



India and Nepal relation from 1947 to 2015

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Abstract

This paper attempted to highlight India policy towards Nepal. India and Nepal are closely interconnected to each other. The link of proximity and cordiality between India and Nepal has influenced their bilateral relations. The paper highlights India's policy towards during NDA and UPA government and also BJP government identified some issues which hinder their bilateral relationship.

Introduction

Foreign policy is basically a set of principles of the state or government to regulate and strengthen its bilateral, trilateral and multi-lateral relationships with other countries. India and Nepal are closely linked with each other through the bonds of geography, culture, history and economy. This perennial bond of proximity and cordiality between India and Nepal has influenced their bilateral relations. Conversely, these bonds are often attracted and even twisted by the imperatives of their mutual political relations and interaction. It would not be possible for

foreign policy makers to ignore Nepal, in view of its geostrategic importance while formulating the foreign policy of India. The importance of Nepal for the Indian foreign policy is that it stretches five hundred miles of its northern border along the People's Republic of China and on the Southern slopes of the Himalaya India has open borders with Nepal and the latter's Northern border runs along the Tibetan frontier. Therefore, if Nepal falls under the influence of China or any inimical power, the entire Indo-Gangetic plain would be gravely exposed and whatever little meaning the Himalayan barrier had would be considerably reduced. It is in this respect that Nepal occupies an important strategic position in the Indian Northern security system.

Objectives

To analyse the India's Policy towards Nepal
To find different issues and problem between Indo- Nepal relation

Research Methodology



The methodology undertaken in this research work includes historical and analytical methods. The historical records and official document were examined: primary as well as secondary sources that are available on the subject have been used. A primary source includes policy documents, reports, official statements and interview of policy makers. In the secondary sources, the major works of different distinguished authors in the field have also been included and analysed.

Discussion

Since independence, the broad strategy of India's foreign policy towards Nepal has been to maintain peaceful and friendly relations with Nepal and Nehru is reported to have said in 1949, "The neighbouring countries have the first place in our minds". The basic objectives of Nehru's policy towards Nepal were clear. No country, neither India nor china, should interfere in the internal matters of Nepal. Nepal was an independent sovereign country and she had every right to establish diplomatic relations with other countries. But India must enjoy a special position in regards to the foreign affairs of Nepal. The bilateral relationship between the two countries received significant jolt after King Mahendra introduced one party Panchayat system in 1962. It is said that it was King Mahendra

who substantially weakened the base of Indo-Nepal relationship by reducing Nepal's dependence on India and developing closer relationship with China. The Indo- Nepalese relations entered in new phase. India now accepted without any mental reservation the system of the Panchayat democracy as introduced into Nepal after royal coup of December 1960. India gave up her past policy of sympathy with the cause of parliamentary democracy in Nepal.

During regime of LalBahadurShastri India fought two wars with its Neighbours in 1962 with china and in 1965 with Pakistan. After these two debacles, India's prime minister initiated new policy towards Nepal as well as its neighbours and he was much concerned about his neighbourhood policy. After the death of LalBahadurShastri, Indira Gandhi became the prime minister of India. During her period, she adopted the policy of Nehruvian vision and aspiration. She also believed that policy should be related to the countries evolving security, political, economic interest for which India needed to emerge strong and reliant. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 Gandhi emerged as a powerful and charismatic leader and expressed that the object of India-Nepal cooperation is that Nepal should develop rapidly on the path of economic progress and



India in its turn will have a prosperous and contented neighbour.

The perception that India should assert its pre-eminence in Nepal in order to protect its strategic interest in the kingdom continued to be denounced even after king Birendra's ascension to power in 1972. He also tried to project Nepal's identity and self-image by forwarding the concept of Nepal as a "Zone of peace". The idea was formally put in 1975 during king Birendra's coronation. In 1980 a new article was added to the Panchayat constitution, which made Nepal "Zone of peace" king Birendra perceived it in accordance with the basic principle of UNO, and that the non-alignment, henceforth it become an objective of Nepalese foreign policy. Nepal's quest to declare itself as a Zone of peace in a way reflected its visible desire and attempt to overlook and disregard India's security in the kingdom. One of the highlights of the year's events was visit of Gandhi to Nepal on 7 February 1973. Her visit was not undertaken to solve any outstanding problem between the two countries or to sign any new agreement. After the assassination of Indira Gandhi, her son Rajiv Gandhi became prime minister of India. Through the initial three years of the Rajiv Gandhi era saw some improvement in the relations with Nepal and other neighbouring countries; later he was seeking

extra advantage. India and Nepal became founder-members of south Asian association for regional cooperation (SAARC) set up in 1985. Such associations were helpful in maintaining cordial relations between the two countries it further strengthened the bilateral trade and commerce. When the treaty of trade transit expired in 1989, the Indo-Nepalese relations were once again strained. There both the countries in the light of their past experiences and future prospects reviewed the relations, and India emphasised on strong bilateral relations. But by that time Nepali congress was engaged in struggle of multi-party democracy in Nepal. The king blames that Nepali congress had the support of a good section of Indian people. The situation changed after the success of democracy in April 1990. After the defect of National front in India, the congress again came in power led by P.V NarshimaRao in 1991. P.V NarshimaRao paid an official visit to Nepal in October 1992. Rao emphasized that Nepal would be the first beneficiary of India's liberalization policy. India had by this time already set policy to encourage economic development in Nepal by boosting its export to India. Rao further highlighting the need to accommodate Nepal's economic interests.

In 1996 the treaty of Mahakali was concluded between India and Nepal. The rise of Maoist insurgency in 1996 was major challenge to



peace, security and democracy in Nepal. India felt concerned due to number of factors. only there being Maoist insurgency initiated number of illegal activities on the border such as, smuggling of Arms and ammunition, Drugs, Human trafficking etc. India was forced to increase its security along the border.

Minister for External Affairs of India, I.K. Gujral tried to follow a policy of good neighbourly relations on a long term basis soon after the installation of the united front government in 1996. Despite being a weak government it took certain concrete steps towards resolving contentious bilateral issues with the neighbouring countries. India's then the foreign minister and later Prime Minister I.K Gujral emphatically believed that there was a need to adopt liberal attitude towards the problems of the neighbouring countries, even without looking for reciprocity from them. In the form of what was called Gujral doctrines, India tried to formulate a sort of a perspective on its relations with the neighbouring countries. In an interview with the frontline, Gujral very firmly acknowledged the regional component in the policy of globalization. He stressed that every worthwhile foreign policy has to focus on regionalism. India took steps to improve relations with all south Asian States.

During this period (from 19 March 1998 to 22 May 2004) under review several initiatives were taken with a view to further enriching and consolidating the relations between India and Nepal. In particular India's economic cooperation programmes with Nepal, trade and commercial relations developed satisfactorily, with the steps being taken to liberalize and improve the procedures and bilateral arrangement in these sectors. The renewal of the transit treaty with Nepal on 5 January 1999, with an automatic renewability clause in particular, has contributed to developing business and investment confidence. India's relations with Nepal is characterised by frequent interaction at both political and official levels and the trend continued during the BJP regime. These several high- level exchanges of visit severed to pervade direction and impetus to India's relationship with Nepal. The Indian Prime Minister Shri A B Vajpayee meetings with his Nepalese counterpart on the fringes of the NAM summit in Durban and the SAARC summit in Colombo had discussions encompassed a wide gamut of bilateral , regional and international issues of common interest.

In January, 1999, King Krishna Prasad Bhattarai visited India and talked with the then Indian Prime Minister AtalBehari Vajpayee over border disputes and



preventing misuse of the open border between the two countries. India tried to resolve the problem with Nepal. To bring Nepal under its sphere of influence, India began to assist Nepal economically and politically. However, Nepal by thinking that it has become important part of India's strategy to prevent direct set of any Chinese occupation in Himalayan border, Nepal used China card as major force to reduce India's influence in Nepal..

On July 21, 2001, the Nepalese Supreme Court issued what can easily be called a destabilizing historic landmark decision in Indo-Nepalese relations. For, on that day, the Nepalese apex court declared that "no foreigner of any gender would be eligible for grant of Nepalese Citizenship, other than the Nepalese themselves". In one knock, the Supreme Court denied inter alia Nepalese citizenship to over 300,000 Indian settlers in Nepal.

Minister of India Jaswant Singh's paid his three days goodwill visit to establish political contact with the new leadership of the Himalayan Kingdom. Singh, the first high-level political visitor from any country to visit Nepal since the tragic massacre in the revered royal family on June 1. As he engaged the new King and the Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Singh was likely to

convey the strong Indian commitment to build a new partnership between the two countries at a time when the political establishment in Kathmandu was struggling to cope with the political challenge from the spreading Maoist insurgency. India attached the highest priority to strengthen the traditional friendship of understanding and cooperation with Nepal.

The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) came into power in May 2004 after the defeat of The NDA (National Democratic Alliance) in the general elections marked another new era of India's approach to her neighbours and identified as "Manmohan Singh Doctrine" As observed by C. Rajamohan . Promoting a peaceful periphery has now become the reigning doctrine in the south block and all successive government after Gujral have adhered to it. The most important objective of UPA government had been to improve the global and regional atmosphere for sustaining India's growth process and overall development. The UPA government was led by the Congress party under the leadership of Manmohan Singh, as the prime minister. In its foreign policy front, the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) became the fundamental guiding principle of the UPA government, that it will give high priority to improve bilateral ties with immediate neighbours.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two day visit to Nepal, on 3-4 August 2014, marked a new beginning in Indo-Nepal relations; the visit opened a fresh chapter in Indo- Nepal relations. By giving new idea of "federal and democratic republic", Prime Minister Modi dispelled fears in Nepal that the new government in India might work for the restoration of monarchy. His momentous speech in Nepal's Parliament won the hearts and minds of Nepalese. Both countries endorsed new developmental projects, showed their willingness to improve the peace and security at border, promised to improve border infrastructure, and expressed concern over the slow pace of implementation of many projects. In fact, a momentum has already been generated in Indo- Nepal relations and it must be continued with better follow up and implementations.

The Power Trade Agreement (PTA) signed between Nepal and India in September 2014 was most important achievement of the 18th SAARC summit. This agreement has been perceived as a major advance in not just addressing the increasing power demand in India and Nepal but also as a major economic boost for Nepal.

On 20 September 2015, Nepal adopted a new democratic constitution and asserted that change is an unavoidable reality in bilateral ties but India's senior diplomats extended a

cold welcome to the Himalayan democracy underlying that this sort of change is not welcome. The new constitution of the country which reshapes the Nepal's administrative and political ties with India, Indian government called it "majoritarian" tendency in the constitution. Secondly, they have raised objection over the constitution's lack of seriousness over the issue of reservation for the backward and the traditional have-not sections mostly found in the Terai region. Thirdly, Nepal's territorial rearrangements such as its delimitation of constituencies and its federal structure are not free of bias. The spirit of democracy has prevailed in Kathmandu. But this moment of triumph needs to be moderated with a reality check. Because Nepal's democratic movement can achieve its now-enshrined constitutional goals by ensuring equal opportunity for all sections of its society and not by leaving out parts of its people from its long term plans for change.

Conclusion

India and Nepal had close relations for long centuries and it is continuing without major issues or conflict in the present century. Geography, history and culture have been a source of strength for India Nepal relations. These have always influenced India to develop friendship and cooperation with

Nepal. Nepal covers nearly 500 miles of India's southern border and five Indian states- Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Sikkim and West Bengal are located on the west, south and east side of Nepal. Nepal shares border with China in the northern side. This is critical to India's security interest. Therefore, India has always sought to maintain a close strategic relationship with Nepal. India's attitude towards Nepal is also determined by its economic interest such as the utilization of water resource, promotion of trade and private capital investment etc. So, Nepal has immense economic dependence on India and their interests are closely interwoven. It naturally has bearing upon the bilateral relations. Social, religious and cultural ties between India and Nepal are inseparable from its geographical proximity and date back to ancient times. According to cultural perspective there seems more common marriage relationships and other family ties among most of Hindu groups, tribes and communities of both India and Nepal particularly in the border areas, quite common nearly ninety percent of the people follow the Hindu religion, which is a special element in binding Nepal to India. India and Nepal are indispensable to each other. Right from the beginning they have been standing with each other in times of peace and distress. India-Nepal relations have been

defined by their close proximity to each other and this continues till date. India-Nepal relations, however, experienced a paradigm shift with the biggest factor being Nepal's advancement towards stability in democracy. The voices of Nepalese people were heard for the first time in an influential way and that took Nepal steps to being a democratic republic.

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