



The Dynamics of the India-Nepal Relationship

Lieutenant General Shokin Chauhan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, SM & VSM (Retd)

Existing Fault-lines in the India-Nepal Relationship

A Connected Subcontinent

South Asia comprising of the nations of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka has more than 2,000 ethnic entities with populations ranging from hundreds of millions to small tribal groups. According to the United Nations population estimates (2014), the region accounts for 8.62 percent of the world's population¹ which is ethnically very diverse in terms of their linguistic, social, cultural and religious affiliations. An understanding of these historical developments is important especially in the present context, given that the notion of South Asia itself is recent and a product of a turbulent past and divided present.

As much as it is true that India is the dominant country of the region, it is not only a result of its geographical size or economic wealth but also an outcome of significant historical heritage and events of the past.

Over the centuries, this region has been invaded and settled by many ethnic groups, including various Dravidian, Indo-Aryan and Iranian groups. The amalgamation of Dravidian, Indo-Aryan and native societies has produced composite cultures with many common traditions and beliefs that converge or diverge throughout the course of time giving rise to strong local traditions. Cultural assimilation, in terms of language, religion, art and socio-political ideologies has been important components of such expansions. In line with this, India and Nepal similarly show great diversity in language with more than twenty-six distinct languages spoken in Nepal that are related to Indo-European, Tibeto-Burman, and Austro-

Asiatic language families² and twenty-two officially recognised scheduled languages belonging to various language families in India.³

Generally, South Asia is often presumed to be India-centric. This may be attributed to the fact that India is the largest and the most populous country in the region, besides being the largest democracy in the world. It is also one of the fastest growing economies of the world and is politically, technologically and militarily better equipped than the other nations in the region. As much as it is true that India is the dominant country of the region, it is not only a result of its geographical size or economic wealth but also an outcome of significant historical heritage and events of the past.

A Shared History

“The history of a people is the story of their survival and growth on the land”⁴. The stories of both India and Nepal in this respect have undergone tremendous changes since the earliest times till present. Nepal's recorded history began with the Kiratis, who arrived in the 7th or 8th century BC from east of Asia. It was also during this period that Buddhism first came to the country; indeed, it is claimed that Buddha and his disciple Ananda visited the Kathmandu Valley and stayed for a time in Patan. By 200 AD, Buddhism had waned, and was replaced by Hinduism, brought by the

Licchavis, who invaded from northern India and overthrew the last Kirati king. The Hindus also introduced the caste system and ushered in a classical age of Nepalese art and architecture.

Nepal frequently called the 'Gorkhali' Kingdom, takes its name from the legendary eighth-century Hindu warrior-saint Guru Gorakhnath⁵. They trace their ancestry to the Hindu Rajputs and Brahmins of Northern India who entered modern Nepal from the west following Muslim advances. In the village of Gorkha about fifty miles to the west of Kathmandu, is a temple dedicated to Gorakhnath as well as another dedicated to Gorakhkali, a corresponding female deity⁶.

Prior to the 18th century, Nepal was a divided country but by the year 1769, under the leadership of King Dhiraj Prithvi Narayan Shahdev (1769 – 1775), the Gorkha dynasty had taken over the areas of modern Nepal⁷ and this served as a driving force to unify Nepal. After his death, the Shah dynasty began to expand their kingdom into what is present day North India and Tibet. Between 1788 and 1791, Nepal invaded Tibet and robbed the Tashilhunpo Monastery of Shigatse. Tibet sought the help of the Chinese and the Chinese emperor Qianlong appointed Fu Kangan, commander-in-chief of the Tibetan campaign. After a series of successful Chinese victories, Nepal signed a treaty on Chinese terms that required, among other obligations, that it send tributes to the Chinese emperor every five years.⁸

On the western side, the Kangra fort, now part of India's Himachal Pradesh, was captured by the Nepalese Army under the command of Amar Singh Thapa who had succeeded in extending Nepal to the Sutlej river (now in India) and beyond in the West, and Sikkim and Bhutan to the East. By the early 19th century, Nepalese territory had expanded up to the banks of the River Sutlej in Punjab and Kumaun to the west and the Teesta River in the east.⁹

Strategic Geographical Location

Nepal lies along the mountains of the central portion of the Himalayas. Nepal's shape is roughly rectangular, about 650 kilometres long and about 200 kilometres wide, comprising a total of 147,181 square kilometres of land. A landlocked country, it is surrounded by India on three sides and by China's Xizang Autonomous Region (Tibet) to

the north. It is separated from Bangladesh by an approximately 15-kilometre-wide strip of India's state of West Bengal, and from Bhutan by the 88 kilometre-wide Sikkim, also an Indian state. Nepal is almost totally dependent on India for transit facilities and access to the sea, that is, the Bay of Bengal¹⁰.

Nepal has acted as an important bridge linking two ancient civilizations of the Asian continent, China in the North and India in the South. The land slopes downwards from the almost impenetrable and mighty Himalayan wall of the north until it reaches the southern fertile Terai plains. The narrow track of Terai plains was once covered by thick tropical forest known as the 'Char Kose Jhadi'¹¹ or malarial curtain. India lies to the south of the Terai. The river Mechi which flows in between the eastern boundary of Nepal and India formed the eastern border and the river Mahakali in Western Nepal became the western border of Nepal. Nepal was once much more extensive and included the present-day Indian Kumaun and Garhwal to the river Sutlej¹².

Between the Himalayas and the Terai plains lie two mountain ranges running from west to east broken only by streams and rivers that run from north to south. These furrows have acted as natural barriers against the movement of people from one part of the country to the other which meant that the isolated communities could enjoy their own unique lifestyles without hindrance from others. The Mahabharat Range also called the Lesser Himalaya reaches up to 10,000 feet in height and constitutes the largest area of the country with most of the Nepalese living on the slopes and valleys of this range. The Chure or Siwalik range, a single file of sandstone hills running from the east to the west, not exceeding 300 to 600 feet from the base, is the outer border of the mountainous ranges. The Terai lies to the south of Chure and serves as the rice bowl of Nepal today¹³.

The Nepal Himalayas consist of four major massifs — Nanda Devi (25,700 feet), Dhaulagiri (26,826 feet), Gosainthan (26,305) and Kanchanjunga (28,156 feet) — making the formidable northern wall throughout the length of the country. The 29,028 feet Mount Everest lies roughly midway and gives off no main ridges¹⁴.

Given the narrowness of the rectangle — as the breadth of Nepal does not cover more than five degrees in latitude in any part — the range in

climate is striking. Climatic variations offer a sanctuary for a wide variety of plant and animal species. The biodiversity is one of the richest even though the area of the land mass is small¹⁵.

Geographical position and historical development are the determining factors of Nepal's foreign policy that regardless of the kaleidoscopic change of contemporary events, and no matter what form of government has been instituted or what political party may be in power, it has a natural tendency to return again and again to the same general and fundamental alignment¹⁶. This is applicable in the Indo-Nepalese context and has been evident in political relations since the establishment of the modern State of Nepal from its inception to the current period.

This unique location of Nepal is of immense strategic value to India as well as to China. India has traditionally looked at its northern frontiers with China as the Himalayan watershed. The Himalayan watershed forms formidable military barriers that can be crossed at selected places only and therefore lend itself for a strong defence line requiring significantly lesser resources to defend. Any Chinese military or ideological influx or influence south of this watershed would be inimical to Indian interests and since the mountains of Nepal open out to the great Indian plains, it becomes crucial to safeguard the military interests of India.

China, on the other hand, views its borders with Nepal, as the soft under belly of Tibet¹⁷. It, therefore, finds it necessary to ensure that it retains adequate political, strategic and economic leverage in Nepal so that its security is not compromised.

The Siliguri corridor, the only rail and road link between the rest of India and its north-eastern states, also merits for serious consideration. Its security is, therefore, vital for India, and it can be jeopardised by a small military manoeuvre or by subverting the people living in this area. Subversion can be easily carried out by political or ideological or religious fundamentalist forces both in Nepal and in Bangladesh. Chinese

military presence, south of the watershed will pose serious threats to this area¹⁸.

Nepal's southern borders with India do not have geographical barriers and are open, porous and in places difficult to monitor by the security personnel. Any anti-India activity in Nepalese border areas will find easy access to a poorly guarded and insecure Indian heartland. These activities could be Inter-Services Intelligence¹⁹ (ISI) sponsored violence, smuggling, drug running, and other economic offences. All the rivers viz., Budhi Ganga, Karnali, Andhikhola, Kali Gandaki, Dudh Koshi, Kabela etc, originating or flowing in Nepal merge into the river Ganges. Unchecked flows, every year, cause floods leading to serious social and economic havoc in India.

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India's Security Concern

India, is of the opinion that militarily, the mountains of Nepal open out to the great Indian plains where defensible lines will be difficult to establish and therefore, finds it necessary to ensure that it retains adequate political, strategic and economic leverage in Nepal so that its security is not compromised. Nepal is always considered to be an intrinsic part of its northern security system. It, therefore, expects Nepal to remain sensitive to its security concerns. This expectation of India has been misinterpreted in Nepal as an attack on Nepal's sovereignty and independence, especially since Nepal feels vulnerable in case of any external powers' presence on Nepalese territory beyond the normal diplomatic activity. On the other hand, Nepal is also fully aware that India could take care of its economic development and security concerns more effectively than any other country including China. This feeling of interdependency was reflected in the 1950 Treaty and also during various the last 70 plus years of a very close friendship. China's role in Nepal has expanded steadily over the last decades. To counter China's reach in Nepal, India has to act speedily and steadily to improve its weak overland infrastructure in the Himalayas.

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India needs to improve its diplomacy vis-à-vis Nepal and show greater benevolence toward it. Nepal and India will gain if they establish bridges of opportunities rather than mistrusting each other.

Evolution of India and Nepal's Foreign Policy

The foreign policy of an independent and democratic India was a clean departure from that of the colonial power which had adopted the policy of bringing other states under its rule by the use of force or intrigue. India on the other hand adopted the policy of helping democratic movements in its neighbourhood. It had supported Nepal's democratic movement which overthrew the century-long Rana family rule, reinstalling King Tribhuvan on the throne and ushered in the democratic polity²⁰. Post-independence, the special relationship between India and Nepal started with the signing of the India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1950 and accompanying letters that defined security relations between the two countries as well as an agreement governing both bilateral trade, and also trade transiting India. As a small and landlocked country, Nepal's foreign policy priorities on the other hand, were to preserve and protect its territorial integrity from its neighbours²¹. During the *Panchayat* regime which was the political system of Nepal from 1960 to 1990 based on the *Panchayat* system of self-governance, any threat to the monarchy was considered as a threat to the sovereignty of the country and vice-versa. Thus, the survival of the monarchy became synonymous with state security²². As a result, Nepal's foreign policy was designed to protect its territorial integrity by maintaining a balance between India and China, adherence to the UN principles and being part of regional organizations. Its foreign policy was also specially formulated to mobilise international support and recognition with the purpose of fulfilling its political and economic requirements²³. Articulating Nepal's foreign policy priorities, in view of its geographic reality, King Prithvi Narayan Shah said that Nepal was like a "*yam between two boulders*", and should maintain an equal relationship with China (then Tibet) and India. S.D. Muni (1973) observes that the

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foreign policy objectives of small states like Nepal are motivated by security (territorial integrity and military), stability (political and economic) and status, but these motivations may not be enough to decipher Nepal's foreign policy. Therefore, it is important to examine some structural factors that influence such policies. The structural factors may be constant (e.g. geography, history, socio-cultural ties with its larger neighbour) or variable (e.g. nationalism and political system)²⁴. To fulfil its foreign policy objectives, Nepal adopted the strategy of firstly, taking advantage of differences and clash of interests between India and China, secondly, reducing dependence on both neighbours by diversifying its foreign relations, and thirdly, mobilisation of international contacts for building counter-pressures²⁵.

Existing Fault Lines

In 1950, the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship was signed between the two countries, however, there has been anti-India protests in Nepal against India's overbearing attitude and perceived interference in its internal affairs over the years. These crystallised into widespread anti-India sentiments²⁶. Almost every section of the people especially the educated elite of Kathmandu and courtiers of the King sought in China, a much-needed counter weight against India. This could also be directly attributable to Nepal's asymmetry in size, psychology and continuing poverty.

There was little doubt that Nepalese leanings towards China were a tilt, historically validated as a balance of power gambit. The Indian defeat in 1962 war against China marked a significant change in the attitude of Nepal towards India and China. The main concern in Kathmandu was that a powerful China posed, possibly, a much larger threat to Nepal than India could militarily. Also, if India couldn't protect itself, how could they expect India to protect Nepal?

The intrinsic strengths of both China in the North and India in the South was not lost on policy makers of Nepal and this was borne out by the advice of Prithvi Narayan Shah to his successors, "the kingdom is like a yam between two boulders. Maintain friendly relations with the Emperor of China, great friendship should also be maintained

with the Emperor beyond the southern seas²⁷. This balance has continued since.

By 1990, Indian intelligence agencies had discovered that Kathmandu had emerged as an important outpost of the ISI of Pakistan. Nepal itself had acknowledged the ISI's growing presence through the expulsion of Pakistani diplomats from its soil. It had also, in its parleys with India, accepted the ISI's penetration and even sought help for dealing with the menace. For most part, Nepal had pleaded its helplessness in checking the ISI's activities²⁸. This development along with the large-scale narcotics trade and smuggling through the porous border had emerged as very potent threats to India's security.

Boundary Related Disputes

Indo-Nepalese boundary disputes are both the legacy of British colonisation as well as vagaries of nature. Boundary disputes along its southern and south eastern borders are mainly due to shifting river beds as a result of heavy drainage as shown in the figure 2.1 which illustrates the shifting courses of the river Kosi

In a number of places, boundary pillars which mark the boundary between the two countries, these have been washed away. There have been encroachments from

The longer the dispute remains, the more difficult it will be to resolve. Boundary problem solving is further complicated by the involvement of the Centre, the States concerned and internal politics of the region which caters more to the vote bank than long-term national issues.

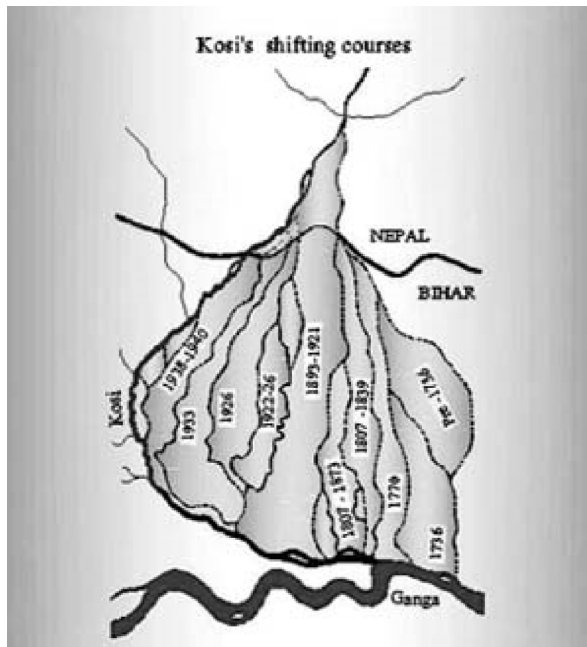


Fig. 2.1: Map showing Kosi's shifting courses

both sides, on each other's territories. The longer the dispute remains, the more difficult it will be to resolve. Boundary problem solving is further complicated by the involvement of the Centre, the States concerned and internal politics of the region which caters more to the vote bank than long-term national issues. Specific issues relating to the dispute are given in the following paragraphs.

Kalapani Salient. The Kalapani river is the eastern headwaters of the river Kali, near the borders of Nepal and Kumaun (Uttarakhand) in India²⁹. It originates from small springs and runs through an area that includes a disputed area of about 400 square kilometres³⁰ around the source of the river although the exact size of the disputed area varies from source to source³¹. The river borders the Nepalese zone of Mahakali and the Indian state of Uttarakhand. The Sugauli Treaty signed by Nepal and British India in 1816 locates the river Kali as Nepal's western boundary with India³². Subsequent maps drawn by British surveyors show the source of the boundary river at different places. This discrepancy in locating the source of the river led to boundary disputes between India and Nepal, with each country producing maps supporting their own claims. Nepal claims the source of the Kali is to the west of Kalapani, while India claims it is to the east. Kalapani has been occupied

by India's Indo-Tibetan border security forces since the 1962 border war with China. India maintains a strict border regime to keep out criminals and control illegal cross-border activities from Nepal.

The 'Politics of Water'

Nepal and India share one of the largest geohydrological regions called the Ganga-Brahmaputra Basin. Nepal covers a large part of the upper catchment of the sub-basin of the Ganges River. Major rivers of the sub-basin like Mahakali, Karnali, Sapt Gandaki and Sapt Kosi originate from the trans-Himalaya region, cross Nepal and flow southwards to join the Ganges in India, and so are international or trans-boundary in nature. Though Nepal occupies 13 percent of the total drainage of the Ganges basin, its contribution to the flow of the

Ganges river is much more significant, amounting to about 45 percent to its average annual flow. In the dry seasons, Nepal's contribution to the total run-off is as much as 70 percent. These hydrological features bind India and Nepal in a relationship of geographical interdependence and economic complementarities of water resource development. Although the potential for joint endeavours is considerable, the cooperation between these two countries on the issues related to water resource development has not been easy and forthcoming, since they were heavily influenced by geopolitics; marked by emphasis on historical wrongs (real and perceived), big-small country syndrome, failure in understanding each other's sensitivities, aggressive posture and negative approach. A major part of the last century was lost in the process, incurring huge opportunity cost of delay for both countries³³. Due to the nature of its terrain, only three million hectares of Nepalese Terai land is cultivable of which 2.6 million is cultivated and approximately one million hectares are irrigated. Every year, about 175 billion cubic meters of water flows down into the Ganges. Sixty-seven million hectares of Indian cultivable farm land lies in the Ganga basin of which 20 million is irrigated. Whereas six to eight million Nepalese are sustained

in the Terai by this water, the Ganga basin in India sustains a population of 360 millions.³⁴

Paradoxically, both India and Nepal need to utilise the Ganga basin water resources for their individual requirements. Nepal needs to irrigate an additional two million hectares in the Terai. It needs hydroelectric power, assessed to have a potential of 83,000 MW of which 42,000 MW is economically viable and of which only one percent has been tapped, as yet.³⁵

India requires water for irrigation purposes and to control it, so as to overcome and avoid the yearly deluge which ravages its plains. It needs hydroelectric power to sustain its economic growth. Cheap and available electricity from Nepal will not only be of use to India but will generate foreign exchange and resources to the cash-strapped Nepalese.

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Nepalese historically, have perceived that the management of development of its water resources has been one sided³⁶ and not a partnership, with India retaining all control during construction as well as in subsequent operations and maintenance. This has contributed to much mistrust as has the apparent lack of transparency. In 1996, India and Nepal had agreed to an integrated development of



Fig.2.3: Nepal River Map

water resources of the Mahakali River to include the Sarda, Tanakpur and Pancheshwar projects. Despite ratification of sorts by the Nepalese Parliament, opposition towards it continues. It could be that Nepalese are prisoners of their own hype³⁷ or that they expect greater Indian concessions in such Himalayan resources, which are essentially required by India.

Baggage of the Past

Nepal's complaint about getting an unfair deal in earlier treaties like the Kosi Treaty (1954) and the Gandak Treaty (1959), cast its shadow over future collaborations. Nepal water resource experts complained about unilateral initiatives of India, nominal and delayed compensations, disregard for Nepal's interest and unequal benefits. These projects created ill feeling and mistrust between two nations leading to a big gap in joint water resource development initiatives. The history of negotiations regarding water projects on Indo-Nepal trans-boundary waters has been dominated by controversy due to a perception difference. The Nepalese believe that India is draining Nepal's watershed for its own benefit and have long viewed India as a hegemonic power that arm-twists neighbours for unfair agreements. India, in turn, blames Nepal as suffering from a small country syndrome, imagining non-existent conspiracies and ignoring India's contribution to different sectors

of Nepal' economy. Further, fragile and unstable political uncertainties in Nepal have also played a role in fuelling anti-Indian sentiments.³⁸

ISI and Terrorism in Nepal

The open and porous Indo- Nepal border runs along five Indian States, i.e., Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Sikkim. There are 21 recognised and manned border check points consisting of police, customs and immigration officials. In addition, intelligence and revenue enforcement personnel also man these areas³⁹. However, trans-border movements across the long border have grown unchecked especially in the Terai, Naxalbari, Darjeeling and West Sikkim areas.

It is a known fact that certain 'terrorists and related criminals' are engaged in gun running, narcotics, smuggling and money laundering and using the open border between India and Nepal to infiltrate and cause mayhem within India. Though the Nepalese did have some significant successes and busted some ISI spy rings as well as apprehended and later extradited Yakub Memon (of the infamous Bombay blast fame) to India in 1994, however subsequently, little has been achieved. Nepal appears to be ignoring the build-up of this terror related activity within Nepal to target India. This "tolerance" has encouraged known fundamentalist

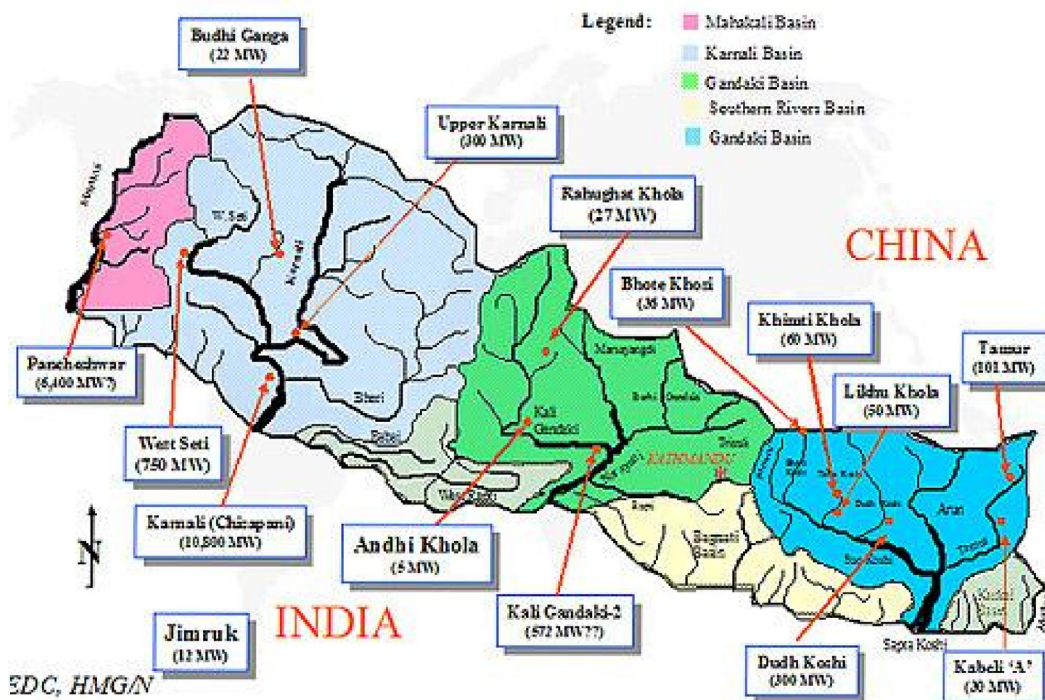


Fig.2.4: Rivers of Nepal

and terror funding organizations in Nepal to create a power bloc, driven by inimical Middle East money and related Islamic NGOs. This menace fuelled by the ISI, in some years has seriously eroded law and order problems in Nepal as well as created an inimical, anti-Indian belt along our borders to directly target our “heartland”, the Indo - Gangetic plains, where India is most sensitive. There is, therefore, a need to carry out some measures to check this menace. Measures suggested below are under three heads, Indian, Nepalese and joint measures.

Indian Measures

- Strict surveillance of all entry points into Nepal, as well as the airports of Dacca, Karachi, Singapore and Delhi.
- Border sealing to be carried out by Para Military Forces. Fencing the border should be considered.
- Establish para military/CAPF presence in certain hot beds of ISI activities to counter ISI activities as on required basis, on own side of the border.
- Raise issue strongly with the Nepalese using all possible means including trade, transit, economic and political means to galvanise Nepalese actions and clamp down on ISI agents, conduits and recruitments.
- Closely monitor ISI activities on own side of the border so as to negate any northern side-stepping and seeking safe havens in Nepalese Terai.
- Keep Nepalese authorities informed of all information and data regarding ISI elements.

Nepalese Measures

- Close monitoring of all ISI activities in Nepal, identifying areas and causes of subversive activities and removing these with all possible speed.
- Monitor and seal foreign funds supporting ISI activities.

- Employ political and diplomatic means to curb such activities.

Joint Measures

- Reworking the extradition treaty to make it more responsive.
- Data sharing and exchange of information on regular basis on ISI agents, sources and activities. New Delhi’s concern over Pakistan’s use of Nepalese territory for anti-Indian activities has been conveyed by the Minister for External Affairs, Jaswant Singh, during his visit to Nepal in August 2001. The PM of Nepal, Sher Bahadur Deuba, confirmed that such activity would not be allowed or tolerated from its soil⁴⁰.
- Joint patrolling or close coordination at border management. Allow hot pursuit in either country. Joint action will be in the spirit of the 1950 treaty. Towards this end, measures to implement joint activities by way of command, control and communications be organised and resources be made available by India.
- Establishing hot lines at all levels including the district level to coordinate common measure at the non-military levels.

Madhesi Movement and India

The term Madhesh itself is derived from Sanskrit word ‘Madhyadesh’ that implies to the Gangetic plain and the Vitri Madhesh area bordering India on the southern side and spreading north up to the foothill of Siwalik range. The Terai region, which is mostly a flatland, is geographically and culturally distinct from the hills. According to the population census of 2001, it occupies 23 per cent of total area and 48.5 per cent of the population of Nepal. Most of the Terai inhabitants are plains people or Madhesi whose religious traditions, language, caste system, food, style of clothing and other social customs and manners are similar to the people of Indo-Gangetic plains in the south. Their mother tongues being Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Urdu, Hindi and Bengali, and dialects of these languages are used by the Janjati groups. After the unification

of Madhesh in Nepal by Prithivi Narayan Shah in 1769, its border was again re-drawn by the Sugauli Treaty concluded between British India and Nepal in 1816. The treaty scattered the people in Madhesh across the border that divides India and Nepal internationally. The Madheshis have ever since been divided till this day.⁴¹

Area and Population. The total land area in the 20 Terai districts is 34,109 sq km which accounts for 23.1% of the country's total area (Table 1). In 2001, 48.4% of the country's total population of 23.2 million lived in Terai districts with a density of 329 persons/sq km. Terai plain and Vitri Madhesh together cover 15.6% of the country's total area.

Poverty. People living under absolute poverty line in Nepal are currently estimated to be 31%. However, about 46% of Dalits, 41% of Muslims and 33% of indigenous Janjati population are below the poverty line (World Bank, 2006). Together these three major ethnic groups have 52.6% of the total Madheshi population.

Land Ownership. Since the knowledge of writing and speaking Nepali language was the clause in the Citizenship Act of 1960s for obtaining citizenship certificate, it was intentionally formulated to deny citizenship to Madheshi. The Madheshis of Terai, who have been living for several generations, are denied citizenship certificate due to their incompetency in Nepali language and without citizenship, land registration deed (Lalpurja) is impossible and hence many Madheshi are Landless. Landlessness has become a major problem among Madheshi community.

Political Exclusion of Electoral Constituencies. The average population per constituency is considerably higher in Terai districts (127,414) than in the mountain (73,026) and 109,081 in the hill districts. This reduces the number of parliamentarians representing Terai region where about 96% of the country's total Madheshi people live while increases their number from hills and mountains where 82% of the country's total Pahadi people live.⁴²

Madhesis' sympathy towards India is more a cultural than political issue, given their century's old relationship with the people of India and their desire to maintain it. The Nepalese political parties have not been

sympathetic to their plight and the discrimination against them, even after the formation of the Democratic Secular Republic of Nepal. Given the rigid positions taken by the major political parties in Nepal over the demands raised by the Madheshi groups, the region will witness some serious ethnic unrest.

India, however, is faced with a dilemma, any constructive attempt by India to salvage the Terai situation is likely to be interpreted as unnecessary intervention in the internal affairs of Nepal and upset its *Pahadi* constituency, whereas, passive indifference to developments in Terai will be construed as shirking of Indian responsibility by the Madhesis with a concomitant effect on the electorate in the adjoining regions of India. India has to find a way to balance this issue, especially the discrimination against the people of Terai region. Therefore, it is in the interests of both the countries and for the internal cohesion in Nepal, that the people of Nepal, including the Madhesis, settle the issue through dialogue and consensus within the framework of the new Constitution. Similarly, the Madhesis need to conform to the constitutional norms of Nepal. Both the *Pahadis* and Madhesis should overcome their mutual mistrust and devote themselves to the nation-building process.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The two dominant perceptions do in fact mirror a great deal of truth about existing bilateral relations. Dwelling on Nepal-India relations in his autobiography, *Aatmabritanta*, B. P. Koirala has very aptly explained, "Our ties shouldn't be interpreted only on the basis of ancient history and culture. Look at Europe; it may be one culturally, but they were always fighting and killing each other. Distrust does not disappear just because there is cultural affinity. Relationships are dependent upon differing perspectives on society and differing expectations of the future." This manifests how despite centuries of shared past, the relations between these nations is complex. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship concluded between India and Nepal in July 1950 was intended to be an instrument of bilateral cooperation between the two countries, but opposition to this treaty and demands to review/voke it have been

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made since the early 1950s. Nepalese describe it as an unequal and one-sided agreement which endangered the sovereignty of Nepal. It is therefore, important to analyse the reasons for Nepalese opposition to the treaty, their fears and concerns and how these could be removed, especially given the widespread anti-India sentiments erupting in protests over the years. At the same time, it is also important that Nepal recognize the possible threat that its international policies may impose on India's security which resulted in India not being in support of some of its policies.

In India's dealings with Nepal, it is desirable to establish a more equitable relationship. "India needs to accept that there are now new important

players in Nepal who have the legitimacy and the approval of the people at large. These players look at interdependence and bilateral relations in a different paradigm which need not necessarily be anti-India." ⁴³ "Channels of communication with all these political parties need to be cultivated for their views will define the Nepal of the future." Economically India must continue to give Nepal latitude due to the existing economic asymmetry between the two countries. The border must be well monitored jointly with infrastructural and support facilities provided by India.

End Notes

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About the Author



Lieutenant General Shokin Chauhan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, SM & VSM (Retd), has been the Defence Attache in Nepal from 2004 to 2007. He has been the Director General Assam Rifles and after retirement the Chairman Cease Fire Monitoring Group in Nagaland.

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Rao Tula Ram Marg, Opposite Signals Enclave, New Delhi-110057
Tele: 2086 2316/ Fax: 2086 2324, E-mail: cs3@usiofindia.org