

Safeguarding the ‘National Interest’ of Nepal: Analysis of India-China relations from Social Constructivism

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to understand the small states role in safeguarding the national interest in the international politics. The paper will also explore more in understanding the role of local peoples living in the boundary region of Nepal. Theoretically Social Constructivism shows that ideas interest and identity plays an important role in exploring the gap in the literatures of Nepal. It also clearly demarcates with the states vies which are based in the realist paradigm of *Kautilya* and *Sun Tzu*. Empirically, Nepal and India's border are open, so the people-to-people relations amongst the frontier inhabitants of the countries in social, economic and cultural fields have remained unparalleled in world history. Moreover, the border between Nepal and China is largely sealed and as such the border inhabitants among the two countries have not been able to obtain sufficient benefit at the local level. Therefore, it is possible that the people living along Nepal's border regions with India and China would benefit more if connectivity is developed between the two sides of the border through roads, irrigation, communication and other infrastructural facilities. However, in order to safeguard Nepal's national interest, the country has to take all possible precautions to ensure that the interest of its neighbour's are not affected by the other, while avoiding further rivalry between them. Hypothetically, "a smaller state always gets more benefits from the stronger states in long run." The paper also explains role of Nepal foreign policy, leading to the three conditional choices, which are 1) situational choice, 2) conditional choice and 3) discretionary choice in safeguarding its national interest.

Keywords: Rising Power, Emerging Power, National Interest

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to understand the small states role in safeguarding the national interest in the international politics. The paper will also explore more in understanding the role of local peoples living in the boundary region of Nepal. Theoretically Social Constructivism shows that ideas interest and identity plays an important role in exploring the gap in the literatures of Nepal. It also clearly demarcates with the states vies which are based in the realist paradigm of *Kautilya* and *Sun Tzu*. Empirically, Nepal and India's border are open, so the people-to-people relations amongst the frontier inhabitants of the countries in social, economic and cultural fields have remained unparalleled in world history. Moreover, the border between Nepal and China is largely sealed and as such the border inhabitants among the two countries have not been able to obtain sufficient benefit at the local level. Therefore, it is possible that the people living along Nepal's border regions with India and China would benefit more if connectivity is developed between the two sides of the border through roads, irrigation, communication and other infrastructural facilities. However, in order to safeguard Nepal's national interest, the country has to take all possible precautions to ensure that the interest of its neighbour's are not affected by the other, while avoiding further rivalry between them.

Hypothetically, "a smaller state always gets more benefits from the stronger states in long run." The paper also explains role of Nepal foreign policy, leading to the three conditional choices, which are situational choice, conditional choice and discretionary choice in safeguarding its national interest. Some aspects of the India-China rivalry are illuminated in the boundary region and in particular in Nepal. A relatively small country long viewed by Asian policymakers as a strategic unimportance has been significantly important competition between India and China plays out within Nepal's borders. Nepal has always been historically, culturally, economically and politically close to India. The country is also very important for China as it borders Tibet. Beijing's attempt to influence political power in Kathmandu may be viewed as a diplomatic move to establish a buffer zone and thereby checking perceived Western and Indian infiltration to destabilize the region and China itself. The Chinese government is tempting Kathmandu in an attempt to impact policy-

making by announcing diplomatic and security offers, as well as huge economic packages and development projects. This gives importance to both India and China to influence small states like Nepal and on the other hand Nepal also gets opportunity to safeguard and explore their national interest. Historically, Kautilya 'Arthashastra' and Sun Tzu's 'Art of War' was composed of intellectual developments. Both the works focused from the strategic point of view of winning in War. Sun Tzu says, 'know yourself and know your enemy, so you will never be in peril.' Thus, both shows the vitality of friendship and neighbourhood

Theoretical Interpretation

Neorealism holds that the classifying principle of the international system is anarchy i.e., there is no power above or below the logic of the system itself that controls the behaviour of states. The international system limits the decisions of the states in such a way that the qualitative characteristics of each state are unimportant example, ideologies, political system etc. Quantitative variations in relative capabilities are the only important differing characteristics of states.

States that operate in ways that contradict the logic of the system are behaving "irrationally" and can be expected to suffer negative outcomes. With no extra-actor mechanisms for dictating behaviour outside of the actual rules, the "system" of the game can be accurately characterised as anarchic. Every player uses the same types of power and methods in order to forward their interests.

Thus, many theories of neorealism should be applicable to case of China-India-Nepal. According to realist views, there are three main concepts dealing with the diplomacy. They are 1) security dilemma, 2) Balance of Power, and 3) Bandwagon.

The first concept of neorealism, came from classical realism that can be easily found in China-India-Nepal relations is that of the "security dilemma" i.e., that forces built to defend against the potential threat of other actors may cause those other actors to feel themselves threatened. The security dilemma is all the more "real" in China-India-Nepal relations given the fact that all players are inherently expansionist.

A second concept of neorealism, also inherited from classical realism that applies to Diplomacy is balance of power. Players that successfully expand become more powerful as they do so, eventually becoming unstoppable. This inevitably results in attempts by the other players to balance an emerging victor.

The last concept of neorealism, from the sub-theory of hegemony, is a variant of balancing theory most developed by Steve Walt in eighties. Walt asserts that in some cases, small powers have rational reasons not to pursue balancing behaviour against a large, threatening power with hegemonic aspirations. If the costs of joining a balancing coalition are seen to be much higher than the costs of cooperating with the hegemon, the small state will “band-wagon” with the winner (Schweller 1994: 105).

While Social Constructivism says, this dependence of social structure on ideas is the sense in which constructivism has an idealist view of structure. (Wendt 1992: 73) Wendt says, “the claim is not that ideas are more important than power and interest, or that they are autonomous from power and interest. The claim is rather that power and interest have the effects they do in virtue of the ideas that make them up. Power and the interest explanations presuppose ideas, and to that extent are not rivals to ideational explanations at all”(Wendt 1999: 135–6).

Elephant-Dragon working Together

Former Prime Minister of India says, “*we can choose our friends but we cannot choose our neighbours*,” which means China and Nepal is the given reality. China is also unusually a powerful and largest neighbour and Nepal is the friendly neighbour. However, neither China, nor India can ignore this fact. Secondly both India and China are growing rapidly and to ensure the further continuous growth, both want friendly and peaceful neighbourhood. Both have shifted in their thoughts and acts beyond the domestic politics. Therefore Nepal being the small country can achieve lots of facilities from both the countries.

Prof Singh says, ‘I see these relations as combinations of many colours.’ They have issues of contestation, cooperation, coordination and also some

fears which lead them in confrontation. All these shades and colours are parts of these complex relationships, which he calls as a “mosaic” which has many colours. He says on different occasion, different colours becomes more important but largely both will not led their relationship derail to the extent that both their development gets trajectory negative. There are two or three things happening in the relations.

Firstly, fundamental happening in the last ten years is the leaders of both the country India and China, meets more often in regional and international forums. When former premier Wen Jiabao came to New Delhi in December 2010, former Indian PM Manmohan Singh address the press by saying that “last time Wen Jiabao came to New Delhi in April 2005 and now in December 2010, but I have met President of China Hu Jintao and Prime Minister of China Wen Jiabao 20 times.” Prof Swaran says, that is the fundamental shift in India-China relations. In foreign policy India-China relations are much more influence by how the leaders interact, negotiate and coordinates in regional and international forums. It's the fact that in regional and international forums, Indians and Chinese leaders finds so much of commonalities- They shares the perspectives in the joint strategies, example in the climate change negotiation, which has the positive impacts and allows them to build the personal chemistry with each other. Thus while sharing the bilateral issues they are able to restrain deeper understanding of each other.

Secondly, both India and China are seen as the important players not only in the regional but also in the international affairs. China is called ‘Rising Power’ which has the system shaping capabilities, while India is called ‘Emerging Power’ because India is looking for greater space in international system. Therefore this gives them an opportunity to play a bigger role in the international system and to play a bigger role to achieve in evolutionary human history which makes them to see bilateral issue small and marginal.

Thirdly, fundamental shift in the relationship is about the leaders. China is experiencing from March 2013, fifth generation leaders President Xi Jinping, similarly India experience a new leader Prime Minister Narendra Modi from May 2014. Both leaders see themselves in leading their destiny of nations for a

decade, means they are not looking for short term but to play a longer role in the future of the countries. Both are also seen as strong nationalist leaders, and they have the capabilities to agree on some unprecedented decisions because of their 'confidence.' Thus this coming first visit to New Delhi by President Xi Jinping will be to focus on the positive relations, such as economic relations as well as the unsolved issues, but they may not project it much. Cooperation also extended towards the film industries of which China is increasingly investing in film making industries. There are also other areas such as the fact that PM Modi visit to Japan and not able to finalize the technology transfer in fast trains gives China a special window to get the deals before Japan decides. There are already Chinese investments in Indian railways; two Chinese industrial parks in Pune and Gujarat are agreed to build; and promise of 5 billion dollars of investment focus more on resolving trade deficit and highlights more on the 'Economic Diplomacy.'

Other objectives would be 'Silk Route' which has land and maritime connections, example, BCIM economic corridor in land was mention in the Joint Statement when PM Li Keqiang visited India. Some discussion area would be on after international forces exit from Afghanistan. Russia is President of Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) and SCO have been exercising counterterrorist activities. Prof Singh further says irritating issues will not be projected as much as other issues.

In relations to bilateral issues nature of incursion has changed in borders. Prof Singh says, Chinese troops walking into Indian Territory can happen by mistakes, as China has stopped throwing wrappers or graphite on the stones and in April 2013, 21 days of Chinese forces were presence with putting the tents. These have been viewed by Indians as displeasure. China also thinks India with the US viewed on China in pessimistic view. There is an understanding how certain issues are cropped up. When Jiang Zemin visited Pakistan in December 1996, he says in the Senate that Kashmir is historical issues and could be solved by India and Pakistan, which means that China did not wanted to be interfere, but again comes the irritating issues like staple visa for Kashmiri people from last years. Prof Singh believes that this all will discuss

on their body language. Moreover factually President Xi Jinping is arriving on the birth date of Indian PM Narendra Modi.

It has automatically created a space for discussion in regional level as well as international system of shaping system. There are debates in the areas like India should be a member of SCO and China being an observer of South Asia cooperation. In climate change both India and China was not presence in September which is convened by UN General Secretary Ban Ki Moon, which sends a message of coordination to everyone. This also sends a message to Asia Pacific countries which reflects in their change in behavior, example Australia considering China as threat reflects in their white Paper as China as 'not being threat'; they were denying India Uranium but now they are agreeing upon it.

This visit will more focus on the symbolic dance of Elephant and Dragon. But these dances have to more on competition too, rather than only cooperation. Prof Singh highlights PM Modi saying, that if India becomes developed and strong than behavior of Neighbour automatically change, means he focus more on economic development in changing China's views towards India. Given China's investment in the aging society, China needs to looks for other places for better dollar returns and India is fit for that.

In relation to border issues Indian perceives India-China border very peaceful, it has incursion but it's always compares with India-Pakistan border. Second India became lucky politically because of President Xi Jing cancelling visit to Pakistan, which release lots of energy of Indian diplomats to counter him in that issues.

In terms of India's Look East Policy and China's towards west, are demanding more domestic but India policy are more to economic engagement. Initially, India stated engaging from New Delhi to five ASEAN countries at first ASEAN and it became six ASEAN and when it became ten ASEAN countries it have border with India. Then the Look East Policy transform from not only looking to trade and investment but also has political implications. Political and social unrest in North East India is partly because of underdevelopment. To link North East India development in eastern region includes China's investment. To

ensure development of this region from 1999 India has talked about sub-regionalism, which is part of Look East Policy, includes India-China-Bangladesh-Myanmar. These are the areas which help to develop together.

India's Strategic Triangle with 'China-India-Russia' and 'India-US-Japan' are seen in Indian strategy. After Soviet Union collapse India came out of international system which was rigid bi-polar system. Though non-Alignment was a major third force but it bi-polar system to east and west sides. In this state of flux every country is trying to friend of every country. Thus on the question of energy, terrorism 'China-India-Russia' shares this issues to manage different system. It does not mean to confront each other. Example, ASEAN was to confront communism but today China is the best friend of ASEAN, similarly India was not comfortable with the US but situation have changed.

Competition and Cooperation

The Energy plays an important and multifaceted role in protecting national security. Energy and National Security Program is a leader understanding of shifting global and domestic energy landscape. Forward-thinking energy policy balance economic, environmental, and security priorities against market and geopolitical uncertainties. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi for using energy as an instruments used the same cards of political bond. During his stay, India pledged to bolster Nepal's energy security by agreeing to establish a two-phase products pipeline, which will eventually carry petroleum products from Raxaul in Bihar to Kathmandu. The power play between China and India for influence in Nepal has turned electric, as China has signed a US\$1.8 billion agreement to develop the 760-megawatt (MW) West Seti Project hydropower plant in Nepal.

Moreover significantly, discussions have been held to link Nepal with a gas pipeline from India. If that happens, it would lock India and Nepal into a genuine strategic embrace, opening up the possibility of Nepal benefiting from gas that India might in the future procure from a variety of overseas destinations.

Following improved atmospherics resulting from Modi's visit, India and Nepal decided to resolve the pending Nepal-India boundary issues, including differences over Kalapani and Susta. Yet, both sides have their task cut out to remove the remaining impediments in the relationship. New Delhi and

Kathmandu need to quickly revise the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950, so that the archaic “big-brother” tag on India is swiftly removed (*The Hindu*, 8 August 2014).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on offered puja at the famous 5th century Pashupatinath temple here on the second and last day of his maiden visit to Nepal. Mr. Modi was at the temple of Lord Shiva for about 45 minutes on a day which is considered pious as it was a Monday that falls in the month of ‘Shravan’. He donated 2500 kg of chandan (sandalwood) to the Pashupatinath Temple trust (*The Hindu*, 4 August 2014).

Nepal faces a chronic power shortage, with daily power cuts up to 14 hours long. Three mega-projects, such as Saptakosi with 5,000MW, Karnali-Chisapani with 11,000MW, and Pancheshwar with 6,500MW - have been languishing for 30 years. When the hydel sector in Nepal was opened up to the private sector, Indian companies (including Tata Power, LANCO, GMR, Jindal, IL&FS, L&T, and GENCO) won 27 survey licences for projects ranging from 100 to 1,000 MW each, but not a single one is even close to beginning construction (Sood, 24 July 2014).

During India-Nepal Joint Commission question and answer session on 26 July 2014, Minister of External Affairs Smt. Sushma Swaraj co-Chaired the third meeting of the Joint Commission along with Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Government of Nepal. The Joint Commission reviewed a range of issues including political and security issues, economic cooperation and infrastructure, trade and transit, power and water resources, culture, education and media. Both sides expressed happiness at the reactivation of the Joint Commission after a gap of 23 years. Both sides also signed an MOU on the installation of 2,700 shallow tube-wells in the Terai region (Ministry of External Affairs, 13 August 2014).

A Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed by the Government of Nepal and CPN (Maoist) which formally brought to an end the armed insurgency. The Agreement laid down the road-map for further steps, as per which the process of arms management was initiated, the interim Constitution

promulgated, and an interim Legislature, with the inclusion of CPN (Maoist), constituted in January 2007. These developments were significant steps in Nepal's journey towards a settled constitutional order to enable the people of Nepal to realize their aspirations for peace and prosperity. India will extend its full support to the Government and people of Nepal in their task of nation building at this juncture of their history (MEA Annual Report 2006-2007).

Nepal Perspectives in National Security

Nepal's political transition began with the Jan Aandolan in 1990 and is still unfolding. Since then, no government has lasted even two years. A Maoist insurgency and the resulting civil war claimed more than 15,000 lives over a decade (1996-2006). The monarchy never recovered after the palace massacre of 2001 and finally, the 240-year-old institution was abolished in 2008, with the Royal Kingdom of Nepal becoming a republic. The historic election in 2008 had given a two-year mandate to the Constituent Assembly (CA) to draft a new Constitution. Four times the CA extended its life but it was finally dissolved in 2012 when there were credible legal challenges to any further extension and it was clear, after four Prime Ministers (2008-12), that a fresh election was necessary. A second CA was elected in November last year, with the goal of completing the Constitution-drafting exercise in a year. Outstanding issues of the type of government (presidential or Westminster) and a federal structure (ethnicity-based or geographical) are polarising, and have to be handled wisely. As the Maoists have learnt, rising expectations cannot be satisfied by *laal salaam* or empty rhetoric (Sood 24 July 2014).

Nepal on the Chinese side, Mao Zedong's though get success in China. It encouraged the Maoist from South Asia. Ten years after the end of "People's War", Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) took the state power through parliamentary election. The way they use the Maoist theory to get more support from people will influence their future. To get more space for survive is also depended on the development of the politics and economy of this country. Unified Communist Party of Nepal (UCPN, Maoist) was established on March 1995. It is the first big party and the main ruling party in Nepal. After the

government of Nepal refused to abolish the monarchy in order to establish the republic, Unified Communist Party of Nepal started the People's War. In 2001, UCPN changed their strategy to use peaceful and democratic way to approach their political purpose. NCPN proposed their own route called Prachanda Route in the second National Congress. Prachanda Route is the use of Marxism, Leninism and Mao's Thought in the realistic condition of Nepal. In 2002 secretary of state of USA visited Nepal and promise to support government of Nepal to attack the Maoist. In 2003, US put the UCPN (Maoist) to the list of terrorist. May 2008, US started to have dialogue with UCPN(M) but still not delete its name on the list of terrorist till the unity of PLA of Nepal and the Nepal army and the dismiss of UCPN(M) youth community.

The Author Yuan Qun said, "It is a big challenge for UCPN (M) to keep its independence of transform and become a pure parliament party without revolutionary character. We should respect commendable exploration of Nepal to have different socialist way like it had multi-party system. However, we should know that make Nepal as a tool to anti-China by influence UCPN (M) in different way." In 21 Nov 2006, NCPN (Maoist) signed a peace agreement. It marked NCPN (M) give up violence revolution and start to go on the way of parliamentary election. UCPN gets many experience and introspection from International Communist Movement. It provided the theoretical foundation for their transform.

Concluding Remarks

There are voices of western media of Elephant and Dragon going for war which is created by Westphalia nation-state concept of 1648. But there are lots of changes and transition in the international system, those countries that were benefitting from the existing international system is not willing to give up their relative power. Therefore they have to admit the facts to accommodate the new powerful countries like China and potentially India. This transition will be good for everybody in creating peace, but it's a real challenge of international system only seeing from the lens of past and assuming there will be war or hegemonic war of new contestant. There are pessimistic views between some scholars of China having war with the US or within Asia China and the emerging India going for war. But Asian Civilizations should not behave necessary like the ancient Greek Civilizations have behaved, there are different ways solving

problem. Also the behaviour of Chinese leaders who are shying away from G2 formulation, Indo-Pacific formulation, from declared as global power is reflection of slowly accommodating changes. They believe in gradual shift of international systems becoming from unipolar to multipolar. This all have to do with the past histories- China's and India's empire were flexible, they had immediate subjects, they were vassal states, and beyond that they were barbarian and system were flexible. They were frontiers who can expand and shrink without wars. It's the introduction of line which changes in perception as threat, but our culture are different from the ancestors of resolving conflicts without wars.

Especially on the issues India-China obstacles, Prof Singh believes that India and China is not 'nation state' but a 'civilizational state.' He says there is a disjuncture of 'who we are' and 'how are we behaving' that could cause certain problem of adjustment of behaviour. Most of us are depending on internet information's but the question lies of who controls internet, CNN, BBC etc. Therefore India and China have to interact face to face for solving problems and knowing each other's well. It's also elaborates that some countries that are seeing India-China in conflicting situation will be happy to see in a peaceful friendly relation. Smarts are there to keep India against Pakistan or India against China to keep India-China underdeveloped, but the responsibility is not to fall under the prey. Only thing India must ensure is India's friends with Japan, Australia, US must not be on the cost of China and on the China's side they have to clarify in everything for transparency. Perception are also changing of how Indian were looked as snake charmer and now are seen as mouse (computer mouse) user, which brings pride to feel more better towards Indian feelings. This will contribute towards nationalism but nationalism should not be towards the neighbour in a negative way.

In relations to Nepal both the country India and China wants to influence. No matter Look East Policy of India and China's Western Development Campaign have both impact upon Nepal? Ideational factors such as ideas, identity and ideologies plays an important role in shaping the National interest of states like Nepal. Nepal were satisfied with the identity of Gorkhas, who are also the majority of citizens from British India to the states like Darjeeling claimed to be the separate statehood of Gorkhaland. On the other hand identity

of Maoist was successful campaign to win the political consent in the past histories of Nepal. Nepal are trying to fit and survive in securing its national interest of identity in international politics which can be achieve only by cooperating with both rather than side-lining with one. International system is dynamic and small state can also influence in the international system. Example, North Korea being very small country do not want to comprise its 'national interest' with the United States and other big power. The main reason for Nepal would be to identify and clarify its 'national interest' on the ground which it can negotiate with the 'growing power' and 'emerging power.' National interest in Nepal have been shifted from identity to other interest, but the successful national interest would be based on the pure interest of all the people.

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