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NEPAL'S IMPORTANCE IN INDIA'S SECURITY ASSESSMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Nepal's geographic closeness, similar cultural and historical links, and political dynamics make it a crucial factor in India's strategic and security concerns. The geopolitical, economic, and strategic aspects that highlight Nepal's relevance are examined in this research study as it relates to India's security architecture. Along with exploring the consequences for India's internal and regional security, the report also explores the changing bilateral ties and the impact of outsider powers like China.

INTRODUCTION

India and Nepal share more than 1,700 kilometres of open borders, including India's Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. This unique and historically rooted agreement allows citizens of both countries to freely surpass their borders without the need for visas or passports to support close connections with people, living economic interactions, and deep cultural assimilation [1]. These interactions are further strengthened by strong family, linguistic and ethnic relations that reflect a rich and general heritage across borders. Open restrictions act as symbols of mutual trust and cooperation, but it also represents an important challenge for internal security. The porosity of the border was used for a variety of illegal activities, including contraband, trade in people, spreading weapons and movement, or recruitment of anti-states such as rebels and terrorists [2][3]. These vulnerabilities require continuous surveillance, infrastructure improvements, and robust border coordination in border control and information exchange. Nepal, which plays between India and China, functions as an important geopolitical buffer in the Himalayas. India's delicate proximity to the north border means that all changes in Nepal's foreign policy or internal stability will have direct consequences for India's national security. Given the fact that Himalayan sites act as natural line of defense, the political orientation and infrastructure development of the region within the broader strategy of the northern Indians are carefully monitored [4]. Given the increasing participation of China in Nepal, the average infrastructure projects, investments and diplomatic scope - India needs to maintain a strong, cooperative and friendly relationship with Kathmandu [5]. India's stable, sovereign and India's Nepal not only increase the security of the region, but also strengthen the strategic depth and influence of India in South Asia. Therefore, support for goodwill through development assistance, strengthening diplomatic participation, and strengthening cultural and economic ties are not merely a matter of neighbourhood policy. It is the basis of India's regional strategy, guaranteeing its benefits and maintaining balance in the developing geopolitical landscape [6][7].

Geographical Importance

Nepal's status of inland countries between China and India gives it a huge strategic significance. Nepal was historically the state of the bumper that prevents direct conflict between the two Asian giants. Its neutrality and sovereignty ensured maintenance of geopolitical balance in the region [8]. Geographic and political harmonization of Nepal is essential for India to ensure strategic depth along its northern border. Upper Himalayas are not only a natural barrier, but also a platform for supervision and early warning. If a potential adversary, such as China, should develop a significant influence or even military presence in Nepal, it is possible that these natural barriers can be surrounded and subjected to the Indian gangnetic plains of security risks [9]. In addition, topography and terrain of Nepal are provided by possible corridors for military inputs or penetration that can be used in case of conflict. Nepal's strategic alignment becomes more significant given the delicate nature of the Indian-Chinese relationship, particularly in the wake of the Galwan Valley Clash and the distance. In this regard, maintaining a stable and positive relationship with Nepal is crucial for both bilateral ties and the general stability of the security situation in the Himalayan area [10].

Border Management and Security Concerns

The open boundary with Nepal, although beneficial for cultural and economic exchange, was also used for illegal activities, including smuggling, trafficking in people, spreading weapons and moving insurgents and criminals. The landscape, which includes hills, rivers, and thick forests, plus the lack of strict border controls generate worries about the migration of undesirable elements that try to elude the law. Over the years, several cases have been reported where the insurgent workers and terrorists used Nepal as a transit point or a safe refuge. This has increased the alarms within the Indian safety facility, especially in regions affected by left -wing extremism or cross -border militance. In addition, counterfeit currency missiles operating through Nepal also appeared as a serious threat of financial security. The porous nature of the border represents an important challenge for Indian security agencies, which must rely on extensive coordination with its Nepalese counterparts to limit illegal cross -border activities [11]. The arrangement of open borders, albeit unique, requires robust supervision mechanisms, intelligence information and a common patrol. The establishment of integrated control contributions (ICP) and improving infrastructure on strategic transitions has become key priorities for Indian politicians. In addition, the region has seen occasional bilateral tension, especially territorial disputes,

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such as Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura dispute. These disputes are rooted in various interpretations of historical contracts and cartographic evidence and regularly defy and affect bilateral ties. A diplomatic rift resulted from Nepal's 2020 release of a new political map that included these targeted territories, which India rejected [12]. Such disputes emphasize the sensitive nature of border management and the need for permanent diplomatic wiring to avoid escalation. To keep the Indian border stable, these issues must be resolved via communication, respect for one another, and conformity to international norms.

China's Increasing Presence in Nepal

There were concerns about the new Delhi as a result of increased investment and the Belt and Road Initiative's (BRI) infrastructure development in Nepal [13]. These projects, which include telecommunications networks, energy pipelines, railroads, and roadways, are intended to link Nepal into the Chinese economy. Although they promise economic development and connectivity for Nepal, Indian analysts consider them to be suspicious of possible strategic consequences. Chinese involvement in Nepal is considered to be part of its wider strategy to expand its trail in South Asia and encircle India, a strategy that is often referred to as "pearl chain". "The possibility of infrastructure with two uses seemingly intended for civilian use, but capable of supporting military logistics-for India direct strategic challenge. Chinese involvement in the development of Nepalese border infrastructure and the ability to supervise the traditional Indian influence and the presence along the border. Sensitive to Beijing, including Nepal's attitude towards Tibet and its rejection against Chinese activities. For India, it requires a multilateral approach against China's influence in Nepal, which includes the revitalization of its own development partnerships, security concerns through institutional cooperation and involvement in high -level diplomacy to confirm the importance of Nepal in the Indian strategic vision for the region [14].

Economic and Sociocultural Interdependence

India and Nepal share deeply rooted socio -cultural ties, including linguistic, religious and family contexts that last for centuries. Both nations are predominantly Hindu and places of religious significance, such as Pashupatinath in Kathmandu and Janakpur, are considered the birthplace of SIT, they are honored by Hindu throughout India. Cultural festivals, traditions and rituals often reflect each other and strengthen the shared civilization ethos. These cultural affinities supported the unique proximity in bilateral relationships and contributed to mutual understanding at the local level. Economically, the relationship is deeply connected. Millions of Nepalese citizens live and work in India, contribute significantly to Indian economies and send valuable transfers back home [15]. Recruitment of Gorkha soldiers to the Indian army - a tradition dating back to the British colonial times - contains symbolization of military and emotional trust between the two nations. Indian investments in Nepal cover a number of sectors, including hydropower, production, telecommunications and infrastructure, reflecting the role of India as the main economic partner. India also remains the largest business partner of Nepal and the primary source of oil products, drugs and basic commodities. India also expands considerable developmental assistance to Nepal through projects in education, health, road construction and community development. The aim of these initiatives is to strengthen human development indicators and build good will. Despite these deep bonds, however, some of the Nepalese India segments increase perception. Examples such as the unofficial border blockade in 2015 supported anti-index sentiments and created diplomatic friction. In order to alleviate these perceptions, India must accept a consulting and respectful approach in its obligations with Nepal. Support of partnership based on equality, mutual benefits and respect for sovereignty can increase the soft power and long -term strategic influence of India in Nepal. Employment of diplomacy focused on people and development cooperation with people will help strengthen bilateral trust and counterweight to external influences [16].

Implications for Security and Political Dynamics

The internal political stability of Nepal is essential for Indian security, especially in connection with the management of its sensitive northern borders and ensuring regional cohesion. Politically stable Nepal will be less likely to serve as a breeding ground for anti-index rhetoric, extremist elements or politics that face Indian interests. On the contrary, the period of political riots in Nepal historically provided opening for external actors to influence influence and arouse nationalist feelings for domestic factions, which often manifest themselves in anti - Indian stories. Frequent changes in the governments of Nepal, moving coalitions and political infighting have occasionally created vacuum management and unpredictability of politics. These conditions can be used by anti-indian actors or militant groups looking for safe refuge or transit routes. In addition, the unstable political environment makes India more difficult to maintain consistent diplomatic involvement or to carry out long -term development projects that are necessary to maintain good will and strategic leverage. Indian perceived involvement in Nepalese politics - whether through the support of backchannel to political parties, public comments on domestic development or apparent diplomatic actions - have ever returned. Such a connection led to accusations of interference, diplomatic protests and an increase in nationalist posture in Nepal. The constitutional crisis in 2015, during which many in Nepal accused India of organization or support unofficial blockages, significantly damaged bilateral relations and supported extensive indignation. Therefore, although India must protect its strategic interests, it is equally important to respect Nepal's political autonomy and sovereignty. A low-profile nuance that supports democratic institutions, capacities and economic development, without seeing that it seemed to be disturbing, likely to bring better long -term results. Encouraging inclusive political dialogue, offering neutral support for democratic processes, and avoiding obvious protectionism can help stabilize the Nepal political landscape and strengthen the role of India as a reliable partner rather than a dominant neighbour [17].

Proposals for Policies

In order to effectively manage cross -border dynamics and support stronger bilateral bonds with Nepal, it is necessary to access multiple tributaries. Strengthening border infrastructure and strengthening intelligence sharing will improve the monitoring and regulation of cross -border movement and will

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address security concerns and facilitate legitimate exchange. At the same time, the deepening of diplomatic involvement in Nepal through sustainable development projects focused on people can serve as a strategic counterweight to grow Chinese influence in the region. This connection should be complemented by regional cooperation support through multilateral frames such as Bimstec and Saarc, which can help strengthen the trust, integration and shared progress between South Asian nations. In addition, support for Nepal's economic development through targeted investments and technical assistance will be built not only Goodwill, but also contributes to long -term regional stability, supporting a partnership based on mutual growth and respect [18].

CONCLUSION

Nepal is still a crucial component in the regional security strategy of India. It is at the core of India's strategic thinking due to its location, historical connections, and current political alignment. A stable, friendly, and cooperative Nepal is vital for India to secure its northern border and preserve regional balance in South Asia.

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