

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS → 12 JUNE 2023 → THE HINDU:

INDIA NEPAL RELATIONS:

- **Context:**

- The Prime Ministers of Nepal and India have demonstrated that a pragmatic approach and mutual sensitivity can re-energise bilateral relations despite enormous obstacles to Nepal's democracy, governance, and stability as well as what appear to be unresolvable bilateral irritants.
- This makes the first bilateral trip to India by Nepal's Prime Minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, since he took office during the current term remarkable. India and Nepal were able to evaluate the full range of the bilateral agenda, including political, economic, trade, energy, security, and developmental cooperation. This assessment was motivated by the difficulties given by the post-COVID-19 world, current realities, as well as enormous prospects.

- **Nepal and India ties:**

- Due to long-standing geographical, historical, cultural, and economic connections, Nepal has a particular place in Indian foreign policy.
- Given that Buddha was born in Lumbini, which is today's Nepal, Hinduism and Buddhism have parallel ties to India and Nepal.
- Through marriages and other familial relationships, the two nations have developed strong ties known as Roti-Beti ka Rishta.
- The foundation of the unique ties that exist between India and Nepal is the India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950.

- **Cooperation Projects Between the Two Countries:**

- Trade and economics: With bilateral trade exceeding USD 7 billion in FY 2019–20, India remained Nepal's top trading partner.

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- **Connectivity:** India wants to expand its inland waterways for the transportation of freight as part of commerce and transit agreements. This would provide Nepal more access to the sea and be referred to as "linking Sagarmatha" (Mt. Everest) and "Sagar" (the Indian Ocean).
- **Defence Cooperation:** Through the provision of equipment and training, bilateral defence cooperation helps the Nepalese Army modernise. Since 2011, India and Nepal have participated in a joint military exercise called Surya Kiran.
- Nepal continues to be the largest beneficiary of humanitarian aid from India since it is located in an ecologically fragile area where earthquakes and floods can cause significant damage to property and human lives.
- **Multilateral Partnership:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Non-Aligned Movement, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation are just a few of the multilateral forums that India and Nepal are members of.
- **India-Nepal Joint Ventures:**
 - Treaty of Mahakali (6,480 MW)
 - Project Upper Karnali (900 MW)
 - Projects Arun Three (900 MW)
 - Project SR6: Seti River
- **Challenges:**
 - **Territorial Issues:** The Kalapani boundary dispute is one of the major obstacles to improving relations between India and Nepal. These borders were established by the British in 1816, and in 1947, India took over the territory over which the British had exercised territorial sovereignty.
 - **Issues with the Peace and Friendship Treaty:** In order to maintain the unique relations Nepal had with British India, as well as to grant them an open border and the ability to work in India, the Nepali government requested the 1950 Peace and Friendship Treaty in 1949. Today, however, it is seen as a manifestation of an unequal relationship and an imposition by Indians.
 - **China's Intervention:** As India's influence over Nepal has waned in recent years, China has progressively stepped in with loans, investments, and other forms of assistance.
 - **Internal Security:** This is a serious issue for India because the Indo-Nepal border is mostly unguarded and used as a recruiting ground for terrorist organisations and rebel groups from the country's North East.
- **Steps to Take:**

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- Today, it is important to steer clear of territorial nationalism rhetoric and set the stage for a peaceful conversation in which both parties show compassion as they consider what is practical. For the neighbourhood first strategy to take hold, India must be a considerate and giving partner.
- In terms of interpersonal relationships, administrative cooperation, and political exchanges, India should be more proactive with Nepal.



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