc. Till date, India has gifted 602 ambulances and 118 school buses to various institutions and health posts across Nepal's 75 districts. 17 fire tenders were gifted to the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development in August, 2016, for enhancing fire-fighting capacity of municipal administration in different parts of Nepal (Bhatt, 1996, p. 88).. Despite the close linguistic, marital, religious, and, cultural ties, at people to people level between Indians and Nepalese, since late 2015, political issues and border disputes have strained relations between the two countries with anti-Indian sentiment growing amongst the government (Glaser, 1993, p. 65). Further because of border disputes between the two countries, a boundary agreement hasn't yet been ratified by either government.

IV. CONCLUSION

India-Nepal relations and requires both sides to recalibrate their “special” relationship. To succeed in their endeavor to chart a mutually beneficial and sustainable partnership, both countries will have to take a deep look at history to avoid past mistakes. Government of India provides development assistance to Nepal, focusing on creation of infrastructure at the grass-root level, under which various projects have been implemented in the areas of infrastructure, health, water resources, education and rural & community development. In recent years, India has been supporting projects in Nepal for development of infrastructure through upgradation of roads in the Terai areas; development of cross-border rail links at Jogbani–Biratnagar, Jaynagar–Bardibas, Nepalgunj Road–Nepalgunj, Nautanwa–Bhairhawa, and New Jalpaigudi Kakarbhitta; and establishment of Integrated Check Posts at Raxaul–Birgunj, Sunauli–Bhairhawa, Jogbani–Biratnagar, and Nepalgunj Road–Nepalgunj. Government of India supported the Election Commission of Nepal in May 2017 with vehicles and other logistical materials for smooth conduct of local elections in Nepal. Apart from grant assistance, Government of India has also extended four lines of credit to the Government of Nepal for US\$ 100 million, US\$ 250 mn, US\$ 550 mn and US\$ 750 mn for execution of infrastructure development projects and post-earthquake reconstruction projects as prioritized by GON. India will have to grow a thicker skin against Nepalese nationalist rallying cries against India. To most Nepalese, the Chinese grass across the Himalayas will naturally look greener than that on India’s Gangetic plains.

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