

Geopolitical Dynamics in South Asia: A Comparative Study of Chinese and Indian Interests in the Sovereignty and Politics of Nepal

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Abstract

Nepal, a landlocked nation strategically positioned between China and India, plays a pivotal role in South Asia's geopolitics. Historically, Nepal has preserved its sovereignty despite external pressures, particularly from its powerful neighbors. In the 21st century, the competition between China and India has intensified, with both nations pursuing their strategic, economic, and security interests in Nepal. China prioritizes stability, adherence to the One-China policy, and economic integration, while India emphasizes historical ties and strategic involvement in Nepal's politics. This study investigates the geopolitical dynamics influencing Nepal, focusing on the period after 2005, when Nepal transitioned from a monarchy to a federal democratic republic. The study aims to explore the historical evolution of Nepal's political landscape, analyze the motivations driving Chinese and Indian interests, and evaluate their impact on Nepal's sovereignty and development. Adopting a qualitative approach, the research utilizes secondary data from scholarly publications, reports, and expert interviews to provide a comprehensive analysis. The findings reveal divergent strategies: China adopts a non-interference policy emphasizing economic collaboration, while India's active political involvement has often led to disputes. The conclusion highlights Nepal's critical need to balance its foreign relations, safeguard sovereignty, and leverage its strategic position for stability and sustainable growth.

Keywords: Geopolitical Dynamics, South Asia, Chinese and Indian Interests, Sovereignty Politics of Nepal

Introduction

Nepal, a landlocked nation nestled between China and India, occupies a strategic geographical position in South Asia. Despite its relatively small size and economic challenges, Nepal has historically maintained its sovereignty while navigating complex relationships with its two powerful neighbors. These interactions have been marked by competing interests and significant influence from both China and India, each pursuing their own strategic goals in the region.

Nepal's modern statehood began with King Prithvi Narayan Shah's unification of smaller principalities in 1769, creating a centralized monarchy and establishing the framework for Nepal's foreign policy (Rai, 2010). The Anglo-Nepalese War (1814–1816) and the subsequent Sugauli Treaty marked a significant turning point, as Nepal lost a substantial portion of its territory and came under the indirect influence of British India. This historical episode not only reshaped Nepal's geopolitical boundaries but also set the stage for the growing involvement of foreign powers in its domestic and international affairs.

In the 21st century, as China and India strive for regional hegemony and global influence, Nepal's strategic importance has grown. Both nations view Nepal as critical to their security and economic agendas. For China, Nepal is a key component of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), offering a gateway to South Asia. India, on the other hand, considers Nepal a vital buffer state and an integral part of its sphere of influence. These overlapping interests have led to intensified competition, as both powers seek to consolidate their presence in Nepal's political, economic, and cultural domains.

Nepal's political history has further amplified its susceptibility to external influence. From the century-long Rana regime, bolstered by British imperial support, to the transition to a Federal Democratic Republic in 2015, Nepal has experienced significant political transformations. These changes have often coincided with shifts in the strategic interests of China and India. The abolition of the monarchy and subsequent political restructuring have created new opportunities and challenges for Nepal in maintaining a balanced relationship with its neighbors while safeguarding its sovereignty.

This research seeks to analyze the historical and contemporary dimensions of Chinese and Indian interests in Nepal, comparing their motivations, strategies, and implications. By examining the interplay of external influence and internal governance, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Nepal's role in South Asia's geopolitical landscape.

Statement of the Problem

Nepal's unique position as a sovereign nation situated between two rising global powers has rendered it vulnerable to external influences. Historically, Nepal has managed to preserve its independence, but the strategic interests of China and India have often undermined its political stability and sovereignty. The competition between these neighbors has intensified following

Nepal's transition to a Federal Democratic Republic, raising critical questions about the implications of their involvement:

- When and how did Nepal's diplomatic relationships with China and India develop?
- What are the historical and contemporary dynamics of the relationship between China and India?
- What are the primary interests driving China and India's engagement in Nepal?
- Why has the influence of China and India in Nepal increased since the abolition of the monarchy?

These questions highlight the need to examine the underlying factors shaping Nepal's interactions with its neighbors and to understand the broader implications for its sovereignty and governance.

Objectives of the Study

This research is guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore the historical evolution of Nepal's political landscape and its interactions with China and India.
2. To analyze the motivations behind China and India's heightened interest in Nepalese politics.
3. To identify and compare the strategic, economic, and cultural interests of China and India in Nepal.
4. To evaluate the influence of China and India on Nepal's political and economic development.
5. To provide insights into how Nepal can effectively manage its relationships with China and India to uphold its sovereignty and foster balanced development.

Significance of the Study

This research holds significant value for policymakers, scholars, and students interested in South Asian geopolitics. By providing a comparative analysis of Chinese and Indian interests in Nepal, the study aims to:

1. Offer a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics shaping Nepal's relationships with its neighbors.
2. Highlight the strategic importance of Nepal in regional and global politics.
3. Identify key factors influencing Nepal's ability to maintain a balanced foreign policy.
4. Inform policy recommendations for strengthening Nepal's sovereignty and political stability.

Limitations of the Study

While the scope of this research is broad, certain limitations must be acknowledged:

1. **Temporal Scope:** The study focuses primarily on the period after 2005, limiting its ability to address more recent developments.
2. **Geographical Scope:** The research is confined to Nepal's interactions with China and India, excluding other international influences.
3. **Data Constraints:** The analysis relies on secondary data sources, which may not fully capture the nuances of Nepal's complex geopolitical relationships.
4. **Contextual Variations:** Political, economic, and cultural contexts in Nepal, China, and India are continually evolving, potentially impacting the generalizability of the findings.

Despite these limitations, the study endeavors to provide a robust and insightful analysis of the geopolitical dynamics influencing Nepal's sovereignty and governance.

Literature Review

The historical relations between Nepal and its neighbors, China and India, span several centuries and reflect intricate cultural, economic, and political exchanges. Before 1949, Nepal's northern boundary was shared with Tibet, fostering strong connections based on religious and economic ties. However, following China's annexation of Tibet in 1949, the geopolitical landscape shifted significantly, with China becoming Nepal's immediate northern neighbor. Diplomatic relations between the two nations were formally established on August 1, 1955 (Manandhar, 1994).

India, on the other hand, emerged as an independent state following the end of British colonial rule in 1947. Diplomatic ties between Nepal and India were officially initiated on June 13, 1947. Since then, Nepal has consistently sought to maintain beneficial relationships with both China and India, navigating a complex and fluctuating dynamic influenced by shifting regional and global contexts (Lohani, 2013).

China's contemporary engagement with Nepal has been heavily influenced by its strategic priorities. The formal establishment of diplomatic relations in 1955 was a turning point in reintegrating Nepal into a broader geopolitical framework following its historical ties to Tibet. Analysts like Lamsal (2020) argue that China's involvement in Nepal encompasses economic, geopolitical, and strategic dimensions, highlighting investments in infrastructure, trade, and development as pivotal elements of the bilateral relationship.

India's interactions with Nepal are rooted in its historical role as a regional power and the legacy of colonial and post-colonial dynamics. Scholars such as Dutta (2007) emphasize India's significant influence on Nepal's political transformations, including the abolition of the Rana

regime and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. This influence was underpinned by India's geographical proximity, economic strength, and political aspirations. Nehru's approach to Nepal, which positioned the country as a buffer state within India's sphere of influence, remains a key theme in understanding their bilateral relations (Upreti, 2012).

Ram Kumar Dahal's analysis of Nepal's foreign policy, also included in *Nepalese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads*, designates King Mahendra as the primary architect of modern Nepalese diplomacy. Dahal emphasizes Mahendra's role in diversifying Nepal's international relations during the post-1950 period, fostering connections with numerous global powers to ensure national independence and economic growth (Dahal, 2015, pp. 43–44).

The strategic autonomy of Nepal in determining its political systems is underscored by Rajan Bhattarai in an interview with Ram Bahadur Rawal, published in *Nepal National Weekly*. Bhattarai asserts that Nepal's political framework should remain an internal matter, free from external influences, a position that reflects ongoing concerns over sovereignty and foreign intervention (Rawal, 2015, p. 30).

Jaideep Mazumdar's paper explores the evolving dynamics among Nepal, India, and China, focusing on how frequent high-level dialogues between India and China have fostered a "Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity." This relationship underscores the opportunities for concurrent development between the two Asian giants while highlighting Nepal's strategic position amidst their growing competition (Mazumdar, 2020).

The geopolitical implications of India's policies towards Nepal are discussed by Sumit Ganguly and Brandon Miliate in their article "India Pushes Nepal into China's Arms." The authors analyze the unofficial blockade following Nepal's promulgation of its new constitution in 2015, arguing that India's coercive tactics, including restrictions on essential goods, strained bilateral relations and pushed Nepal closer to China (Ganguly & Miliate, 2015).

The competition between India and China for influence in Nepal is further elaborated by Keshav Prasad Bhattarai, who critiques India's geopolitical strategies as exploitative. Bhattarai contends that India's policies often foster internal dissent within Nepal, undermining its stability and sovereignty (Bhattarai, 2015, p. 6).

Sanjeev Shakya highlights the historical mistrust and inequality characterizing Nepal-India relations, advocating for a reassessment of this dynamic to foster mutual collaboration over the next fifty years. He emphasizes the importance of building a framework that addresses past grievances and establishes equitable partnerships (Shakya, 2015, p. 6).

In *Mao and China's Foreign Policy Perspectives*, Dhurba Kumar discusses China's principle of state equality and its implications for Nepalese sovereignty. Kumar notes that China's historical experiences and Maoist ideologies continue to shape its approach to regional

diplomacy, underscoring Nepal's strategic value in China's South Asian policy (Kumar, 2010, p. 212).

Sudha Ramachandran examines the strategic importance of Nepal to India post-Tibet's annexation, which transformed Nepal into a critical defense buffer. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 institutionalized Nepal's alignment with India's security framework, reflecting the intertwined nature of their bilateral relationship (Ramachandran, 2007).

Madhavji Shrestha critiques Nepal's foreign policy strategies in "Nepal's Ties with India, China," identifying a lack of systematic planning and strategic clarity. Shrestha emphasizes the need for evidence-based policymaking to navigate the complexities of Nepal's relations with its powerful neighbors (Shrestha, 2014).

Dabhade and Pant's neo-realist perspective underscores the competitive dynamics between India and China in Nepal, highlighting their efforts to maximize influence. They argue that smaller states like Nepal are not passive recipients but active participants navigating the regional power balance (Dabhade & Pant, 2004, p. 167).

While extensive literature examines Nepal's foreign relations with India and China, the existing studies predominantly focus on historical and geopolitical dynamics. There is a limited exploration of how Nepal can effectively balance these relationships to achieve sustainable development and safeguard its sovereignty. Furthermore, the role of domestic political structures in shaping foreign policy strategies remains underexplored. This research aims to fill these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of Nepal's foreign policy strategies in the context of its evolving geopolitical landscape.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design supported by qualitative methodologies to investigate the complex social dynamics surrounding the competing interests of China and India in Nepal. The research integrated analytical, comparative, descriptive, and historical methods to offer a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Nature and Sources of Data

The study predominantly relied on secondary data obtained from diverse sources such as academic books, peer-reviewed journals, magazines, newspapers, scholarly articles, and reputable online platforms. These secondary resources formed the foundation for an in-depth analysis of the topic. Moreover, the methodology incorporated historical and analytical approaches to situate the research within a broader contextual framework.

Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

Data collection encompassed both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was derived from interviews with individuals possessing expertise in Chinese and Indian relations with Nepal, including journalists and political leaders. Secondary data was gathered from institutional reports, scholarly publications, journals, and bulletins. To enhance the analysis, insights were drawn from interviews or focus group discussions with experts in Nepalese studies, journalists reporting on regional conflicts, and individuals involved in examining the socio-political dynamics of Nepal. These perspectives provided valuable firsthand information to complement the secondary data.

Chinese and Indian Interests in Nepal

Nepal holds a distinctive position among South Asian countries, having preserved its independence during the era of British colonial dominance. This unique historical context has significantly influenced Nepal's foreign policy in two key ways. First, Nepal is recognized globally as a sovereign, non-aligned, and independent state, which has earned it widespread respect, goodwill, and cooperation from the international community. Second, Nepal has cultivated an image as a peace-loving and amicable nation, distinguishing itself on the global stage.

In the current geopolitical climate, Nepal's relationships with its immediate neighbors, India and China, have become increasingly critical. India perceives Nepal as a strategically vital partner, particularly in terms of security considerations. Conversely, China regards Nepal as an important neighbor due to its proximity to the sensitive Tibet Autonomous Region in South-Western China. As a result, Nepal's geopolitical significance is intricately tied to the primary interests of these two regional powers.

The driving force behind any nation's foreign policy is its pursuit of national interests. Historically, and even today, states engage in international relations to safeguard and advance these interests. For Nepal, its geographical position between India and China, coupled with a history marked by regional conflicts, has heightened its strategic value. In recent years, competition between India and China for influence in Nepal has intensified.

Although India and China continue to have unresolved border disputes, notably dating back to the 1962 war, their economic and commercial cooperation has grown. Both nations aspire to enhance their global prominence and pursue political, economic, and security interests in Nepal. India, in particular, is watchful of China's expanding engagement with Nepal, given that China is India's largest trading partner globally, while India remains a significant market for Chinese exports.

As emerging economic powers, China and India are striving to strengthen their geopolitical influence in South Asia and beyond. This competition is evident in their rapid development of military capabilities and increasing roles in global affairs. Despite their rivalry, both nations share significant historical, cultural, and economic ties with Nepal, underlining the importance of mutual collaboration.

The primary interests of China and India in Nepal can be summarized as follows:

1. **Geostrategic Influence:** Both nations seek to expand their strategic foothold in Nepal due to its geographical and political importance in the region.
2. **Economic Engagement:** Enhancing trade and investment opportunities in Nepal is a key priority for both countries.
3. **Security Concerns:** Nepal's location impacts the regional security strategies of China and India, shaping their broader regional policies.
4. **Cultural and Historical Ties:** Both countries place significant value on their shared historical and cultural connections with Nepal, which influence diplomatic relations.

Understanding these interests provides valuable insight into the complex geopolitical interactions surrounding Nepal and underscores its strategic importance to its two powerful neighbors.

Chinese Interests in Nepal

China's involvement in Nepal is primarily shaped by its strategic and economic priorities. Key areas of focus include security concerns, economic cooperation, and maintaining regional stability. China regards Nepal as a vital partner in safeguarding its national interests and advancing its broader geopolitical objectives.

Security Interests

China's foremost interest in Nepal is ensuring security and stability, particularly in relation to Tibetan separatist activities. Nepal's proximity to Tibet makes it a critical area for China to monitor and influence. The presence of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, some of whom engage in activities perceived as threats to Chinese sovereignty, remains a major concern. For instance, tensions arose in 2007 when Tibetan activists attempted to disrupt the Olympic torch relay in Kathmandu. Such incidents highlight China's vigilance in preventing Nepal from becoming a base for anti-China activities, often allegedly supported by external powers.

To address these concerns, China has strengthened diplomatic and military ties with Nepal. High-level visits by Chinese officials, such as Lieutenant General Ma Xiaotian of the People's Liberation Army, and increased financial assistance to Nepal's security forces have reinforced bilateral cooperation. These measures aim to ensure effective border control and minimize the movement of Tibetan refugees to India.

Strategic Interests

Nepal's strategic location serves as a buffer zone for China, particularly concerning the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Stability in Nepal directly impacts China's territorial integrity and national security. Historical events, such as the Khampa rebellion in 1959, underscore Nepal's importance in China's security calculations. Following the annexation of Tibet in 1950, Nepal has gained even greater prominence in China's South Asia policy.

China's strategic vision includes using Nepal as a gateway to enhance its influence in South Asia. During a 2014 visit, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi emphasized Nepal's potential role as a bridge between China and the region, advocating for trilateral cooperation among Nepal, China, and India.

Economic Interests

China views Nepal as an integral part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a global infrastructure development strategy aimed at enhancing trade connectivity. Through initiatives like the Upper Trishuli-3A Hydro-Power Project and the Pokhara Regional International Airport, China has demonstrated its commitment to investing in Nepal's infrastructure. Such projects not only facilitate economic integration but also serve China's long-term strategic interests.

China's economic engagement with Nepal extends to the hydropower sector, where Chinese companies, including Sinohydro and Hydrochina Corporation, are involved in significant projects. Additionally, China's financial assistance to Nepal, in the form of grants and soft loans, underscores its intention to deepen economic ties while promoting regional stability.

Social Interests

The historical social connections between Nepal and China, established through royal alliances and cultural exchanges, continue to play a role in shaping bilateral relations. China seeks to deepen its social engagement with Nepal by supporting educational initiatives and infrastructure projects, thereby fostering a positive image among the Nepalese populace.

Nepal's position as a host to Tibetan refugees engaged in anti-China activities is a significant concern for Beijing. To counter these influences, China has initiated various measures, such as establishing Confucius Institutes in Nepal. These institutes promote Chinese language and culture, aiming to enhance bilateral relations and mitigate the impact of activities originating from Tibetan refugee communities.

Cultural and Religious Interests

Cultural and religious ties are integral to the strengthening of Nepal-China relations. Historically, cultural exchanges—such as those led by Nepalese artist Araniko and Buddhist scholars—have established a foundation for cooperation. Nepal’s global religious significance as the birthplace of Lord Buddha and the Mansarovar pilgrimage site holds particular relevance for China.

China supports the development of Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha, into an international pilgrimage and tourism hub. This commitment, including a \$3 million development plan, reflects China's broader strategy of leveraging soft power to strengthen its influence in the region, particularly in Tibet, through cultural and religious connections.

Political Interests

China’s political interests in Nepal revolve around preserving Nepal’s sovereignty and independence while preventing external actors from using the country as a base for anti-China activities. Nepal plays a key role in China’s South Asia policy as Beijing aims to counterbalance external pressures.

China has historically refrained from direct involvement in Nepal’s internal conflicts, focusing instead on promoting stability. Its diplomatic approach underscores the importance of Nepal adhering to the “One China” policy, which includes recognition of Tibet and Taiwan as integral parts of China. Maintaining Nepal’s political stability and ensuring non-interference from third parties aligns with China's overarching strategy in the region.

China’s interests in Nepal are multifaceted, encompassing security, strategic, economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions. These priorities shape Beijing’s engagement with Nepal, driving initiatives that aim to consolidate regional stability, expand economic cooperation, and safeguard China's broader geopolitical goals.

Indian Interests in Nepal

India’s engagement with Nepal is driven by a combination of strategic, economic, social, and cultural imperatives, underpinned by historical ties and geographical proximity. India’s approach reflects its desire to maintain regional stability, safeguard its security interests, and promote mutually beneficial relations with its northern neighbor.

Security Interests

India's security concerns in Nepal stem from the open 1,800-kilometer border that allows for unrestricted movement of people and goods:

- **Geopolitical Considerations:** Nepal's proximity to China places it at the heart of India's security strategy. The 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship underscores mutual security obligations, framing Nepal as a critical buffer against external threats.
- **Regional Stability:** Ensuring a stable political environment in Nepal is paramount for India, as any unrest could have direct implications for Indian border states. Incidents such as the 1999 hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC 814, which highlighted vulnerabilities along the border, have prompted India to advocate for enhanced security cooperation.
- **Counterterrorism and Illicit Activities:** Issues like smuggling, fake currency circulation, and the emergence of extremist elements in the Terai region remain areas of concern. India works closely with Nepal to address these challenges.
- **Chinese Presence:** India closely monitors China's increasing influence in Nepal, including infrastructure projects and cultural initiatives, as these developments could shift regional power dynamics.

Strategic Interests

Nepal's role as a buffer state between India and China is central to India's strategic calculations:

- **Historical Context:** The 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship highlights India's early efforts to secure its northern borders and integrate Nepal into its sphere of influence.
- **Buffer State:** After China's annexation of Tibet, Nepal's strategic position became critical in safeguarding India's northern frontier.
- **Madhesi Concerns:** India maintains a vested interest in the Terai region due to its ethnic, cultural, and economic connections to northern India. Political instability in this region could have direct repercussions for India's border areas.

Economic Interests

India's economic relationship with Nepal is multifaceted, encompassing trade, investment, and resource utilization:

- **Trade and Investment:** India is Nepal's largest trading partner and a significant source of investment, with bilateral trade spanning diverse sectors, including energy, infrastructure, and manufacturing.
- **Water Resources:** Nepal's vast hydropower potential is of strategic interest to India, which seeks to collaborate on joint projects to address its energy demands.
- **Market Access:** The integration of Nepal's economy with India's provides opportunities for Indian businesses to expand into Nepalese markets, fostering economic interdependence.

Social Interests

India and Nepal share deep-rooted social and cultural ties:

- **People-to-People Connections:** The open border facilitates extensive movement between the two countries. Nepalese citizens contribute significantly to India's economy, particularly in sectors like defense and administration.
- **Cultural Affinity:** Shared religious festivals, traditions, and linguistic similarities further strengthen the social fabric between the two nations.

Cultural and Religious Interests

India leverages shared cultural and religious heritage to reinforce its influence in Nepal:

- **Religious Significance:** Sites like Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha, and other sacred locations underscore the cultural bond between the two nations. India actively promotes religious tourism to these sites.
- **Hindu and Buddhist Connections:** India emphasizes the shared heritage of Hinduism and Buddhism to deepen ties and bolster cultural diplomacy.

Political Interests

India's political engagement in Nepal is aimed at fostering stability and ensuring alignment with its regional objectives:

- **Policy Influence:** India strives to maintain a favorable political environment in Nepal that aligns with its strategic goals.
- **Balancing External Influence:** Countering China's growing presence remains a central concern for India, which seeks to reinforce its position as Nepal's primary partner through diplomatic, economic, and cultural channels.

India's Strategic Interest in Nepal's Sphere of Influence

Regional Dynamics

India seeks to maintain Nepal within its sphere of influence, driven by strategic, economic, and cultural considerations. As a dominant regional power, India's geographical proximity, economic strength, technological progress, and military capabilities position it as a key player in South Asia. Nepal, as a neighboring state with close historical ties, naturally falls under this ambit of influence.

Historical and Political Ties

Shared cultural and historical connections between the two nations further reinforce India's interest. These ties extend into Nepal's domestic political affairs, where India aims to align Nepalese policies with its broader regional and strategic objectives.

India's Role in Nepal's Political Transition

Maoist Insurgency and Peace Processes

India has been actively involved in Nepal's political transitions, particularly during times of conflict. During the Maoist insurgency, India engaged directly with the Maoists and other political actors to mediate and influence the resolution process. A landmark development was the 12-point agreement signed in New Delhi in 2005 between the Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance, which India facilitated.

Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Constitution Drafting

India supported the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, a cornerstone of Nepal's peaceful transition to democracy. It has also advocated for an inclusive constitution that represents all political and ethnic stakeholders, emphasizing consensus-building to ensure long-term stability.

India's Engagement with the Madhesi Movement

Advocacy for Inclusion

India's involvement in the Madhesi movement stems from ethnic and cultural linkages between the Madhesi population and northern India. New Delhi has consistently urged the Nepalese government to address the demands of the Madhesi community for equitable representation.

Diplomatic Strain and China's Role

The unofficial blockade following the promulgation of Nepal's new constitution in 2015 resulted in significant humanitarian and economic challenges. China's support during this period underscored its growing role as a counterbalance to India's influence.

Findings

1. Historical and Geopolitical Dynamics:

Nepal's historical and cultural connections with both China and India have profoundly influenced its political and diplomatic relationships. From the mid-7th century with China

to the 4th century with India, these ties have shaped Nepal's strategic importance as a buffer state between two regional powers.

2. Shifts in Political Landscape:

The period from 2005 marked significant political transitions in Nepal, moving from monarchy to a federal democratic republic. This transformation invited intense geopolitical interest from both China and India, with each country pursuing divergent strategies to secure their interests.

3. China's Approach:

- China initially supported the monarchy as a stabilizing force to safeguard its concerns regarding Tibet and regional stability.
- Post-monarchy, China adapted to the new political realities by engaging with Nepal's emerging republican leadership.
- Its priorities included securing Nepal's adherence to the One-China policy, enhancing trade, and positioning Nepal as a strategic partner in its South Asian ambitions.

4. India's Approach:

- India played a pivotal role in Nepal's transition to republicanism, supporting democratic forces and the Maoist insurgency to align Nepal's political structure with its regional strategy.
- India sought to influence Nepal's political and economic policies to secure access to Nepal's markets, water resources, and ensure political alignment with its strategic interests.

5. Diverging National Interests:

- China emphasizes Nepal's sovereignty, stability, and economic partnership while maintaining a non-interference policy.
- India's approach involves strategic involvement in Nepal's politics, driven by economic and security concerns, often resulting in disputes over trade, transit rights, and border issues.

6. Impact on Nepal's Sovereignty:

Persistent disputes with India over issues such as border claims and trade restrictions have challenged Nepal's sovereignty. China's relatively stable engagement focuses on economic ties and mutual non-interference.

Conclusion

The period after 2005 was a transformative era for Nepal, marked by its transition from a monarchy to a federal democratic republic and the concurrent intensification of geopolitical interest from China and India. Both nations, driven by their strategic priorities, sought to influence Nepal's political trajectory, albeit with differing approaches. China, initially a staunch supporter of the monarchy, adapted its stance to engage with Nepal's republican leadership, prioritizing stability, adherence to the One-China policy, and economic collaboration. India, on

the other hand, played an active role in Nepal's democratic transition, using its historical and cultural ties to influence the country's political and economic policies. While China emphasized non-interference and economic partnerships, India's involvement extended to strategic engagement in Nepal's politics, often leading to disputes over trade, transit rights, and sovereignty. These competing interests have underscored Nepal's pivotal position in South Asia, necessitating a careful balancing of its foreign relations. By focusing on its national interests, such as security, internal stability, and economic development, Nepal can effectively manage the influence of its neighbors. Maintaining a diplomatic approach that respects the strategic concerns of both China and India, while asserting its sovereignty, will be crucial for Nepal to navigate its complex geopolitical landscape and secure a stable and prosperous future.

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