

Assessment of Nepal's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy towards China and India

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Abstract

The present foreign policies of Nepal are based on the Charter of the United Nations, non-alignment, principles of Panchasheel (peaceful co-existence, mutual respect for territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence; non-aggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs and Equality and mutual benefit), international law and the norms of world peace, taking into consideration of the overall interest of the nation while remaining active in safeguarding the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, and national interest. The foreign policy of Nepal has been changing over the years. After unofficial blockade of immediate neighbor India, the challenges and opportunities are seen in the sky of Nepalese foreign policy. The major emerging challenges of Nepalese foreign policy are to balance the foreign policy with India and China continuation of independent foreign policy, recognize and prioritize the national interest, modernization of foreign policy, political consensus, national unity, political consensus, and good leadership, successful conduction of economic diplomacy, etc. Diplomacy is one of the powerful means or instruments of achieving the goals of foreign policy. The goals of foreign policy are guided by the national interests of concerned states. Diplomats are the actors who plays role according to the foreign policy of the concern state. Diplomats have to perform different functions and discharge different duties with their different roles and capacities. In other words, it is the task for the diplomat to act in different capacities and to play different a role because diplomacy itself is a serious business which requires different capacities and role by the diplomats. The major responsibility of diplomat is the promotion and protection of the national interests of Nepal. Therefore, the proficient diplomat should require making diplomacy effective.

Key Words: Foreign Policy and Diplomacy, Nepal's Trilateral Relations, China, India

Introduction

Since Nepal has ever committed to remaining independent position between both India and China in terms of foreign policies, it seems to have respected the integrity and national sovereignty of these great nations. In accordance with the Nepalese Foreign Policy, 2077 the guiding principles of Nepalese foreign policies are the protection of the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest, and promotion of national respect and prestige. The basis of conduction of foreign policy is the constitution of Nepal, Existing Nepalese Laws, national security policy and other policies which keep concerned with foreign policy, sectoral policies of the government of Nepal, and periodic plans. Economic policy and program, Charter of United Nations, treaties, agreements, bilateral regional and multilateral declarations, Charter of / statute of regional and sub-regional organizations, international laws including Vienna Conventions, international laws, custom, practice and established norms and values (Foreign Policy of Nepal, 2077, pp.6-7). The commitment and discipline of Nepal in respecting the independent positions of both India and China has been at the apex.

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According to article 50 sub article (4) i.e., state policies of Nepal, the Nepal's international relations directed towards enhancing national prestige by maintaining international relations on the basis of sovereign equality with promoting and protection of independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national interest of Nepal [Constitution of Nepal, Article 50(4), p.20]. As per article 51(m)(1) of Constitution of Nepal. i.e. Policy regarding international relations, the foreign policy of Nepal have to conduct by prioritized interest of Nepal on the basis of principles of principles of panchasheel (Mutual respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and national independence, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and equality and mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence), international law and values of world peace with determination of sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence [Constitution of Nepal, 2015, p.29]. As per article 51(m)(2) of Constitution of Nepal, to review the previous treaties and to perform treaties and agreements on the basis of mutual interests [Constitution of Nepal, 2015, p.29]. Nepal has been trying to maintain foreign relations with its immediate neighbor China and India. Nepal has been continuing visit diplomacy with China and India.

Research Questions

- a) What is the present status of Nepalese foreign Policy and Diplomacy towards its immediate neighbor China?
- b) What is the present status of Nepalese foreign Policy and Diplomacy towards its immediate neighbor India?
- c) How any why Nepalese foreign policy and diplomacy towards China and India have to balanced?

Rational /Relevance of the Research

This study has reviewed and analyzed about existing Nepalese foreign policy and diplomacy towards its immediate neighbors China and India. China and India are emerging and rising powers of world. China has been contesting for superpower. Nepal is landlocked least developed country located between two Asian giants China and India. So, the foreign policy and diplomacy of Nepal is important to maintain good diplomatic ties, economic diplomacy and other bilateral and multilateral achievements.

Nepal has surrounded from northern side by China and from Eastern, Western and northern side by India. So, there is also geo-strategic, geo-political and geo-economic importance of geographical location of Nepal. The each and every small steps which has taken by Nepal about world affairs become concerns of the its immediate neighbors China and India. For illustration, after Russian attack over Ukraine, Nepal cast on the behalf of Ukraine or against the Russian intervention in Ukraine. That event also has been becoming debatable issue in Nepalese academia. In that case, China and Nepal both has remain neutral. The critiques also have mentioned that that step of Nepal has encroached the non-alignment trend or legacy of Nepal. But some of scholars of international relations have mentioned that the voting of Nepal against Russian intervention against Ukraine is on the behalf of Nepal's national interest, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity as well. They have argued that Nepal have not encroached non-alignment legacy. So, this paper has analyzed new developments of Nepalese foreign policy as well.

Research Methodology

For this research/study, mostly secondary data have been collected. The sources of data have been books, documents, reports, journal articles, and other publications regarding present status of Nepal's foreign policy and Diplomacy towards its immediate neighbors China and India.

This study has been mostly based on the doctrinal method. So, qualitative and quantitative data have been collected. Most of the data about Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy have been collected from available secondary sources.

The analysis of this research has descriptive, and explanatory. This research have sought to explore, describe and explain the Nepalese foreign policy and diplomacy toward China and India This research has assisted to study, understand, and analyze Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy towards its immediate neighbors China and India.

Present status of Nepal's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy towards China

Nepalese prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal visited China from September 23 to 30 2023 AD. In occasion of opening ceremony of Asian Games. During this visit Nepalese prime minister met with Chinese president Xi Jinping, Chinese Primer Li Qiang, and President of National People's Congress Zha Leji. During this visit Nepal and China agreed to implication agreements between Nepal, and China based on five principles of Panchasheela, Charter of United states and agreed to follow Belt and road (BRI). In addition, both countries agreed to mutual assistance to promote common development, economy, trade investment, agriculture, tourism capacity of productivity, poverty alleviation, health, and education etc. (<https://mofa.gov.np/joint-statement-between-the-peoples-republic-of-china-and-nepal/>). The commercial and political between India, Nepal and China have demonstrated the significance of the trilateral relations of Nepal with its neighboring countries. The mutual benefits have pushed all these nations to the front for moving forward with the respect for each other. Nepalese foreign minister, Mr. Narayan Khadka visited China on 9th to 11th August 2022. According to press release published by Ministry of foreign Affairs of Nepal during his visit foreign minister Narayan Khadka mitted with Chinese state councilor and Minister of foreign affairs Wang Yi.

Specially, after passing of American project Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) by Nepalese parliament with explanatory declaration on February 27, 2022 China has been showing deep concern towards Nepal regarding security matters. After passing American MCC project, the high-level delegates of the USA has visited Nepal. Some of high-level US officials also visit Tibetan Refugee Camp of Kathmandu valley. These events have been increasing concern of China towards Nepal regarding security issues. There is still confusion, whether the MCC is part of Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) or not. On the other hand, the controversial letter of State Partnership Program (SPP) also disseminated in media. SPP is also one of the projects of the IPS. After controversy government of Nepal on July 21 decided to stay away from the US program SPP (The Kathmandu Post, July 13, p. 2). The analysts of international relations and diplomacy open that, the passing of MCC project and dissemination of controversial document regarding SPP breach Nepal's non-alignment legacy. However, some of other analysts opines that Nepal have to keep balance not only China and India but also to United States of America and other major powers as well. These series of events regarding American activities in Nepal make Nepal's immediate neighbors China. So, the visit of Nepalese foreign minister might assist to normalize Nepal-China relations in present era. Chinese foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Nepal on 26th march to 28th March 2022. During the of Chinese foreign Minister in Nepal discussed about bilateral relations and both sides signed in Nine agreements related to technical and economic assistances.

Present Status of Nepalese Foreign Policy Diplomacy towards India

Indian foreign minister S. Jayashankar visited Nepal on January 4 and, 5 2024. During this visit he co-chaired 7th ministerial meeting of Nepal and India. During that meeting the delegates of Nepal and India discussed about trade, economic relations, land, train, Civil aviation project, defense and security cooperation, agriculture, energy, water resources, natural disaster management, tourism, cultural exchanges among peoples of both countries, and development cooperation etc. During this visit India declared to assist Nepal Rs. 10 billion economic donation to restructure Jajarkot and Rukum district by the earthquake of November 3 2023. In addition an agreement regarding energy trade also concluded. According to that agreement, 10 thousand Mega Watts electricity will be exported to India by Nepal for 25 years. After 25 years this agreement will automatically renew. The secretary of energy, water and irrigation of Nepal Gopal Sigdel and Energy secretary of India Pankaj Agrawal signed in that agreement. According to another agreement the India agreed to increase donation to development projects. India will provide 20 million to precede small size development projects by means of government and non-government organizations it is known as Highly Effective Community Development Project (HECDP). Some of activists and former administrators criticized the energy agreement between Nepal and India during official visit of Indian foreign minister S. Jaya Shankar (The Kathmandu Post, January 5, 2024).

Nepalese prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal visited India from 31 May to June 3 2023 AD. During this visit Nepal and India agreed on long-term Power trade (The Himalayan Times, p. 1). During official visit of Nepali the then prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba visit to India on 1-2 April 2022 the several agreements concluded between Nepal and India in Prime ministerial levels. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially visited on May 16, 2022 and involved in special ceremony and meditation organized in Assembly Hall of Lumbini International Buddhist Center for celebration of Buddha Jayanti.) During this visit Indian Prime Minister Modi met with Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and they exchanged bilateral views, Nepal -India cooperation and matters of mutual interests. This visit further strengthened bilateral socio-cultural bonds between Nepal and India. That was fifth Nepal visit of Indian Prime minister Narendra Modi. Nepalese prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba visited officially to Indian on 1-2 April 2022. According to Press release by Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nepal during this visit dozens of agreements made between prime ministers of Nepal and India including agreements to revised Nepal-India transit treaty.

Efforts have been made by India and Nepal to pacify the anti-feeling against each other, soon after the formation of the new government of Nepal after the promulgation of the constitution of 2015, the Indian PM spoke to Nepalese new prime minister KP Oli and congratulated him on the new assignment (Singh, 2016, pp. 59-75). The Nepalese government sent its deputy prime minister Kamal Thapa to India to talk about a wide array of issues with the Indian government. Despite these efforts on both sides, Nepali diplomats and politicians believed that bilateral Ties are at the lowest ebb and damaged (Singh, 2016, pp. 59-75).

After issuing the new political map by the Survey Department of India on November 2, 2019, having included Nepalese territories Kalapani, Limpiyadhura, and Lipulekh in India, the Nepalese prime minister KP Oli organized an all-party meet in Nepal on November 10, 2019, and sent a diplomatic note to India on November 20 and offered a talk at the foreign secretary-level on November 23 regarding this issue. However, India did not respond for long (Giri, 2019, iv-xiv). One month after, the diplomatic note, India finally responded positively to Nepal's demand for talks but there has been no development on when and where the meeting will happen (Giri, 2019, iv-xiv).). This year, after an uproar in Nepal over the Indian defense minister's inauguration of a road in Lipulekh, Oli

amend to expand the Nepali map (Baral, 2020, Para. 4). Every the country should fiercely protect its territory but without infringing on other country's right to protect what legitimacy theirs (Poudyal, 2010, Para. 28). The protection of its territory could symbolize the emotional strength of Nepalese government. The longevity of the current government relies on its concerns for the national interests.

Findings, Discussion, Analysis, and Conclusion

China's relationship with Nepal has been remaining mostly cordial but bilateral relations between India and Nepal have been remaining problematic mostly. China has been respecting Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

In International Relations mostly the powerful state shows hegemonic behavior toward the small state. Nepal is the small state between two rising powers of the world China and India. India mostly has been showing her hegemonic and bullying behaviors toward Nepal and other south Asian States. So, India has been becoming unpopular in South Asian regions. On the other hand, China has not that much shown hegemonic behaviors towards her immediate neighbors including Nepal. But in International politics if the interest of Major Powers becomes the same, they dominate national interest, sovereignty, territory and integrity of the small state. Therefore, the cooperation between two major powers China and India may be problematic and dangerous to Nepal and other small states of South Asia as well. There is the possibility of being affected badly Nepal by China and India increasing engagement and cooperation. Hence, Nepal has to remain always sensitive to save her from all sorts of encroachment from two giant neighboring countries China and Nepal.

In addition, being major and largest trade partners there is the possibility of bypassing Nepal by China and India while deciding about issues trilaterally related like in the Lipu Lekh agreement between the Chinese and Indian prime ministers. So, Nepal has to remain conscious about the protection and promotion of its national interest, and give of continuity territorial integrity, independence, etc. On the other hand, Nepal has been also kept in priority by third countries like the United States of America, the European Union (EU), etc. Due to the geostrategic location of Nepal, the major powers of the world are also interested to influence the internal politics of Nepal. So, Nepal has to be conscious and serious to save from any sort of design of immediate neighbors and other relatives. Nepal can be protecting and promote her national interest, territorial integrity, independence, etc. through diplomat maneuver rather than war. On the other hand, Nepal has to precede process to normalize relations with both countries China and India as immediately.

Being a small, landlocked, least developed country, the issue of protection of territorial integrity, independence, and national unity has to focus on by rulers and the general public. For that task, there should be grown patriotic feelings from all of the citizens of Nepal. There is a strategic position of Nepal in the map of the world. Being a landlocked least developed country, Nepal is a strategically important state in the world. Furthermore, Nepal is the storage of natural resources, water resources, biodiversity, etc. There are also possibilities for the tourism industry. But due to a lack of economic/financial resources, farsighted leadership and stable visionary bureaucracy Nepal is still unable to flourish her possibilities. But there are possibilities for collecting economic and other resources to transform Nepal. China and India are immediate neighbors of Nepal. China has been competing with super power states the United States America. India has been also a raising state. China and India are major trading partner with each other. Nepal has been surrounded by India from the East, South, and west on the other hand Nepal has linked with China through the land on the northern side. But Nepal has been become unable to take benefit from her immediate neighbors China and India.

Being a geostrategic important state, Nepal has also become the target of other neighboring countries like the United States of America, the UK, the European Union, etc. However, there may be the certain hidden interests of these neighboring countries. It is said that there is a grand strategy of “encirclement of China” by the United States of America. India has been also engaging with the USA in the military and other issues. The United States of America have been launching the Indo-Pacific strategy in Asia and Pacific regions now. The United States of America wants to involve Nepal in this strategic alliance. But some analysts mentioned that it is a counter strategy against the “Belt and Road” initiative of China launched by Chinese president Xi Jin Ping in 2013 AD. In addition, some analysts mentioned that China has been launching her “One Belt One Road” project to encircle India. The controversial gossip has been predicted in the international arena. Nepal has to become very serious while behaving with her immediate neighboring countries and other neighboring States including the United States of America.

International relations have been changing according to time and context. Especially after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, the world has shifted to the unipolar state. But with time, the unipolar world has been multipolar. The BRICS, SAARC, ASEAN, BIMSTEC, African Union etc. have been established. In addition, the world financial institutions, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etc. has been challenged by Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), New Bank, BRICS bank, etc. Nepal has been aided by World Bank IMF etc. Nepal is also one of the founder members of AIIB. On the other hand, Nepal has already signed in “Belt and Road” initiative proposed by China. But another immediate neighbor India has not signed in OBOR project till now. But some analysts argued that India will also become a member of the “Belt and road project”. As mentioned by some analysts there are possibility of involvement of India in the OBOR project. China and India are major trading partners. If China and India construct their trade pass through OBOR project or other projects, the amount of trade between China and India also increases. So, Nepal has to maintain good and cordial relations with immediate neighbors China and India. Nepal also has to keep maintain cordial relation with other neighboring states including the USA, European Union, etc. But it is better to not engage in any strategic alliance. In other words, Nepal has to emphasize to developing and a becoming prosperous nation within a few decades. Economic development, Nepal has to establish a balance relationship with her immediate neighbors and other neighbors.

Conclusion

Nepal is the least developed country surrounded by two large emerging powers China and India. Nepal has been depending on her immediate neighbor India excessively and also a dependency of Nepal towards China has been increasing day by day economically. Relation between Nepal and India is quite asymmetric. Nepal is located between two globally emerging powers People’s Republic of China. Some Nepalese politicians emphasize asymmetrical relations between Nepal and India. But such kind of asymmetric relationship between two rival powers China and India has to be reduced and symmetric and equal relationship. Nepal has indeed, been surrounded by India in three directions and By China in one direction. So geographically, India is closer than China to Nepal but we have to be conscious to maintain a balance in the relationship between both countries.

Political instability, economic weakness, lack of skillful well-trained diplomats, traditional administration, psychological enhancements of diplomats and leadership, external influence in internal matters of Nepal, adopting of modern technology in the sector of foreign policy and, imbalance relationship with immediate neighbors (basically with India and China) are major problems present foreign policy of Nepal. To overcome these problems Nepal, have to create

political consensus among political forces, Nepal has to grab positive aspects of globalization. On the other hand, Nepal can face existing challenges regarding foreign policy by proper utilization of foreign aid, reviewing and renewing the past multilateral and bilateral treaties, increasing its meaningful presence and role in SAARC and other international forums, Developing diplomatic skills and art, Political stability, inter-ministerial cooperation, institutional reforms of MOFA and other subordinate institutions, Creating scholarly group regarding foreign affairs, managing open border issue and strengthening border diplomacy, manage recording system, economic strengthening by utilizing natural resources, proper implementation of 'diplomatic code of conduct', developing self-dependence economic system, diplomatic settlement of refugee problems, etc. On the other hand, Nepal can protect and promote its foreign policy through launching successful economic diplomacy. In the context of Nepal's foreign employment, Trade relations with neighboring countries, the industrial development, utilization of foreign investment in industrial sector, tourism development, water resources development, prioritize the agriculture and forestry sector etc. Nepal has to prioritize her foreign policy in the direction of socio-economic development, and relationship with immediate neighbors, to enhance its role in the UN, SAARC, and other international Forums.

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