

Analysis of Geo-Political Relations between India and Nepal from 1947-2020

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Abstract: The study aims to delve into the multifaceted and intricate nature of their relationship, analyzing the historical, political, economic, cultural, and security factors that have influenced their interactions. With shared geographical proximity and a history of colonial influence, the relationship holds significance within the broader context of international affairs. The analysis explores the historical ties, cultural connections, and power dynamics that have shaped their interactions. It also scrutinizes the impact of bilateral agreements, territorial disputes, and economic collaboration on the relationship. Moreover, the paper addresses security concerns and the role of cultural exchanges in fostering mutual understanding. In essence, this study provides an in-depth insight into the complexities and dynamics that have defined the geo-political relations between India and Nepal during the specified timeframe.

Keywords: - Border Issues, Cultural Affinities, Geo-Political Relations, Historical Ties, Hydropower, Regional Power, Territorial Disputes, Water Resources

Introduction:

The paper " Analysis of Geo-Political Relations between India and Nepal from 1947-2020" takes a deep dive into the complex relationship between India and Nepal over the span of more than seventy years. This study aims to uncover the various factors that have influenced their interactions, including history, politics, economics, culture, and security, from the time they gained independence in 1947 until 2020. The relationship between India and Nepal holds

significance on the global stage due to their shared border, historical ties, and diverse connections. After gaining independence from British rule in 1947, both nations charted their paths, while maintaining their geographical proximity. Over time, their interactions have woven a tapestry of diplomatic ties, challenges, cooperation, and occasional conflicts, garnering attention from scholars, policymakers, and the world.

To begin, the analysis places their relationship in the context of post-colonial South Asia. It explores the backdrop against which India and Nepal emerged as independent states, emphasizing their shared heritage and early camaraderie. The study dives into the myriad of factors that have molded India-Nepal relations. It examines history, geography, culture, and the intricate power dynamics that have influenced their interactions. Bilateral agreements and treaties are a focal point of the analysis, shedding light on diplomatic efforts and mutual understanding. These documents reflect successes and failures, revealing how they've shaped stability between the nations.

Territorial disputes and border issues are addressed to understand their nuanced relationship. Managing or escalating these matters reveals diplomatic strategies and their broader significance. Economic ties are scrutinized, assessing trade, investment, and development. This assessment uncovers the economic dimensions of their relationship and its impact on diplomacy. Security concerns, like terrorism, insurgency, and cultural exchanges, are also explored. By comparing these factors, the analysis paints a comprehensive picture of the India-Nepal relationship.

In essence, the analysis traverses time, unraveling the complex threads that bind India and Nepal. It carefully examines historical, political, economic, and cultural aspects, aiming to shed light on the intricate dynamics that have connected and occasionally strained these neighboring nations.

Research Methodology: - The study adopts a historical research design to comprehensively analyze various parameters related to the social, economic, cultural, and geopolitical landscapes of India and Nepal. This involves critical analysis of collected data to understand their conditions. The sample includes economic, cultural, and political aspects. Data will be sourced

from historical books, biographies, archives, newspapers, and institutions. This qualitative and quantitative research work involves visits to archives, museums, and libraries in India and Nepal.

Both primary and secondary data will be collected through suitable methods. Field visits may be conducted for accuracy in primary data. Processed data will be presented in an easily understandable format. The research aims to identify areas of collaboration for the welfare of citizens of both nations. A comprehensive research paper will be produced to present findings.

1. Historical Context and Background:

Here is a comprehensive overview of the historical events, social changes, and political developments related to both India and Nepal from 1947 to 2020:

India -1947-2020

- Independence and Partition (1947): India gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947, resulting in the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan. The partition led to mass migration, communal violence, and the creation of two separate nations based on religious lines.
- Integration of Princely States: India worked to integrate numerous princely states into the newly formed nation. The process involved negotiations, referendums, and at times, military action.
- Nehruvian Era (1947-1964): India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, emphasized secularism, democracy, and non-alignment. The country focused on industrialization, agriculture reforms, and economic planning through Five-Year Plans.
- Indo-China War (1962): A border dispute with China escalated into a brief conflict, highlighting territorial and security concerns in India's northern regions.
- Indo-Pak Wars (1965, 1971): India engaged in conflicts with Pakistan, primarily over the Kashmir region. The 1971 war led to the creation of Bangladesh and reshaped regional dynamics.

- Emergency (1975-1977): Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency, suspending civil liberties and facing criticism for authoritarianism.
- Economic Reforms (1991): India initiated economic liberalization, opening up its economy to global trade and investment. This shift paved the way for higher economic growth and modernization.
- Nuclear Tests (1998): India conducted a series of nuclear tests, becoming a declared nuclear state and eliciting international reactions.
- Economic Growth and Global Role (2000s-2020): India experienced rapid economic growth, emerging as a global technology and services hub. It also focused on strengthening diplomatic ties and engaging in international organizations.

Nepal- 1947-2020

- End of Rana Rule (1951): Nepal saw the end of Rana rule through a democratic revolution, transitioning to a constitutional monarchy under King Tribhuvan.
- 1950 Treaty with India: Nepal signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India, establishing a close bilateral relationship covering security and economic cooperation.¹
- Political Instability (1950s-1960s): Nepal faced frequent changes in government, instability, and power struggles among political parties.
- Panchayat System (1961-1990): King Mahendra dissolved democracy and established the Panchayat system, a one-party state with limited political freedoms.
- Democratization (1990): People's Movement in Nepal led to the restoration of democracy, adoption of a new constitution, and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy.
- Maoist Insurgency (1996-2006): Nepal experienced a decade-long civil war between Maoist rebels and the government, leading to significant political changes, the abolition of the monarchy, and the establishment of a federal democratic republic.

¹ “1950 India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship”, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.
<https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/6295/>.

- **New Constitution (2015):** Nepal adopted a new constitution that aimed to address ethnic and regional disparities, but it faced protests and tensions in certain regions.
- **Natural Disasters and Challenges:** Nepal faced major natural disasters, including the devastating earthquake in 2015 that exposed weaknesses in infrastructure and disaster management.
- **Foreign Relations and Geopolitics:** Nepal navigated its relationships with neighboring India and China, seeking to maintain sovereignty while pursuing economic development and political stability.

2. POST-COLONIAL ERA, THE END OF MONARCHY IN NEPAL, AND INDIA'S EMERGENCE AS A REGIONAL POWER

The period after colonial rule ended, Nepal transitioned from monarchy to democracy, and India became a stronger regional player, these three historical changes had a big impact on how India and Nepal interacted. Here's how each change mattered:

After Colonization: When both India and Nepal got free from colonial rule in 1947, they faced similar struggles. This common experience made them feel a bond, like they were in it together. But it also brought challenges as they tried to figure out who they were and how they fit in the world.

Shared Struggles: The fact that they both went through tough times under colonial rule made them feel like they were on the same side, which led to them cooperating and helping each other.

Sovereignty and Identity: Both India and Nepal wanted to be their own bosses and keep their own cultures strong. Sometimes, they worried that the other might get too involved in their affairs.

End of Monarchy in Nepal: Nepal changed from a country ruled by a king to a democratic republic where people had more say in how things were run. This shift in politics had a big impact on their relationship.

Changing Dynamics: The way Nepal was ruled completely changed. This meant that how they dealt with India also had to change, because their system of government was now different.

Shared Democratic Values: India supported Nepal in becoming a democracy, which helped make their relationship positive. Both countries believed in democracy, so this helped them get along.

India's Bigger Role: India became a stronger country in the region, which meant it had more influence on its neighbors like Nepal. India's economy grew, its military got stronger, and it worked with other countries more.

Cooperation Chances: India's growth meant it could work with Nepal on things like trade, development, and building important things together. This could help Nepal too.

Balancing Act: Nepal needed to find a good way to deal with India. They depended on India for many things, but they also wanted to keep their own choices and not feel controlled.

Security Worries: Because India got stronger, Nepal worried that India might try to control or change things in Nepal. This made Nepal concerned about its own safety and control.

So, these changes in history - the end of colonial rule, Nepal becoming a democracy, and India getting stronger in the region - all had a big impact on how India and Nepal worked together and faced challenges.

3. Factors Shaping Geo-Political Relations:

The way India and Nepal interact with each other has been shaped by many important factors. Let's look at some of them:

Historical Ties and Cultural Affinities: India and Nepal have a deep history and share similar cultures. They have religious connections, with many people practicing Hinduism and Buddhism. These ties have created a sense of unity and understanding between the two countries. People from both sides can easily visit each other due to the open border they share. This has led

to cultural exchanges, family bonds, and even marriages across the border. Religious sites in both countries are also important for people from both sides, making their spiritual links stronger. These cultural ties have influenced their diplomatic relations, like the Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1950. Such cultural exchanges have contributed to diplomatic relations, exemplified by the Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950), which in part was influenced by their shared heritage.²

Geographical Proximity: India and Nepal are neighbors, so they are very close geographically. This has a big impact on their relationship. They share borders and are near each other, which has made it easy for them to trade and interact. The geography has also helped them with projects like using water for electricity and making agreements for working together on shared rivers. Historically, their close geographical ties facilitated cultural and religious exchanges, reinforcing shared traditions and affinities.³ But being so close also means they have to work together to solve problems, like managing the border and dealing with security issues.

Economic Interests and Trade: India and Nepal trade a lot with each other. They buy and sell goods and work on projects together. This helps their economies grow and makes their relationship stronger. They have signed agreements to make it easier to trade. But sometimes, they also have disagreements about trade and money. They work together on big projects, like making electricity from water, to help both countries. As decades passed, economic interactions intensified, with bilateral trade agreements being signed to facilitate smoother cross-border commerce.⁴

Water Resources and Hydropower: Nepal has a lot of water, and India needs electricity. So, they work together to use Nepal's water to make power for India. This helps both countries. They

² "1950 India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship", Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/6295/>.

³Bhattarai, B. R. (2018). "Nepal-India Relations: Impediments and Opportunities". *Journal of Nepal Studies*, 1(1), 16-33.

⁴Poudel, M. S. (2017). "Indo-Nepal Trade Relations: A Review of Theories and Recent Trends". *Economic Journal of Nepal*, 40(3), 242-255

have agreements and discussions about how to do this. Sometimes, there are problems because they have to share resources and benefits fairly.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity: Both India and Nepal are diverse countries with many languages and cultures. This has both helped them understand each other and brought challenges. They need to respect each other's cultures and languages. Sometimes, they have discussions and agreements about how to do this.

Diplomatic and Historical Agreements: India and Nepal have signed agreements in the past that helped them work together. These agreements show how they want to cooperate and be friends. But sometimes, these agreements also cause disagreements if one side feels that the other is not following the agreement.

External Influences: Other countries like China and the United States have also influenced India and Nepal's relationship. They want to be friends with both countries, and this sometimes makes things complicated.

Migration and Labor Mobility: Many Nepali people go to India to work, and this has made their relationship stronger. But sometimes, there are problems about how these workers are treated. This makes both countries work together to make sure things are fair for everyone.

Territorial Disputes and Border Issues: Sometimes, India and Nepal disagree about where their borders are. This can cause tension between them. These disputes have a long history and are sometimes connected to bigger events in the region.

All these factors together make the relationship between India and Nepal complex. They have many things in common that help them work together, but they also have challenges they need to solve. It's important for both countries to understand each other's needs and concerns to keep their relationship strong.

4. Bilateral Agreements and Treaties

Several significant bilateral agreements and treaties have marked the relationship between India and Nepal after 1947, shaping their diplomatic interactions and cooperation. These agreements reflect the evolving nature of the relationship and address various aspects such as trade, transit, security, and cultural exchanges. Here, I will analyze some of these agreements with specific references:

1. Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950):

The Treaty of Peace and Friendship, signed on July 31, 1950, stands as a pivotal and historic accord that has left an enduring mark on the bilateral relationship between India and Nepal. This landmark agreement holds immense significance due to its profound influence on shaping the interactions and cooperation between the two neighboring nations. The timing of the treaty's signing is noteworthy, as it coincided with a momentous juncture in Nepal's political landscape. It was inked shortly after Nepal's transition from the autocratic Rana regime to a constitutional monarchy, symbolizing a critical turning point in the diplomatic ties that bound these two nations. The signing of the treaty occurred at a juncture when Nepal was undergoing a transformative period, moving away from the centuries-old Rana rule towards a more open and democratic governance structure. This shift in Nepal's internal dynamics was accompanied by a reevaluation of its foreign policy priorities and an exploration of new avenues for international engagement. Against this backdrop, the Treaty of Peace and Friendship assumed a role of strategic importance, signifying the dawn of a new era in the diplomatic relationship between India and Nepal.

The treaty's signing was not just a formal diplomatic event but an embodiment of the shared aspirations of both countries for mutual respect, friendship, and cooperation. The transition from autocracy to constitutional monarchy in Nepal paralleled India's journey as an independent nation in the post-colonial world. This shared context fostered an atmosphere of commonality and camaraderie, as both countries endeavored to establish their identities on the global stage while nurturing their historical and cultural connections.

Key Provisions:

The treaty consists of several key provisions aimed at fostering friendship, cooperation, and mutual understanding between India and Nepal:⁵

- **Sovereignty and Non-interference:** The treaty reaffirms respect for each other's sovereignty and security, prohibiting threats by third parties.
- **Open Borders and Equal Treatment:** Notably, the treaty ensures open borders, allowing citizens to move, reside, and own property in each other's territories. Equal rights and privileges promote cross-border interactions.
- **Trade and Commerce:** The treaty encourages economic cooperation with fair trade relations and dispute resolution mechanisms.
- **Cultural and Economic Exchanges:** Emphasis is placed on fostering cultural and economic ties, supporting religious and cultural visits.
- **Security and Consultation:** The treaty commits India and Nepal to consult on shared interests and security, aiming for regional peace.
- **Foundation of Friendship:** The treaty established a basis for a strong and lasting friendship by promoting trust and cooperation.
- **People-to-People Connectivity:** Open borders and equal treatment facilitated cross-border interactions, cultural exchanges, and family ties.
- **Economic Cooperation:** The treaty's trade provisions bolstered economic collaboration, leading to increased trade, investments, and joint ventures.
- **Diplomatic Framework:** The treaty created a diplomatic mechanism for addressing security concerns, regional stability, and common interests through consultation and cooperation.

Criticism of the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950

⁵ “1950 India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship”, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. <https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/6295/>.

- **Perception of Unequal Benefits:** Critics argue that the open border provision has led to a perceived imbalance in benefits. While Nepal benefits from open access to India's markets and resources, India's interests are not equally reciprocated, leading to concerns about the economic and social impact on Nepal.⁶
- **Loss of Sovereignty:** Some critics contend that the treaty compromised Nepal's sovereignty and autonomy by requiring it to consult India on matters of foreign policy and security. This raised concerns about Nepal's ability to independently pursue its national interests without external interference.
- **Limited Economic Benefits:** While the treaty aimed to promote economic cooperation, critics argue that Nepal did not receive substantial economic benefits in return. The trade provisions, for instance, were seen by some as not providing Nepal with equal access to India's markets.
- **Dependency:** The treaty's provisions, while promoting people-to-people ties, have also been criticized for contributing to Nepal's dependency on India in various sectors, including trade, economy, and infrastructure development.
- **National Pride:** Critics argue that the treaty undermined Nepal's national pride and self-esteem, portraying the country as weaker and more dependent on India, which could have cultural and psychological implications.
- **Perceived Inequities:** Some critics contend that certain clauses in the treaty, particularly related to security and military cooperation, could potentially compromise Nepal's strategic interests and security.
- **Public Opinion:** Over the years, public sentiment in Nepal has at times been critical of the treaty, with some segments of the population perceiving it as a historical artifact that needs to be reconsidered.

⁶Acharya, Harsha V. "Nepal-India Treaty of Peace and Friendship: Challenges, Opportunities and Future." *Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 78, no. 1, 2017, pp. 189-199.

2. Gandak Agreement (1959):

The Gandak Agreement of 1959 stands as a significant bilateral accord between India and Nepal, signifying a joint commitment to collaborate in the development and prudent management of the water resources associated with the Gandak River.⁷ This watercourse, known as the Narayani River in Nepal, traverses the territories of both nations, holding substantial potential for various developmental endeavors, particularly in the realms of irrigation and power generation. At its core, the agreement sought to harness the hydrological capabilities of the Gandak River, thereby addressing critical agricultural and energy requirements in both India and Nepal. This commitment to shared development emerges as a pivotal aspect of the agreement, reflecting the aspiration to optimize the river's potential for the mutual benefit of the two countries. The agreement's emphasis on "benefit sharing" underscores the intent to ensure that the positive outcomes of harnessing the Gandak River's waters are equitably distributed, reinforcing the collaborative spirit that underpins the agreement.⁸

The Gandak Agreement of 1959, while laudable in its aim to promote collaborative water resource development, has encountered a range of challenges and limitations. Delays in project implementation, uneven benefit sharing, political changes, environmental concerns, and issues related to conflict resolution have hindered the agreement's full potential. Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts, transparent communication, and adaptive strategies to ensure the equitable and effective utilization of the Gandak River's waters for the benefit of both India and Nepal.

⁷Narain, Sunita. "India-Nepal Cooperation in Water Resources Development: Challenges and Opportunities." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 35, no. 18, 2000, pp. 1531-1537.

⁸Uprety, Dilli Raman. "India-Nepal Water Relations and Regional Security." *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2008, pp. 604-619.

4. Transit Treaty (1971) and Revised Treaty (2003): The Transit Treaty of 1971 and the Revised Transit Treaty of 2003 are pivotal agreements that define the transit rights and trade relations between India and Nepal. These treaties have played a crucial role in facilitating bilateral trade and connectivity, contributing to the economic development and cooperation between the two nations. The Transit Treaty of 1971 and its subsequent Revised Treaty of 2003 were pivotal agreements between India and Nepal that facilitated transit arrangements for landlocked Nepal through India's territory. The 1971 treaty provided Nepal access to India's ports and assured unrestricted transit of goods to and from third countries. It aimed to boost Nepal's economic connectivity and reduce its dependence on a single trade route. The Revised Treaty of 2003 further refined and modernized transit provisions, emphasizing mutual benefits and addressing concerns regarding transit fees and documentation. These agreements enabled Nepal to utilize Indian ports for trade with other nations, enhancing its economic viability and regional integration while showcasing the intent of both countries to foster mutually beneficial trade relations.

Criticism of Transit Treaty (1971) and Revised Treaty (2003):

The Transit Treaty of 1971 and its updated version in 2003 were agreements between India and Nepal that aimed to make it easier for Nepal to trade with other countries using Indian ports and roads. However, these agreements have been criticized for a few reasons. Some people say that they have made Nepal rely too much on India for trade, which could make Nepal's economy weaker. Others think that sometimes India has used these agreements to control Nepal's decisions. Also, some people feel that these agreements haven't always been fair in terms of how much Nepal has to pay for using Indian ports and roads, which has caused some unhappiness in Nepal. Additionally, some folks question if these agreements are still useful considering how trade and the world have changed. In short, while these agreements were meant to help Nepal, they have faced criticism for not always balancing Nepal's needs and independence well.

5. Border Disputes and Territorial Issues:

1. Kalapani-Limpiyadhura Dispute: The history of the Kalapani dispute is intricate and multifaceted. In the early 19th century, Nepal's territorial expansion led to conflict with British India, culminating in the Anglo-Nepal war and the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli.⁹ The western boundary was defined as the Kali River originating in the Himalayas, but without specific maps or coordinates. Challenges emerged north of Garbyang village, where multiple tributaries converge to form the Kali River. Determining which tributary should be labeled as the Kali river became a point of contention. Due to the lack of infrastructure, the road's alignment did not raise concerns during its decade-long construction. However, it emerged as a sensitive issue during a time of domestic political instability. The inauguration of the road by the Indian Defense Minister, Rajnath Singh, on May 8, 2020, served as a catalyst for discussions around the Kalapani dispute.

Impact of the kalapani dispute

Unilateral Border Change: In May 2020, the Nepal government released a new map of the country that included a territory called Kalapani, which Nepal had been claiming since 1996. This disputed territory, located on the western border, has been a subject of inconclusive discussions between the two countries.¹⁰ However, the new map not only incorporated Kalapani but also extended Nepal's claims by changing the course of a tributary of the Kali River that defines the boundary between Nepal and India as established in the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli between Nepal and the East India Company.

⁹ "Treaty of Sugauli, 2nd December 1815 between East India Company and the Kingdom of Nepal", Wikisource. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Sugauli.

¹⁰"Political Map of India", Survey of India. http://www.surveyofindia.gov.in/files/Political%20Map%20of%20India_1.jpg.



Source: Map from article by Kanak Mani Dixit and Tika P Dhakal in Scroll.in. <https://scroll.in/article/962226> / territoriality-amidst-covid-19-a-primer-to-the-lipu-lek-conflict-between-india-and-Nepal

Constitutional Amendment and Nationalism: The revised map was introduced as a constitutional amendment proposal and was overwhelmingly supported. Nepal's President signed it into law in June 2020. This move was met with widespread support and a surge in Nepali nationalism. Even opposition parties largely voted in favor of the amendment, showing the significant backing for this change.

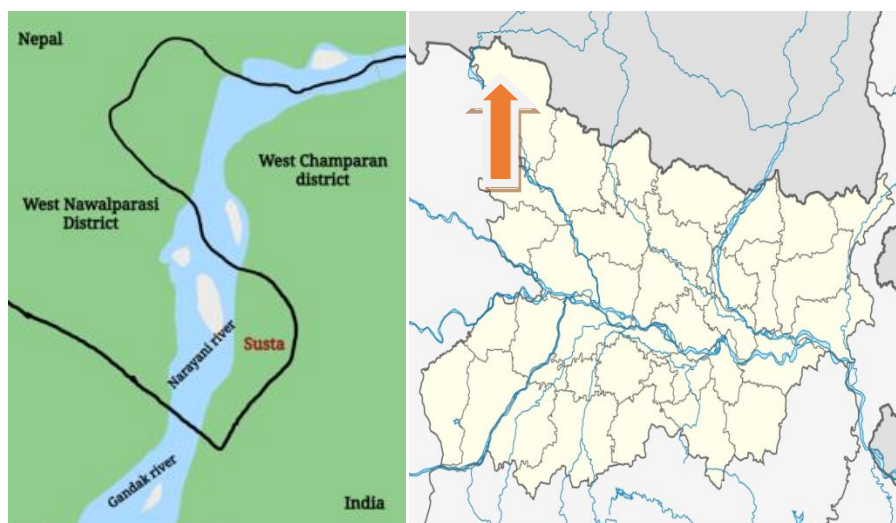
2. Susta Dispute: The Susta dispute is a longstanding territorial disagreement between Nepal and India, revolving around a land strip near the confluence of the Narayani (Gandak) and Rapti Rivers in Nepal's southern plains. Originally under Nepal's control, this area near Nichloul, Uttar Pradesh, India, now falls within India's territory due to changes in the course of the Gandak River. This area under dispute totals over 140 km² and is being controlled by the Indian Government¹¹.

The dispute stems from conflicting claims to sovereignty over Susta, rooted in historical territorial divisions during British rule. The colonial era's arbitrary border delineations

¹¹ <https://www.inventiva.co.in/stories/what-is-behind-the-india-nepal-border-dispute/>

disregarded local cultural and ethnic affiliations, fostering ambiguities and tensions. The shifting river courses of the Narayani and Rapti Rivers have further complicated the situation, making it hard to determine precise boundaries outlined in historical treaties.

Diplomatic efforts by Nepal and India have been ongoing to address the complex Susta dispute, as its impacts extend to local communities residing in the region. Beyond territorial claims, uncertainties affect resource access, infrastructure development, and administrative services for these communities. Both countries recognize the importance of friendly bilateral relations and collaboration in other areas, given the strong cultural, familial, and economic ties that persist across the border. These connections have contributed to mutual understanding and stability amidst the ongoing dispute.



3.Madhesi Movement:

The Madhesi movement is a socio-political phenomenon in Nepal rooted in the concerns and aspirations of the Madhesi community, primarily residing in the southern Terai region. The movement is shaped by historical, cultural, and political factors, reflecting the challenges faced by the Madhesi people in terms of identity, representation, and socio-economic development.

Background: The Madhesi community is distinct from Nepal's predominantly hill-dwelling populations and has historical ties to Indian culture due to its geographical proximity and historical trade links. Despite their significant population, Madhesi people have often felt marginalized, stemming from historical biases and unequal resource distribution.

Grievances and Demands:

Political Representation: Central to the movement is the demand for greater political inclusion and proportional representation. Madhesi groups seek to ensure their voices are heard and their interests are considered in legislative bodies and government institutions.

Federalism and Identity: The movement highlights issues of federalism and cultural identity. Madhesi people advocate for a federal system that acknowledges their distinct cultural and linguistic identity, granting them autonomy and decision-making power.

Inequality and Discrimination: Activists stress economic disparities, unequal resource access, and discrimination in areas like education, healthcare, and employment. They call for policies that address these inequalities and provide equitable opportunities.

Timeline of Movements:

2007-2008: The movement gained momentum after Nepal's civil war ended. Demands included proportional representation, federal restructuring, and cultural recognition.

2008: Protests erupted after a new constitution was declared. Madhesi groups were dissatisfied with representation and autonomy provisions.

2015: The new constitution led to renewed protests. Madhesi groups rejected it, claiming it didn't address their demands.

2015-2016: Protests escalated into strikes, blockades, and clashes. Trade disruptions with India caused shortages, impacting Nepal's economy.

Border Blockade and Regional Dynamics: The movement's protests at the India-Nepal border led to supply disruptions, exacerbating Nepal's economic challenges. India's perceived involvement strained bilateral relations. The blockade led to skyrocketing prices, scarcity of goods, and disruptions in sectors. The blockade exacerbated existing challenges in Nepal's infrastructure and supply chains.¹²

Resolution Efforts: Negotiations between Madhesi leaders, Nepal's government, and political parties aimed to address concerns. Constitutional amendments were proposed to enhance representation and autonomy for marginalized groups.

Significance: The Madhesi movement underscores the complexity of addressing identity, citizenship, and political inclusion within a diverse nation. It influences Nepal's socio-political landscape, sparking discussions about federalism, representation, and cultural preservation. The movement reflects a struggle for equal representation, cultural recognition, and socio-economic advancement, resonating beyond the Madhesi community and shaping broader conversations about Nepal's future.

Recommendations for Dispute Management:

The recommendations for managing the border disputes between India and Nepal include recognizing the significance of the issues, addressing them promptly, and being open to compromises. A joint committee should be formed with diplomatic and military representatives to work on resolution. Diplomatic efforts should involve presenting historical records, involving experts, respecting sovereignty, and considering ecological concerns. Gathering accurate information using modern technology, engaging with the local population, and responsible media practices are essential. Economic cooperation, infrastructure development, and leveraging open border benefits are crucial. Water-related matters should be addressed, and a structured

¹²Nepal blockage: Six ways it affects the country”, BBC New, 12 December 2015.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35041366>

resolution process with a defined timeframe is suggested. Overall, these measures aim to foster understanding, trust, and a constructive approach to resolving the disputes.

6. Security Concerns and Regional Dynamics:

The security concerns that have influenced the India-Nepal relationship encompass cross-border terrorism, regional stability, border management, and geopolitical influence. The shared concern over cross-border terrorism and insurgency arises from the porous Himalayan border that allows for covert movement of militants and weaponry, posing threats to both nations. Efforts have been made to address these concerns through diplomatic channels and cooperation.

Regional stability is vital due to the geographic proximity and cultural ties between India and Nepal. Instability or conflicts within Nepal can impact India through migration, political unrest, and ethnic tensions. Diplomatic engagement and security cooperation have been employed to manage these risks.

The open border, while emblematic of their interconnectedness, poses security challenges. Lack of stringent border controls leads to criminal activities such as human trafficking, narcotics trade, and arms smuggling. Collaborative initiatives and technological advancements have been sought to enhance border management without compromising the open border's benefits.

Geopolitical influence also shapes the relationship, particularly Nepal's historical connections with India and China. Nepal's balancing act in its foreign policy aims to maintain harmonious relations with both neighbors while safeguarding its sovereignty. India's concerns about China's expanding presence in Nepal have triggered discussions on security cooperation and a shared interest in ensuring regional stability.¹³

Diplomatic efforts, dialogues, and cooperative agreements play a crucial role in addressing security concerns and promoting mutual understanding. Multilateral forums like SAARC

¹³(Reference: Acharya, S. (2019). India-Nepal Relations: Emerging Realities and Future Prospects. Strategic Analysis, 43(2), 97-112.)

facilitate discussions on regional security. The complexity of historical ties, geopolitical interests, and contemporary security challenges underscores the intricate nature of India-Nepal relations, pushing both nations to achieve a balance that respects their history while addressing security challenges through diplomacy. While diplomatic channels and collaborative efforts have been employed to address these concerns, the persistent nature of these threats underscores the need for sustained vigilance and cooperation to safeguard both countries.¹⁴

7. Nepalese Inclination towards China

Nepal's inclination towards China has evolved due to a combination of factors, including historical experiences, economic considerations, political dynamics, and regional influences. This shift in Nepal's foreign policy has been of interest to observers, given its historical ties with India. Here's a detailed breakdown of Nepal's inclination towards China: Nepal's engagement with China has been misunderstood as a strategy to gain leverage over India, but it aligns with Nepal's tradition of pursuing diversified foreign partnerships and capitalizing on its strategic location. While seeking an independent relationship with China, Nepal faces the challenge of India's unease over growing Chinese influence. Both Nepal and China express commitment to a meaningful engagement. Nepal's motivation lies in historical grievances with India's perceived assertiveness and disregard for sensitive issues. Instances like river treaties, border disputes, and harsh border force behavior led Nepal to explore alternatives. China's emergence as an ally offers new possibilities, despite the complex India-Nepal history.

India's Perceived Hawkishness: Nepal has at times perceived India as having a "hawkish" and self-centered approach in dealing with sensitive matters, including border disputes, river treaties, and border encroachments. This perception has led to dissatisfaction in Nepal regarding its relationship with India.

¹⁴ (Reference: Devkota, R. (2018). Nepal's evolving security environment: impact on India's security. *Strategic Analysis*, 42(3), 212-226.)

Open Border Concerns: The open border between India and Nepal has been a contentious issue. Despite its benefits, Nepal has faced challenges related to demographic changes, unchecked movement, and cross-border criminal activities.

Economic Dependence on India: Nepal's heavy economic dependence on India has led to concerns about its vulnerability and lack of leverage in its relations with India.

Diversifying Partners: Nepal's strategy to engage with China is part of its broader approach to diversify its foreign relations and reduce its dependence on India.

Trade and Transit Routes: Nepal's reliance on India for trade and transit has led to economic challenges. Seeking alternative routes and access to markets through China aligns with Nepal's economic interests.

China's Economic Engagement: China's investments in Nepal's infrastructure, education, and health sectors, along with its participation in economic initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), have attracted Nepal's attention.

Trans-Himalayan Railway: China's plans to develop a railway connecting Tibet with Nepal could significantly boost connectivity and trade for Nepal, providing an alternative to maritime routes.

Ideological Alignment: Nepal's communist parties have favored China due to ideological similarities and shared views on certain issues. This alignment has been reinforced by China's economic and political engagement.

Balancing Act: Nepal's desire to balance its relationships with India and China has led to a more pragmatic engagement with both neighbors. This approach allows Nepal to assert its sovereignty and pursue its national interests.

China's Soft Power: China's investment in education and language training programs, such as Mandarin language schools, aims to enhance its soft power influence in Nepal and potentially create a labor force for its expanding economy.

Implications for India:

Nepal's growing proximity to China has implications for India's regional influence. China's engagement with Nepal has been partly prompted by India's actions along its border and the evolving Indo-US relationship. Nepal's inclination towards China doesn't necessarily indicate a shift away from India, but rather a desire to maintain a balanced foreign policy and expand its options.

The Way Forward

China's engagement with Nepal is not a new development, and India's ability to compete with China for influence in Nepal depends on its capacity to challenge China and address its own controversial approaches towards Nepal. While Nepal's reliance on India remains vital, India's strategy to minimize Nepal's engagement with China is becoming less viable. To move forward, India needs innovative strategies, policies, and initiatives that bring tangible benefits to Nepal and address vulnerabilities arising from its engagement with China. Nepal's growing trade deficits with both India and China have led to its welcoming stance towards China. India should depart from traditional security angles and proactively engage Nepal through economic, developmental, and infrastructure projects. As Nepal becomes a member of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), India's position becomes more challenging, and both countries need to find new ways to move forward for mutual benefit in a shifting regional and global landscape.

Conclusion

The analysis of India-Nepal geopolitical relations spanning from 1947 to 2020 reveals a complex journey characterized by historical connections, changing dynamics, challenges, and shared aspirations. This period witnessed the transition from centuries-old ties to modern diplomatic engagement, shaped by historical, cultural, and geographic factors. The post-colonial era established interactions marked by mutual respect and the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which emphasized open borders, economic collaboration, and cultural exchange. However, territorial disputes, power dynamics, and internal political shifts introduced periodic strains to the

relationship. The end of Nepal's monarchy led to democratic aspirations and greater diplomatic engagement, as India's regional power status brought opportunities and sensitivities related to sovereignty. The evolution of regional and global geopolitics further complicated their interactions, demanding a careful balance between national interests and external influences. Throughout, geographical proximity facilitated connections, economic cooperation, and cultural exchanges, while posing challenges in security, borders, and migration. Successful joint projects, trade agreements, and water resource management efforts culminated from these interactions. Amidst this journey, the enduring historical, cultural, and social ties between the two nations persisted, even amid contemporary complexities. The critical analysis highlights the need for continuous dialogue, flexibility, and innovative solutions to navigate the intricate web of history, challenges, and aspirations. As the relationship evolves with both cooperation and tensions, the analysis serves as a reminder that diplomacy is fluid and influenced by internal and external factors. Moving forward requires acknowledging past successes and shortcomings, fostering mutual understanding, and developing a relationship that reflects the aspirations of both nations. Nepal's recognition of China and India's complex power dynamics underlines the importance of Nepal's independent policy choices and India's cooperative diplomacy. Emphasizing Nepal's sovereignty and facilitating independent policy choices aligns with India's interests. The evolving time has reshaped not only India-China relations but also Nepal's relationship paradigms. Both nations are employing soft power tools to exert influence. The enduring people-to-people relationship, geographic proximity, and historical ties are transcendental, even as Nepal faces border issues with both China and India. Amidst Nepal's diplomatic challenges, maintaining a stable political system and a strong foreign policy are crucial for fostering beneficial relationships with both neighboring giants.