

RISE OF ANTI-INDIAN FEELINGS IN NEPAL: A MAJOR SECURITY CONCERN FOR INDIA

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Abstract: Due to the open border, India's relations with Nepal is unique than other neighbouring countries. After independence, India took the British Indian policy to keep the special relationship with Nepal. Peace and Friendship Treaty (1950) is the bedrock of existing relations. Nepal was very significant of India's Himalayan Frontier Policy and a buffer state between India and China. The increased tempo of anti-Indian feelings and growing Chinese influence with decreasing India's in Nepal influence make concerned about its security. The article will analyse the birth and subsequent growth of anti-Indian feelings in three stages: the emergence of ant-Indian feelings; take off the stage of anti-Indian feelings and the heyday of anti-Indian feelings.

Keywords: Anti-Indian feelings, Foreign Policy, India, Nepal, China.

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Introduction:

The rise of anti-Indian feeling in Nepal that leads political elites to take a pro-China stance is a major security concern for India. India shares an open border with Nepal and on the basis of the Peace and Friendship Treaty (1950), there is no restriction on the movement of citizens. Both neighbours agreed to grant same privileges to citizens of other in its own territory in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, etc. But Government of India (GoI) was unfortunate in the account of that because in spite of huge economic investment and support in Nepal to uplift the poor people of the country and overall development of society in return India have been facing anti-Indian feeling that also has been being misused by various political parties and kings of Nepal to conceal their failure and lust for power. This article seeks to analyse the causes behind this anti-Indian feeling and from when this mistrust and anti-Indian feelings have appeared?

Recent Development:

After the grim economic blockade by peoples of *Terai* along India's border with Nepal which began on 23 September 2015, lasted for two months, India's relations with Nepal have been improving gradually, though Nepal's government and also a major section of peoples reckon this as an undeclared blockade is just like India's declared blockade on 1989 which was imposed due to arms deals with China. However, when bilateral visits of both countries Prime Minister and high-level delegates have helped to appease the anti-Indian feelings of Nepali peoples and bring the relations presumably in the former condition, some events have befallen which indicates Nepal's reliability has shifted to China from India and also their anti-Indian felling fire made with husk.

The first event is the agreement between Nepal and China that has made Nepal a part of China's President Xi Jinping's ambitious project to build a new Silk Road that would link Asia, Africa and Europe in the name of "One Belt, One Road" which could alarm India because it will escalate the influence of China on India.¹

The second event was the finalization of the protocol of Nepal-China Transit Transport Agreement (TTA) on 7 September 2018 which was signed in March 2016 during Nepali PM

Oli's official visit to China. TTA has a historic significance because it would end Nepal's sole dependence on India for third-countries' trade or overseas trade. This agreement has given Nepal access Tianjin, Shenzhen, Lianyungang and Zhanjiang seaports and Lanzhou, Lhasa and Xigatse dry ports to trade and also allow the Nepali traders to the Chinese territory from six checkpoints-Rasuwa, Tatopani (Sindhupalchowk), Korala (Mustang), Kimathanka (Sankhuwasabha), Yari (Humla) and Olangchung, Gol (Taplejung).² For long distance comparatively with Kolkata port, the Chinese port may not be taken as optional India's ports, but it has reduced the psychological fear that only India is the option to Nepal for sea trade. Because the nearest Chinese port Tianjin distance is more than 3000 kilometres from Nepal border. And it might take a long time for China to create infrastructure like an extension of the railway link from Shigatse to Kyirng near the Nepal border which also delaying and costly. According to a Chinese report, it will take nine years at an estimated cost of approximately 2.5 billion US dollar.³

The third event was the withdrawal of Nepal Army from the first ever BIMSTEC anti-terror military exercise or "Milex- 2018" which was held at Pune in Maharashtra from September 10 to 16, 2018. The Oli government, which always takes pro-China stance remarked that during the 4th BIMSTEC summit in Kathmandu on August 30-31 no decision was taken about the military exercise and as this platform is purely an economic forum among seven-member countries, does not supremacies any types of military activity. Out of fourteen areas of cooperation under the BIMSTEC forum, India leads the counterterrorism and transnational crime sector. Therefore, at the fourth summit, Indian PM Narendra Modi declared for a joint military exercise by a platoon-size contingent (over 30 soldiers each) from all BIMSTEC countries- Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan. None of this member country did oppose to the declaration at that moment, but after the summit, Nepal and Thailand declared that they would not participate in the anti-terror military exercise and only send observers due to "prior commitments". But Nepal decided that their army chief General Purna Chandra Thapa would attend the closing ceremony of the exercise.⁴ These three events indicate not only Nepal's pro-China inclination but also a mistrust towards India, which might lead to a gradual decline in mutual trust and friendly relations.

Emergence of Mistrust in Nepal

BrajKishor Jha marked the period 1951-55 as the emergence and growth of anti-Indian feelings and mistrust in Nepal. He analysed this development in the lights of the rise of Nepali nationalism and its continuous internal stability that made government incapable to maintain its internal law and order and also independent foreign policy.⁵ Therefore, Nepal's inherent dependence on India had been continuing for its democratic experiment. During that period India played a contradictory role. On the one hand, she signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950) with the Rana Prime Minister of Nepal, Mohan Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana, whose family was a hereditarily de facto ruler from 1848 to until the Revolution of 1951. This friendship treaty was enforced with the rejection of previous treaty of *Sugali* which had been signed between Jung Bahadur Rana and British India to aside the British interference in domestic affairs of Nepal and to keep Rana Regime in safe and well-protected. After Jung Bahadur all Rana Prime Ministers had followed this principle though maintain friendly relations with British India.⁶ India also did not undertake any step after British withdrawal from subcontinent that might be reckoned as interventionist and accepted the treaty of *Sugali* by which sovereignty of Nepal recognised. To maintain their *de facto* rule on Nepal which confronted massive anti-Rana sentiment under the leadership of Nepali Congress, Rana regime took a number of steps one of them was singing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950).⁷ And India made Nepal as an active buffer on the northern frontier after Chinese annexation of Tibet.⁸ But some sections of Nepalese ruling elite was very critical, considering it as compromising Nepal's national sovereignty, curbing its independent foreign policy and giving India disproportionate economic, political and security ascendancy over Nepal.⁹ On the other hand, India was criticized by both Nepali Congress and Rana regime for its "middle way" approach. On the request of prime minister, the Padma Shamsher Delhi send a team of constitutional expert on May 16, 1947, simultaneously assisted Nepali Congress to launch anti-Rana agitation to establish a democratic regime and gave asylum to King Tribhuvan who was well connected to Nepali Congress.¹⁰

The rise of Nepali nationalism was a new phenomenon of the 1940's. As a political force nationalism arose in Nepal after World War-II. Because the internal political situation was more repugnant due to the rise of anti-Rana agitation. During the Rana rule, Nepal had been disconnected from modern civilization and ruled on medieval culture. The major number of

people believed in superstition and Rana government based on tyranny, tried to preserve only the status quo. A goal of their foreign policy was to maintain friendly relation with British Government.¹¹ But some Nepali youth who had been studied in India and inspired by India's freedom struggle started protests against this tyranny. They became conscious of their nationhood. The non-violent ideology of Mahatma Gandhi encourages much Nepali youth like Tulsi Mehar Shrestha who was later known as the Mahatma Gandhi of Nepal.¹² However, for these psychological idiosyncrasies of Nepali elite nationalism arose, which was very crucial to analyse the emergence of anti-Indian feelings.

India's interventions in 1951 and again in 1952 and 1953 to the revolution of Nepal and restoration law and order generated misunderstanding in the minds of some nationalist leader particularly opposition group who excoriated the step and anti-Indian campaign arose. But this was not an interventionist step of India. After the appeal of Nepal to India for help, it sent a military mission and the arrival of Indian military troops in Kathmandu gave birth the conspiracy of Indian armed intervention.¹³

Kosi project agreement which had been signed between India and Nepal on 25th April 1954,¹⁴ became a highly controversial issue. The Indian Government had a plan to construct a barrage on the basis of mutual benefits at few miles upstream of Hanuman Nagar town on the Kosi river with an afflux and flood banks and canals and the main barrage lying within the territory of Nepal to save the people of both countries of the river basin from havoc flood. This project not only for flood control but also some positive benefits like irrigation, electricity etc.¹⁵ Mainly because of two reasons this agreement became a source of anti-Indian feelings. First, many Nepali people considered that their country would not much benefit like India. Second, they conceived the agreement might be granted India to intervene in their internal events that should be established Indian domination over Nepal.¹⁶ These two reasons also related to their idea of nationalism. Almost all opposition parties including Nepali Congress escalated the campaign against India. With this arrival of an Indian parliamentary delegation in May 1954 in Kathmandu added fuel to the flames that were an austere blow to India. The existing Nepali government criticized the opposition, but this could not prevent them from organising the anti-

Indian feeling. this became more worst in September 1954 who a pro-Communist group organised an “Anti-Indian Interference Day” successfully.¹⁷

Take off Stage of Anti-Indian Feelings:

Zone of Peace proposal by Nepal and India’s disagreement with this proposal a major cause behind the growing mistrust in 1970’s. The Nepalese Kingdom was very fearful about the step of the Indian Government towards Sikkim. In the first half of 1973, a massive protest broke out in Sikkim and on the request of *Chogyal* Delhi took over the internal administration which was beyond the India-Sikkim Treaty (1950). This treaty had given Delhi over Sikkim external affairs, defence and communication. Nepal saw it as an expansionist step.¹⁸ From this psychosis fear Nepalese kingdom declared the concept of the Zone of Peace proposal for the first time at the Non-Aligned Summit in Algeria in 1973.¹⁹ India’s intervention in Sikkim created a threat perception and anti-Indian feelings in Nepal and influenced the Indo-Nepal relations. Other causes that led king Birendra to raise the proposal was India’s successful atomic explosion at Pokhran on May 1974.²⁰ however, on 25 February 1975 king Birendra officially introduced the proposal at an assembled of royal personages in Kathmandu.²¹ The proposal was well accepted by most neighbouring countries of Nepal including 115 within two months except India. Nepal explained it with her national sovereignty and intensified the campaign against India.²²

On the economic sphere, Nepal’s allegation was Delhi preferred a single treaty and transit treaty to maintain its leverage over Nepal’s economic and security policies.²³ Before 1978s trade and transit treaties, there was a combined composite treaty that governed Indo-Nepal bilateral trade and transit rights for landlock Nepal. On March 17, 1978, two new treaties, a Trade Treaty and a Transit Treaty were signed between India and Nepal, replacing the previous composite treaty of 1971 which had expired in August. A separate treaty was a long day demand of Kathmandu.²⁴ After so much hesitating, India signed separate treaties of trade and transit to fulfil Nepal’s demand, conditionally which were reviewed in every five years. Subsequently, this condition became a controversial issue when Rajiv Gandhi was hesitating for renewal in early 1989 and on 23 March of the same year, India closed 13 check posts out of 15 on India-Nepal border.²⁵ Behind this blocked there were various causes like; Nepal’s arms deal with China; additional customs duty on Indian goods etc.²⁶ But India’s step harshly hurt the economy of Nepal which not only

augmented the anti-Indian feelings but also left behind a long term political disturbance by collapsing thirty-year-old party less democracy.²⁷

1990s was very crucial because India-Nepal relations passing through a zigzag path. Some pro-Chinese left parties spread ant-Indian feelings among people to gain popular support. For example, Chairperson of Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML), Manmohan Adhikari justified their anti-Indian stand in election campaigns as “election-related” matter. He also promised about the revision of Peace and Friendship Treaty (1950) during his election campaign but after the election when CPN-UML came to power in a hung parliament to keep their popularity they again chose this dishonest strategy. Kathmandu’s main demand was to abrogate article 2,6 and 7 of the treaty.²⁸ Beside this, CPN-UML revived Kalapani issue to create the anti-Indian feeling.²⁹

Over the issue of Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project and Mahakali River Project Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) launched people’s war on 13 February 1996. The main objective was the subversion of the monarchy. The 40-point demand was presented to the Deuba government, mentioned nationalism and the abrogation of unequal water treaties. The second point of the demand said, “the so-called Integrated Mahakali Treaty concluded on 29 January 1996 should be repealed immediately, as it is designed to conceal the disastrous Tankpur Treaty and allow Indian imperialist monopoly over Nepal’s water resources.”³⁰

Heyday of Anti-Indian Feelings:

From mid-nineties, another more issues were added with quondam- one of them was an allegation of the encroachment of Nepalese territory by India in eastern side border. In July 1996, the communists became captious in Nepal during a parliamentary debate and also with their campaign over the fake news about India’s encroachment of Nepalese territory in the eastern side of the country. With a common view of both nation on 3 July 1996 border officials from each marked boundary pillars on the basis of the old map of 1874. The agitation was spread out in Kathmandu with the demand of removal of controversial *Junge* pillars built across Mechi river in 1818.³¹ Indian embassy of Nepal strongly condemned in a press release on 25 July 1996,

“the is on question of boundary pillar being manipulated to the advantage of either Nepal or India. For less are the possibilities of forcible alteration of any of the border lines.”³²

Among those negativities, one positive statement came from K.P. Bhattarai who took oath as new Prime Minister on 31 May 1999 and promised to take initiative to put down anti-Indian feelings by solving the problems like Kalapani and Susta border dispute, Mahakali treaty etc. In the last week of 2000, on the statement of Indian film star Hrithik Roshan a storm of anti-Indian feelings blown over Nepal especially Kathmandu. Though security officials of Nepal, who were monitoring this anti-India protests, suspected the hand of the ISI, Pakistani intelligence agency.³³ However, after a decade of the 1990 Movement for Restoration of democracy, Kathmandu looked such type of agitation. On 25th December 2000, various student group damned Hrithik’s statement that he disliked most was Nepal and the people he disliked most were Nepalese. These student organisations propagated to people to boycott his films and cinema. Next day, a numbers of student processions blocked the city handed with protest banner and gave slogan against India. Meantime, during a clash between protester and police, four persons were gundown, including a 12-year-old girl who was watching street from the window. In all this there was no single protester who had seen the TV programme wherebollowed star delivered this controversial statement, even the Indian TV channel exposed the video clip of the show as an evidence that Hrithik had never ever mentioned Nepal or Nepalese people in any of his interview with the media.

On 28 May 2008, through a fundamental change, Nepal became the Federal Democratic Republic and transferred itself as a secular state. Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) was the first Prime Minister of newly established state on 18 August 2008. However, Nepal experienced a very zigzag political episode from 1990s as in eighteen years Prachanda was 17th Prime Minister.³⁴ He was a pro-Chinese Prime Minister. He paid his first foreign visit to China and meet Chinese President Hu Jntao and confirmed Nepal’s support over Tibet issue.³⁵ On the other hand, he demanded a fresh look at the Peace and Friendship Treaty (1950).³⁶ After few days on 4 May 2009, Prachanda resigned and Madhav Kumar Nepal became new PM.³⁷

Over the priest issue of Pashupatinath Temple, anti-Indian feelings took its religious dimension. On 4 September 2009 arose a serious concern as two newly appointed Indian priests were attacked at the temple and protests spewed out in Nepal. Their demand was that the *Puja* should be conducted by Nepali priests.³⁸ Various time on the request of Nepal government New Delhi had provided help. On December 19, 2009, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) began a three-day general strike protesting against a decision which had been taken on 3 May 2009 by President Ram Baran Yadav to reinstate the then Army Chief Rukmangud Katawal! He blamed there was New Delhi's "naked interference" behind this decision of President which was also deepening political crisis in the country. He gave another allegation against India that it had encroached Nepalese territories and unilateral construction of dams by India near the border would lead to Nepalese territory being inundated. He fuelled the protest in the disputed Kalapani region, the tri-junction between Nepal, India and China and demanded the withdrawal of Indian troops from Kalapani which had deployed after Indo-China war (1962). An anti-Indian rally was addressed from where the Maoists alleged unilateral construction of dams by India. Prachanda demanded the scrapping of the Peace and Friendship Treaty (1950) along with other "unequal" agreement with India and covet for the ending of "special relationship" with India. He alleged Prime Minister Madhav Kumar led coalition government was formed by India's initiative and was acting like a "puppet". Therefore, the decision of President Ram Baran Yadav about the recall of the army chief Gen Rukmangud Katawal who had been dismissed by Prachanda in May 2009, was "unconstitutional".³⁹

The then Prime Minister of Nepal Dr Baburam Bhattarai said in an interview with Prashant Jha, which was published on *The Hindu*, an English daily of India, Nepal was more integrated with India, with an open border and closer economic relation, therefore Nepal had more interaction with India and more problems also, which sometimes created misunderstanding but Nepal was not anti-Indian. On 20 September 2015 President Ram Baran Yadav promulgated the new constitution, replacing the previous interim constitution which had been continuing from 2007. After long struggle promulgation of the new constitution would be a matter of grand celebration but due to its basic structure which was unable accommodate the aspirations of the whole country perfectly and crucial demands from sizeable sections of people especially who live in *Terai* region, increased the tempo of the *Madhesi* protest. This protest seriously disturbed the

trade and transit across the border checkpoints. The situation had been delineated to the people by pro-Chinese political classes as unofficial “blocked”, similar to the one imposed by India in 1989. Consequently, it stoked anti-Indian sentiments among a large section of Nepali people specially *Pahadiyas*.⁴⁰ A major outcome of this event was the formation of the Eminent Persons' Group on Nepal-India relation in January 2015 to review various aspects of the bilateral relations including Peace and Friendship Treaty (1950).⁴¹

Conclusion:

There are many causes behind the anti-Indian feelings in Nepal like; psychological setup of Nepalese people that India plays a big brother attitude of Nepal and India get more advantage from the special relationship, uneven trade and water treaty, land encroachment, India's interference in internal matters of Nepal etc. Though most of the allegations against India is always denied (except 1989 economic blocked) and exposed evidence in support of her statement. But among them, their most anti-Indian feelings appear from interference. And also, in India, this question regularly raised, why India do this? We can answer the question through the word of former Indian Ambassador's to Nepal, Deb Mukherji. He said, “It needs to be noted that India's consistent view, as repeatedly conveyed even in recent times by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is that India wishes to see a stable and prosperous Nepal, a bouquet of different fragrant flowers, where each community has a sense of ownership of the constitution.”⁴² To improve relations and mitigate the anti-Indian feelings both countries must have to be recalled and re-emphasised that an open border, a mutually convertible currency, a treaty that permits free movement of Nepali citizen and their life and work in India, besides the tens of thousands of Gorkhas who fight under the Indian flag.⁴³ Above all India must have to play “true big-brother” role to Nepal to fulfil her requirements, wish and importunate request.

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