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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE INDO-SINO-NEO-COLONIALIST APPROACH AND POLICY IN NEPAL

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the comparative policies and approaches of India and China in Nepal in the context of neo-colonialism and realism. India and Chinese relations have been tense, unfriendly and strained due to their territorial rivalry, ideological differences and divergent regional policy. However, the rivalry has been shifted in the regions of Nepal and Tibet which have badly affected Nepal. No doubt, Nepal is a landlocked country that serves as a buffer between China and India, also can act as a bridge between China and India. The socio-cultural affiliation of Indians with the people of Nepal helped India to ensure its presence in Nepal, but it has been equally resisted by the regional economic and political cooperation of China and Nepal. Thus, the realist policies of India and China in Nepal have created tense power-politics environment.

The paper is qualitative in nature which has based on realist theory. In order to explore and investigate the Indian and Chinese policies in Nepal, different facts and events have been analyzed and investigated. The paper has also tried to know what would be the possible policy options for Nepal to avoid the colonialist approaches of India and China.

INTRODUCTION:

Nepal is located on the North of India and South of China which acts as a buffer state between both traditional rivals. No doubt, both China and India share borderline with Nepal, however, Indian dominancy and friendship with Nepal is much greater due to Indian socio-cultural affiliation with the people of Nepal (Paudel, Devkota, & Bhandari, 2018). Open border and deeply connected individuals to individual's cultural touch the people of India and

Nepal so much close. The practice of free travel over the both sides of the border between Nepal and India has a long history. The saluting and cordial coexistence in India-Nepal relations can be traced back to pre-modern nation-state structures. Nepal and India are two of the most ancient sites where Buddhism and Hinduism were first introduced (Messerschmidt & Sharma, 1981). Sanskrit is the basis of both Hindi and Nepali languages (Indhuja, Indu, Sreejith, Sreekrishnapuram, & Raj, 2014). The paradox of detachment and closeness is an equally critical factor of Indian relationship with Nepal (Tripathi, 2019).

As far as the Nepal and Chinese bilateral relations are concerned, both established diplomatic and friendly relations in April, 1960 after the conclusion of Nepalese Treaty of Peace and Friendship with China (Bansh Jha, 2013). It ought to be noted that at the initial phases, Nepal did not make good relations with China due to India factor, however, with the passage of time, Nepal developed strong bilateral relations with China in respect to trade and commerce. The border dispute between China and Nepal has been a big obstacle in developing strong amicable relations, however, both finally agreed to sign Nepal-Chinese Border Agreement on March 21st, 1960 which finally normalized the bilateral relations. It has been extremely tough for Nepal to maintain balanced relationship between India and China since both regional powers have been penetrating their regional interests in Nepal. After 1975, Nepal and Chinese relations grew so deeply that both have been witnessed in collaborating in many areas of their bilateral relations (Murton & Lord, 2020). Even Nepal has made many attempts to ensure the Chinese membership in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) despite Indian opposition (Kumar, 2015). Thus, the triangle of India, China and Nepal is a complicated study in South Asia due to the regional and traditional enmity of India and China. Both wants to maintain their regional supremacy.

Indian Policy in South Asia

India is a major economic power with a strong political background. Therefore, it has been trying to ensure its regional supremacy, dominancy and economic giant at the risk of other regional power. The Indian foreign policy in Kashmir has caused human rights violation, occupation of Kashmiris land and censorship of freedom of speech (Mohiuddin, 1997). Apart from Indian cruelty in Kashmir, India has maintained cruelty and aggressive approach in Bhutan and Nepal, intervening their internal matter which is a clear violation of the Charter of United Nations.

Mr. Nehru is widely regarded as the founder of Indian foreign policy (Bandyopadhyaya, 2003) who gave a conflicting origin of foreign policy of India for South Asian states. In case of 'Kashmir occupation, dominancy in Nepal and Bhutan, the anti-imperialist and secularist approach of Nehru advocated violence as we witnessed today in Kashmir. Unfortunately, the shortcomings of Mr. Nehru are still felt in South Asia today. When her daughter Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister of India, she took on the same legacy in the form of "hard Realism". The regional policies of Indira Gandhi also created a tense political environment which never let India to establish

good relations with its neighbor states. Sikkim territory was incorporated into India at the time of Indira Gandhi and her plans were afoot to make India a powerhouse or a "hegemonic state" in South Asia. The thoughts of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi continued to influence India's foreign policy while dealing with its neighbors. Regionalism and economic globalization have had a major effect on Indian foreign policy. India intervenes in the affairs of its ethnic neighbors. India is today's new force due to its economic potential. In Nepal's foreign policy making phase, Indian hegemony can be seen as more than just paternalism (Baral, 2018).

Nepal as a Buffer State Between China and India

The geostrategic location of Nepal is extremely important for the study as it falls between India and China which are not only regional economic powers, both have a bitter history of traditional rivalry and enmity. Nepal which falls over an area of 147,516 square kilometers (Namin et al., 2020), finds its location in Himalayas region. It also acts as buffer zone between China and India. Nepal is known as a "Indian Locked Country" because it shares 1,753 kilometres of boundary with India on the South, West, and East (N. Sharma, 2017). The Himalayan mountain range and the world's highest mountain, Mount Everest, form the boundary between Nepal and China's autonomous region Tibet, which stretches for 1,389 kilometres. India has a strong impact on Nepal's foreign policy and geopolitics. Although, the Sino-Nepal relationship is also valuable and significant in this regard.

Without Indian territorial encroachment on Nepal, the India-Nepal relationship discourse is incomplete. There are approximately 71 disputed zones, with Indian encroachment on Nepalese borderline. The disputed areas of Nepal with India may stretch over twenty-one Districts of Nepal. While leaving the area, British India demarcated the borderline which clearly separated India with Nepal, however, with the passage of time, the demarcation has been modified and changed to many ways. Many agreements and treaties, especially those related to water, such as the Gandak and Koshi, have been found to be unfavourable to Nepal in present day (Shukla, 2006). The current state of treaties indicates that India only has to seize Nepal's natural and water capital. India has yet to present a model that will be beneficial and outstanding for water sharing among Nepal and India (Mirumachi, 2013).

Indo-Nepalese Ties

Despite the fact that Nepal was not a British colony, however, after the Indian independence, it has maintained neo-colonialist policy vis-à-vis Nepal. The independence of India in 1947 opened a new chapter in Indo-Nepalese relations which were based on mutual co-existence, mutual respect, freedom, autonomy, and mutual gain. Due to Indian dream of supremacy and regional dominancy, these all above mentioned values were overturned. Indian regional policies were witnessed to be aggressive in nature since it started in interfering in the internal political and economic and military affairs of Nepal. Despite Indian aggressive and imperialistic approach against Nepal, history is replete with strong bilateral relations of Nepal and India. The relations of Nepal and

India improved on right track after the restoration and empowerment of Multi-Party tenure in Nepal in 1990. Thus, political reforms, freedom of speech and free of media were witnessed in Nepal that most importantly invited public debate over the Indo-Nepalese ties (Subedi, 1994).

Nonetheless, the political ties and socio-cultural affiliation between the people of India and Nepal are the main reasons of their strong ties. Therefore, people of both sides have been the strong believers of peace and tranquility between both nations. The bilateral relations of Nepal and India are based on politics, economics, social and individual-to-individual deep-rooted ties that bound the people of both sides under a common belief, culture, and tradition. Aside from these, the frequent bilateral institutional dialogues and high-level visits and exchanges between both nations have fostered their bilateral relations. India's assistance to Nepal is focused on the most basic needs, such as health, education, defence, and infrastructure (Adhikari, 2014). India has been assisting the border checkpoints of Jogbani-Biratnagar, Raxaul-Birganj, Sunauli-Bhairahawa, and Nepalganj-Nepalgunj-Road.

Simultaneously, water supplies are critical in the bilateral agenda of Indo-Nepalese relations as water is the primary source of electricity and irrigation in Nepal. According to the Power Arrangement of 1971, both countries would use shared transmission infrastructures to meet their power needs. The defence sector is a key area of collaboration where both countries established Joint Working Groups (JWG) for border protection. Moreover, the Border District Coordinating Committees (BDCCs) was made to address mutual security issues. Aside from that, a Boundary Working Group (BWG) was formed in 2014 to oversee technical work such as repair, renovation, and boundary reconstruction on both borders. The trade, transit, and import and export between the two countries is overly solidified, and they are the biggest trading partners in the region. Despite their cooperation, India has been dominated over Nepal in the region, interfering its internal political matters. India has a dominant role in Nepal's governmental problems, economics, culture, technology, defence, and media as a result, strong relations of both states never lasted long.

Area of Divergence in Indo-Nepalese Ties

Despite their shared socio-cultural affiliation, the bilateral ties between the two countries have been so much fragile and weak. The Indian two-month long blockade of Nepal trade and transit route in 2015 gave a disappointing venture in Nepal that disturbed the bilateral relations of Nepal and India (A. Sharma, Mishra, & Kaplan, 2017). When Nepal attempted to buy weapons from China in 1989, India enforced an economic blockade in the form of cutting drugs, food, and other materials for Nepal which India had done in 1989-1990 with Nepal. The Indian involvement in Nepalese politics has been witnessed in September 2015 after for formulation of new Constitution of Nepal by the National Assembly of Nepal since a strong group opposed many articles of the constitution over the Indian direction. Even anti-Nepalese group is found with Nepal. It was believed that it was India which supported and backed the anti-Nepalese group in Nepal. India, the world's most powerful

democracy, used a blockade strategy in Nepal. India's hegemonic environment is maintained by such overt intervention in Nepal's internal relations. The blockade was enforced with intimidation in order to force Nepal to change its constitution. Previously, a similar blockade was imposed on Nepal in 1989 on the borderline of Nepal to stop and put pressure on the country to prevent the purchase of arms from China (Garver, 1991).

Indo-Nepalese Ties Under International Law

Portraying itself as a lawmaker in the neighboring states, Indian relationship with Nepal is less democratic and more hegemonic. The 'pressure-building embargo and blockade of 2015 against Nepal was most likely a breach of international law. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 gives exclusive rights to the landlocked countries to enjoy on the sea. More importantly, the convention provided them with the right of access to and from the seas and freedom of transit (Bayeh, 2015). However, the Indian blockade was also a violation of the UN's and Convention of Law of Sea of 1982 which allows landlocked countries to enter the sea without restriction. Furthermore, the 'Bilateral Trade Treaty' between India and Nepal, which simply grants Nepal access to the Indian market through the sea, was violated. The South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) was established to promote free trade (Jamil, 2004) and industry in the region. SAFTA does not allow the blockade of the transit route of any states. However, India also violated. India has historically maintained hegemonic policies and interventions in Nepal and Bhutan. India, a nuclear power with a developing economy and the world's second largest population, practices a post-colonial foreign policy (Adhikari, 2014).

Indian regional policies show that how Mr. Nehru's policies haven't changed at present. Indian involvement in the internal affairs of Nepal is not hidden to anyone. The presence in Nepal has greatly dominated the political environment of Nepal badly.

Chinese Foreign Policy Objectives in Nepal

The Sino-Nepalese ties are deep-rooted (Koirala, 2010) as Nepal has been in the key regional interest of China. Despite the geographical proximity, China and Nepal have cooperated in the areas of politics, defence, economy and other bilateral agreements. However, their diplomatic relations took place in August, 1955 for the first time. In addition to this, both countries ties were established for the regional integrity, cooperation, mutual coexistence, mutual respect and understanding one another. It ought to be noted that Nepal has always maintained that its soil would not be used against any subversive and covert activities against China. In order to strengthen their bilateral relations, high level of visits have been maintained on both sides. Many projects have been signed between these two countries, especially for the development of Nepal. The cooperation in the fields of economic and trade, border security issues, joint tourism and terrorism have continued from time to time. Even has provided grants, interest free loans and other insensitive for the development of Nepalese economy (Murton, Lord, & Beazley, 2016).

Apart from bilateral relations between China and Nepal, both have been witnessed in cooperating on international forum. It ought to be noted that Nepal holds the status of Dialogue Partner in Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Most importantly, Nepal has been supporting the Chinese membership in SAARC forum. Despite all this cooperation, setback in their relations have been observed due to Tibet factor. Traditionally, Tibet is the region on which Indian and Chinese interest differ. Both, India and China have different point of views over Tibet status. However, to Chinese point of view, the geostrategic location serves best to the regional interest of China. It is believed that the Chinese interest in Nepal are due to the Tibet factor (Kant, 1994).

The geographical proximity with Tibet is the largest source of interest of China to ensure its presence in Nepal by developing good relations with Nepal (Murton et al., 2016). It has been the key objective of China to integrate Tibet region with China, however, India seems to be the largest hindrance. No doubt, it has intervened militarily in Tibet, but it never succeeded to its mission due to Indian factor and lack of support from Nepal (Kant, 1994). It ought to be noted that Chinese access to Tibet region is far difficult and its presence in Nepal is the main reason to get its intended result. Dalai Lama presence in India makes it further difficult for China to claim over Tibet territory. No doubt, China has restricted the Tibetan access to outside the world, disconnecting them with the world politically, economically and socially. This posture the Chinese neo-colonial policies in South Asia. It has the key objective of Chinese relations with Nepal to convince and stay away Nepal in intervening the internal affairs of Tibet (Kant, 1994).

There is no doubt that Nepal is small state which makes no sense for the political and economic strengthen of China. Even Nepal has no importance for Chinese in respect to trade partnership. The establishment of relations with Nepal is only motive of China to ensure peace on Tibet border, to get Nepalese support over Tibet issue and stop Indian intervention in Tibet via Nepalese soil. Most importantly, Nepal finds Chinese much closer as compare with India. Despite geographical proximity, socio-cultural affiliation and strong economic ties Nepalese relations with India have been limited whereas Nepalese ties with China have greatly been welcomed in Nepal, even knowing the fact that China is the greatest regional exploiter of small states.

Nepal is well-learned about the fact that disturbed Indo-Sino relations are in the greater interests of Nepal since Chinese relations with India deteriorates, Nepal become the ultimate need of China and India in the region whereas the relations between China and India are good, the needs for Nepal in the region would be dormant (Kant, 1994). But, Nepalese relations with China have been much stronger as Nepal is well-aware about the fact that Chinese would not intervene in the internal affairs of Nepal as India has been doing in past.

CONCLUSION

Nepal in the context of Indo-Chinese geo-political conflict and geo-economic competition finds itself in political dilemma since power politics in South Asia has badly affected the political and economic structures of Nepal badly. It is

believed that the twenty-first century is known as the Asian Century. The realists view did not take into account the full range of China-Nepal-India ties. The neocolonial features of China and India have badly affected Nepal. Neocolonialism shows how Indian hegemony and influence have cast a pall over in Nepal-Indian ties, making them fearful. In Nepal's many achievements, India's hegemonic position has been witnessed in realpolitik. Similarly, in the case of China, the realist and neocolonialist policies of China in Nepal are also fearful as China main aim t ensure its regional supremacy, integrating some independent territory like Tibet. Nepalese grievances that need to be addressed. Nepal has already joined the OBOR initiative, and India needs to join as well. China and India were compelled to resolve their mutual problems due to commerce, transportation, tourism, geography, and other dimensions factors. Because of its strategic location between the two developing economies of the region, Nepal has the potential to serve as a vibrant bridge. To restore and sustain China's, India's, and Nepal's ties, peaceful and progressive regional cooperation need to initiated at earliest.

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