



Nepal-India Relations: India's Covertly and Overtly Imposed Blockades

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Abstract

The following paper aims to clarify India's actual involvement in Nepal during three blockades. In order to achieve the study's objectives, the researcher employed secondary sources of data and analyzed it using both analytical and descriptive methods of information interpretation. Scholarly books, articles, opinions, social media-based information (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TV interviews, News, Views); viewpoints available on paper and electronic media have been employed under the category of secondary source of information. In 1969, after Nepal constructed the Araniko Highway connecting Kathmandu with China and established Tatopani as a trading route with the northern neighbor, India became displeased and blocked the flow of commodities into Nepal. Even though the 1969 economic embargo only lasted a short while, it caused problems for Nepal's seamless supply of some goods, like salt and spice products, because the country was dependent on India for these items. India was enraged by Nepal's attempts to decrease its dependence on India alone. India imposed a second embargo in 1988–1989 that lasted for 15 months. The dissatisfaction of Nepal and India over the renewal of trade and transit treaties was the excuse for it, and the political reason might be the contrast between parliamentary and royal government. The third blockade, which was informally enforced by India under the guise of a constitution that was exclusive to the Madhesi people, lasted for almost five months. The author of the article examined the rationale for and the impacts of India's blockades of Nepal.

Keywords: Nepal-India Relations, Blockade, Indian Vested Interest, Unmanaged Open Border.

Introduction

The relationship between India and Nepal appears stable on the surface, but when we dig deeper, we discover that Nepal is subject to covert Indian pressure. India supports Nepal when it feels it will help it further its own interests, and it blocks Nepal when those interests are not met. Blockade imposed by India on Nepal, as well as the deeds and responses of different Indian diplomats,

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politicians, and senior bureaucrats justifies the claims. Nepal declined to grant India's request for a single trade and transit treaty in 1988 when the two treaties were due for renewal, claiming that doing so "violates the principle of freedom to trade." Following it, a hard-line stance was adopted by both India and Nepal, which caused a major crisis in their bilateral relations. Leaders in Nepal argued that transit rights were "a fundamental and a permanent right of a land-locked country" under the UN charter, and that India's desire for a single treaty was therefore untenable. Following two extensions, the two accords came to an end on March 23, 1989, thus cutting off Nepal's commercial access to India. This blockade persisted until late April 1990 (Crossette, 1989, April 11).

The third but the "unofficial blockade" that India imposed on Nepal between September 2015 and February 2016 gave rise to the impetus for this article (Acharya, Phuyal, & Dhakal 2015; Jha, 2016a). Severe energy shortages occurred in Nepali cities as a result of an unexpected halt to trade across the border between India and Nepal. India denied taking any direct part in halting the supply of supplies, but it was believed to be doing so in order to put political pressure on the Nepali government to accede to demands made by the Madhesi, an ethnic group that lives in the Terai, in the southern lowlands of Nepal. Some Nepalese view Madhesis with distrust due to their proximity to the Indian border and shared cultural similarities with their Indian neighbors; some even contend that Madhesis are Indian and not Nepali at all. However, the 2015 Madhesi protests were sparked by Nepal's recently ratified constitution, which recognizes minority rights less than the 2008 interim constitution (Associated Press, 2015). In this situation the author has investigated the covert and overt cause behind the blockades through this article.

Objectives: The general objective of this article is to analyze Nepal-India relations focusing on India's covertly and overtly imposed blockades. Whereas, the specific objectives are:

- To describe causes and consequences of blockades imposed by India.
- To recommend the ways to avoid India dependency of Nepal.

Literature Review

Although Nepal has categorically never been conquered by a foreign power, Nepal's geographic location has impinged on its sovereignty, especially in relation to India. In this frame, the blockade was just one of several instances where India has used Nepal's geographic dependence to assert its interests in Nepal. Nepal-India relations can be studied in the line of different IR theories such as: Spheres of Influence Theory.

A Sphere of Influence (SoI) is a conceptual or physical area over which a state has some degree of monopoly power in the fields of politics, culture, economy, and military affairs. It refers to the state's ambiguous or illegitimate interpretation at the start of recorded history. While rival powers seek exclusive control in the same region, or subsidiary or vassal nations reject subordination or contribute to the conflict, sphere of influence claims, as a tactic of great power or imperial supremacy, can bring order to surrounding territories (Jackson, 2019, 24 October).

As stated by Deudney (n.d), the Punic Wars started in the third century BC as a result of

the rivalry between ancient Rome and Carthage for dominance in the western Mediterranean's periphery.

More recently, after World War II, the Soviet Union established spheres of influence as a political reality on the territory of Eastern European countries. This effectively asserted American influence in the "New World" and prevented subsequent smaller American neighbors from interfering in the internal affairs of the American people. This was made possible by the Monroe Doctrine (1823) (Para.5).

Monroe asserted that the Western Hemisphere was the United States' sphere of interest and that the European nations had a duty to respect it. In 1823, the Monroe Doctrine—a warning to European nations not to meddle in Western Hemisphere affairs—was included in President James Monroe's annual address to Congress.

In the words of Hast (2016), a state's claim to exclusive or dominating authority over a foreign territory or region in international politics is known as its sphere of influence. The phrase describes a political claim to exclusive control that other governments may or may not accept as true, or it describes a pledge to avoid meddling in another state's area of influence. It may also allude to a contract.

The phrase in the later legal sense, according to Deudney (n.d.), only came into use in the 1880s, as the European powers were wrapping up their colonial expansion into Africa and Asia. Throughout this last stage of growth, every major colonial power made an attempt to maintain their mutual competition for colonies through established channels in a peaceful manner. The sphere of influence agreement was utilized for this purpose (para- 2).

The phrase was first used in a May 1885 agreement between Germany and Great Britain that called for the "separation and definition of their respective spheres of influence in the area of the Gulf of Guinea." Numerous accords of a similar nature followed this one, as seen by Article 7 of the Agreement between Germany and Great Britain on July 1, 1890, regarding East Africa. According to Hast (2016), the sphere of influence theory of international relations has been significant in a number of post-Cold War debates and conversations. Talk about and define power dynamics, including the affecting and influencing forces and the spaces they occupy.

Similarly, Hast (2016) found that the orbit—which denotes the influence of the US, Russia, and even the EU—is the metaphorical source of spheres of influence. Similar to other sub-continental nations, India has secret policies in place to influence certain regions. A breach of a border entails a breach of sovereignty and, consequently, of a sphere of influence. Thus, this is a derogatory term that indicates a transgression or contempt for an independent nation's sovereignty, which is demonstrated here by the Indians. Contemplating injustice embodies the concept of the sphere of influence, which is emotionally and historically laden and has the capacity to incite hatred and inspire resistance.

The failure of SAARC in South Asia as a result of India's apathetic role indicates that, although regionalism accepts all regional powers equally, sphere of influence theories aim to be hegemonic, imperialist, or interventionist under the guise of providing development assistance,

humanitarian intervention, solving peripheral problems, or even bringing about political change. It either supports or believes in unipolar power, which justifies the influence of those in positions of authority. It focuses on the influence of India, especially on the Madhesi community and how they affect the politics and governance of Nepal.

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory is a school of thought in contemporary social science that seeks to understand underdevelopment, examine its causes, and, to a lesser degree, offer solutions. It first surfaced in South America in the 1960s, soon moved to North America, Europe, and Africa, and is still significant in today's discourse after gaining momentum in academic communities and at regional organizations (Sonntag, 2001). The dependency theory holds that the primary cause of underdevelopment is the impacted countries' peripheral position in the global economy. The world's poorest countries are usually suppliers of inexpensive labor and raw materials. Developed countries possessing the necessary infrastructure to transform these resources into final goods purchase them.

Developing countries end up having to pay hefty prices for the finished items, depleting resources that could be utilized to boost domestic manufacturing. The result is a vicious cycle that maintains the division of the global economy into a wealthy core and a poor periphery. However, the dependence of politically sensitive landlocked nations like Nepal has been overlooked in the opinion. Due to its proximity to two developing economies and technical giants with sizable populations, markets, and industries; Nepal enjoys geopolitical benefits (Dahal, 2011). The author also noted that, historically, Nepal has been able to keep stronger relationships with its two neighbors than it was able to do with each other (pp. 21–33).

In Nepal's past, the Hindu elite have traditionally ruled over the country, which is governed by a Hindu constitution. People that share similar religious and cultural ties to Nepal are also found in the neighboring Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Bihar. Because of this, the majority of the laws and practices that the government of Nepal has implemented are mostly intended to placate the native populace. It claims that by granting everyone equal rights, democracy triumphs (Dahal, 2011, pp. 21-33).

Nepal has endured the painful experience of losing and being compelled to ratify treaties and accords that restricted its rights to commerce, territory, and, above all, its integrity as a nation. It therefore has comparatively less power and resources than those two of her states. Muni (1973) claims that when the Sino-Indian War started in 1950, Nepal had to keep up its diplomatic ties with China as well by pursuing a policy of non-alignment and deepening diplomatic connections with the US, China, the USSR, and Japan, King Mahendra aimed to broaden relations (Muni, 1973).

In order to balance neighborly interdependence and free it to pursue national interests in the international system, Nepal undertook this diversification and pursuit of India's specialties approach. Nepal sought to lessen its total reliance on India and its security issues with this approach. Nepal's ability to manage its relationship with its two neighbors will determine how far

it can go in terms of political, economic, and national security growth. It contributes to the global stage and portrays itself in this way (Dahal, 2011, pp. 21–33). According to Pierson and Theda (2002):

In historical institutionalism in contemporary political science stated “Outcomes at a “critical juncture” trigger feedback mechanism that reinforces the recurrence of a particular pattern into the future” (p.6).

The monarchy was overthrown in 2006, and Nepal was proclaimed a secular state by the new administration. Nepalese experienced an identity crisis during this time, leading to an increase in the disparities amongst them in terms of class, religion, ethnicity, and other factors (Dahal, 2011, pp. 21-33). With regional and religious identities progressively transforming into national identities, these divisions were the primary causes of Nepal’s struggles to establish political stability and a common national goal. The political system of the nation is unstable as a result of these disagreements. The political parties responsible for these divisions have brought about the development of exploitative political and economic structures, which have been made worse by Nepal’s unstable political situation.

Constructivist Theory

Constructivism’s arrival in IR is frequently linked to the conclusion of the Cold War. It defied explanation by conventional notions like liberalism and realism. This failure may be traced back to a number of fundamental ideas, including the idea that states are power-hungry, self-serving entities and that the unequal distribution of power across nations establishes the relative power between them. The state is the main focus of classical theory, hence human agency is not given much space. In the end, the end of the Cold War was guaranteed by the efforts of common people rather than those of states and international organizations. Constructivism says that humans made the social world in response to this worry.

International relations are constantly influenced and occasionally transformed by the acts and interactions of actors, who are usually influential people such as leaders and notable citizens (Sarina, 2018, February 23). According to Sarina, agency and structure are mutually beneficial, which suggests that agency affects structure and vice versa. The ability of individuals to take action is known as agency, whereas the international system of ideal and material components is referred to as structure. Identity and profit is another major constructivist theme (2018, February 23). Constructivists went on to say that states are capable of having several identities that are created by social interactions with other actors.

Constructivists, who think that identities are a representation of interests and actions, value them. A small national identity, for instance, suggests a distinct range of interests than a huge national identity. It is likely that smaller states are more concerned with surviving (Josse, 2020, p. 1). However, the major powers want to be in charge of all political, economic, and military matters worldwide. Thus, this theory can be used to examine the relationship between Nepal and India. This is a result of the closeness and distinctiveness of bilateral contacts brought about by open borders and the common socio-cultural identities of people in adjacent regions who

are married and Madhesi people.

Research gap

Even though there have been many studies on Nepal-India relations, India's perspective on Nepali politics still appears to be absent in academia, despite the fact that these studies are founded on constructivist theories of international relations, dependency, and spheres of influence. This researcher has therefore examined Nepal – India relations, which are focused on India's blockades against Nepal, using the prism of the aforementioned IR theories.

Methodology

As this is a qualitative study, the researcher has used both descriptive and analytical methodologies to analyze the data. The author has resorted to desk work in order to collect necessary knowledge, such as reading scholarly publications, journal articles, opinions expressed on social media, etc.

Findings

Nepal a Landlocked Country

In South Asia, Nepal is a landlocked nation bordered to the north by China and to the South, East, and West by India. The nation spans 147,516 square kilometers and is located between 26° 22' N and 30° 27' N and 80° 4' E and 88° 12' E. Nepal is located north of the Tropic of Cancer in the temperate zone. About 800 km separate east and west, whereas just 150–250 km separate North and South. Large water systems in Nepal flow southward into India. The Tarai region, the mid-hill region, and the Himalayan region are the three primary geographical divisions of the nation. Mt. Everest (8,848 m) is the nation's highest point, while the Tarai plains of Kechana Kalan in Jhapa (60 m) are its lowest (Nepal, n.d.) Nepal is a landlocked nation in South Asia, formally known as the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. Although it encompasses portions of the Indo-Gangetic Plain, its primary location is in the Himalayas. It shares boundaries with China's Tibet Autonomous Region to the north and India to the south, east, and west. The Siliguri Corridor separates it from Bangladesh, while the Indian state of Sikkim separates it from Bhutan. Due to being land locked country it suffers from hurdles in trade and transit time and again.

Bayeh (2015, April) writes that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 Part X: Right of Access of Land-Locked States to and from the Sea and Freedom of Transit explains rights of a land locked counties as:

Article 124 Use of terms

1. For the purposes of this Convention:

- (a) "land-locked State" means a State which has no sea-coast;
- (b) "Transit State" means a State, with or without a sea-coast, situated between a land-locked State and the sea, through whose territory traffic in transit passes;
- (c) "traffic in transit" means transit of persons, baggage, goods and means of transport across the territory of one or more transit States, when the passage across such territory, with or without trans-shipment, warehousing, breaking bulk or change in the mode of transport, is only a portion of a complete journey which begins or terminates within the territory of the land-locked State;

(d) “Means of transport” means:

- (i) Railway rolling stock, sea, lake and river craft and road vehicles;
- (ii) Where local conditions so require, porters and pack animals.

2. Land-locked States and transit States may, by agreement between them, include as means of transport pipelines and gas lines and means of transport other than those included in paragraph 1.

Article 125 Right of access to and from the sea and freedom of transit: 1. Land-locked States shall have the right of access to and from the sea for the purpose of exercising the rights provided for in this Convention including those relating to the freedom of the high seas and the common heritage of mankind. To this end, land-locked States shall enjoy freedom of transit through the territory of transit States by all means of transport.

2. The terms and modalities for exercising freedom of transit shall be agreed between the land-locked States and transit States concerned through bilateral, sub-regional or regional agreements.

3. Transit States, in the exercise of their full sovereignty over their territory, shall have the right to take all measures necessary to ensure that the rights and facilities provided for in this Part for land-locked States shall in no way infringe their legitimate interests.

Article 126 Exclusion of application of the most-favored-nation clause: The provisions of this Convention, as well as special agreements relating to the exercise of the right of access to and from the sea, establishing rights and facilities on account of the special geographical position of land-locked States, are excluded from the application of the most-favored-nation clause.

1. Article 127 Customs duties, taxes and other charges: 1. Traffic in transit shall not be subject to any customs duties, taxes or other charges except charges levied for specific services rendered in connection with such traffic.

2. Means of transport in transit and other facilities provided for and used by land-locked States shall not be subject to taxes or charges higher than those levied for the use of means of transport of the transit State.

Article 128 Free zones and other customs facilities: For the convenience of traffic in transit, free zones or other customs facilities may be provided at the ports of entry and exit in the transit States, by agreement between those States and the land-locked States.

Article 129 Cooperation in the construction and improvement of means of transport: Where there are no means of transport in transit States to give effect to the freedom of transit or where the existing means, including the port installations and equipment, are inadequate in any respect, the transit States and land-locked States concerned may cooperate in constructing or improving them.

Article 130 Measures to avoid or eliminate delays or other difficulties of a technical nature in traffic in transit

1. Transit States shall take all appropriate measures to avoid delays or other difficulties of a technical nature in traffic in transit.

2. Should such delays or difficulties occur, the competent authorities of the transit States and land-locked States concerned shall cooperate towards their expeditious elimination?

Article 131 Equal treatment in maritime ports: Ships flying the flag of land-locked States shall enjoy treatment equal to that accorded to other foreign ships in maritime ports.

Article 13 Grant of greater transit facilities: This Convention does not entail in any way the withdrawal of transit facilities which are greater than those provided for in this Convention and which are agreed between States Parties to this Convention or granted by a State Party. This Convention also does not preclude such grant of greater facilities in the future (Source: https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part10.htm). Despite giving such rights to a landlocked nation, India has repeatedly disregarded them and imposed blockades on Nepal, which is clearly against international law and customs.

Undeclared blockade 1969

Enraged with Nepal for building the Araniko Highway that connected Kathmandu to China and opening Tatopani as a commercial route with its northern neighbor, India blocked the flow of goods into Nepal in 1969. Despite the fact that the 1969 economic embargo was only temporary, it caused problems for Nepal's smooth import of certain goods, like salt and spice items, since the country was dependent on India for these imports (Subedi, 2016). India became enraged with Nepal's efforts to reduce its reliance on India alone. The first barrier was imposed by the Indian government through quantitative limits on cross-border trade when the 1950 Trade and Transit Agreement expired in 1969.

However, the extent to which Nepal's economy was harmed is unknown given there are no concrete figures available for that time frame (Shakya, 2016). Given that both Nepal and India have broken the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, it is clear from the aforementioned facts that India has a limited perspective on the landlocked nation. Nepal is not breaking the deal on its own; rather, India is repeatedly violating it unilaterally by acquiring weapons and ammunition and signing security arrangements with Russia and other nations.

Since they united, there have been significant fluctuations in the relationship between India and Nepal. Nepal became democratic in 1951 but an agreement from 1950 also made Nepal an Indian peripheral state. India established a dual policy throughout the thirty years of Panchayat rule. Furthermore, bilateral relations were negatively impacted by a personality struggle between the leaders of the two countries. According to Simkhada (2011), "personality and policy could never be fully detached."

As noted by Simkhada (2011), there were conflicts between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and King Birendra, which resulted in a blockade in 1989–1990. The Panchayat regime also led to bad relations between Nepal and India. Generally speaking, India saw its relationship with Nepal from a security standpoint and wished to establish a privileged government here (Subedi, 2017, pp. 53-83). India made a lasting impression on Nepal when its government tried to handle its domestic matters independently. It seems that India enforced an economic embargo against international law in 1989–1990 in an attempt to maintain Nepal's attractiveness.

Second Blockade Against Nepal (1989, March 23- 1990, April)

The Rajiv Gandhi government did not revoke the Trade and transit deal, which ran out in March 1989 (Dharmadasani, 1997, p. 68). India was enraged with Nepal in 1989–1990. According to Savada (1993), India also refused to supply petroleum products to Nepal, which led to a serious scarcity of essentials in that country. As a result, New Delhi's severe economic sanctions against Nepal exacerbated the country's political turmoil. The Trade and Transit Treaty lapsed in March 1989 due to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's government's refusal to extend it (Dharmadasani, 1997, p. 68). Crossette (1993) said that demonstrations against India's "economic blockade" were encouraged by the regime of King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (p. 112). This Indian authority directly blames Nepal for their difficulties but if we took some decisions independently they impose blockade and hurdles in border.

This issue has also been raised by the King in a number of international fora. Furthermore, Nepal had high-ranking visitors from China and Pakistan and purchased armaments from China. Tensions between Nepal and India were heightened by visits to the country in June 1989 by Chinese Premier Li Peng and November 1989 by Pakistani Foreign Minister ShahebazadeYokum Khan (Crossette, 1993, pp. 112-113). It confirms India's unwavering aim to have sole power over Nepali politics. "Our foreign policy will break down at the point where India or China loses faith in us and concludes that the vital national interests and sensitivities do not receive proper recognition in our conduct of relations," Simkhada (2011) said in his analysis of this episode (p. 14).

Author (2011) went on to say that bilateral and trilateral talks should be used to clear up any misconceptions between neighboring nations. To control illicit traffic, both sides finished and initiated the creation of independent trade and transit agreements. The trade dispute between India and Nepal began prior to the formal signing of these agreements in 1989.

The letter stated that both the trade treaty and the "Illegal Trade" control agreement will be deemed to have expired on March 23, 1989, in light of the transit treaty between India and Nepal being scheduled to expire on that day. India declined to finalize two distinct treaties including extension clauses that need to be governed by international law and limited commercial practices since Nepal is a landlocked nation. According to the letter, India wished to establish new agreements to stop illicit trade as well as a new unified trade and transit convention (Vaidhya, 2001).

There were also more factors that had contributed to the growing gap between Nepal and India. In response to India's 1987 demand that Nepali settlers be forced out of neighboring countries, Nepal set up a system of work permits for Indian nationals working in Nepal (Thapa 2010, December 10). It was also thought to be intentionally inciting India to jeopardize its own security by purchasing arms and ammunition from China. According to Pandey (2072B.S), the declared reason for the blockade was not the genuine one; rather, it was an attempt to reduce Indian influence in Nepali politics during King Birendra's reign.

This situation raises questions about Nepal's historical relationship with India. Nonetheless, Nepal made major diplomatic efforts to convey its opinions on trade and transit issues to the international community. The significant divergence in Nepal-India ties observed in 1989 may have been caused by India's discontent with Nepal since the 1960s, especially because of King

Mahendra's rule and the continuation of King Birendra's policies. The Indian ruling class appeared to be breaking, if not outright violating, the monarch's principles of balance and equidistance toward both China and India. There are more elements that also played a part in the blockade scenario. Informally, decision-makers and diplomats from India and Nepal had talked about their "cold" relationship with King Birendra Bikram Shah Dev of Nepal (Mandal, 2014).

This situation was greatly influenced by the two somewhat cold and self-conscious men. The mutual hostility peaked at the December 1988 SAARC summit in Islamabad, which brought together seven countries. According to Nepal, King Birendra refused to take pictures with Gandhi or the King of Bhutan; however, India thought Gandhi had turned down King Birendra's invitation to breakfast. King Birendra will ultimately suffer, not the people of Nepal, regardless of what actually happened in Islamabad. Under the pressure from India, they proved more resilient than New Delhi had thought. The facts cited above clearly showed that the 1989 crisis had consumed him from two different perspectives. In the 1950s, Nepal, an independent state, attempted to exercise its rights, while India sought to implement its objectives through treaties. There were also conflicts between Rajiv Gandhi and King Birendra's personalities. According to T. Karki and P.-M. Gurung, in this regard:

The crisis was caused by nationalist King Birendra, who turned down formal and informal invitations and meetings from Rajeev Gandhi. Instead, he sought better alternatives to the 1950s accord, which had unnecessarily made Nepal dependent on India. King Birendra campaigned for equal sovereignty, but Rajeev Gandhi once thought he was in charge of a large country and that the King of Nepal should treat him with respect (Key Informant Interviews, March 26, 2019 and April 12, 2019).

On April 26, 1989, India's Foreign Minister, PV Narsimha Rao, spoke candidly to the Lok Sabha about his country's policy in Nepal. One of these promises is to reduce the taxes on Indian goods supplied to Nepal. In response to the collapse of their trading system on March 23, 1989, Nepal further lowered its duties on Indian commodities on April 11, 1989, as per the letter from the Indian Ambassador. The failure of certain treaty terms to hold true in the 1950s and Nepal's purchase of Chinese arms in the middle of 1988 were held accountable. Nepal has likewise responded to the issue in a straightforward and uncompromising manner (Vaidya, 2001).

Hamal (2011) states that in this specific context, "the personality clash between India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and King Birendra also furnished fuel for the embargo against Nepal" (Key Informant Interview, February 28, 2019). King Birendra was not happy with India since it rejected the Zone of Peace (ZoP) proposal that Nepal had submitted, and Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was even less satisfied with Nepal because of its procurement of Chinese armaments.

Consequently, India was organizing a scenario in which a widespread uprising against the King of Nepal would culminate in his overthrow. While the King was trying to set up an autonomous administration and government, India feared that Nepal would withdraw from its desired area. When India imposed an embargo on Nepal, the country's left-wing parties saw an

opportunity to gain more clout globally and decided to mount a concerted campaign against the Panchayat system. India backed this since it would be against Western dictatorship to allow it to have any say in Nepali politics. India, on the other hand, responded to the coups of the 1960s with a degree of apathy.

India, on the other hand, responded to the coups of the 1960s with a degree of apathy. India had an impact on the king's authority over both domestic and foreign affairs throughout the 30-year Panchayat administration. While the relationship between Nepal and India remained fragile, India's resentment of King Birendra grew. Nepal did everything in its power to uphold its distinct character and resist the notion of being too dependent on India.

Since the Sugauli Treaty, Nepal-India relations have been shaped by India's colonial legacy. It was assumed, but in vain, that India would adopt Nepal's policy of sovereign equality after gaining its independence. Relations between Nepal and India remained tense during the panchayat era due to the ego battle between the Indian Prime Ministers and Nepal's Kings.

Third blockade (23 september 2015 – March, 2016)

The 23 September 2015 India Nepal's prime minister, KP Sharma Oli, cited the Blockade of Nepal, which Panchsheel principles today, urging India to "immediately lasted around six months, was lift the undeclared blockade" put on his country in a humanitarian and economic order to improve bilateral relations in the midst of the catastrophe that had a significant recent political unrest surrounding the country's new impact on Nepal's economy. Constitution.

(Source: Wikipedia, 2018 March)

Ironically, the biggest democracy in the world, India, responded to the people of Nepal's rejection of their mandate by enforcing a blockade. One could contend that such overt involvement in the internal affairs of an independent and sovereign state like Nepal is motivated by India's imperial attitude. When Nepal agreed to buy weapons from China in 1970 and 1989, India took similar actions, demobilizing 13 of its 15 transit points along the Nepalese border (Nayak, 2016).

On September 20, 2015, the parliamentary assembly adopted the much-anticipated constitution; nonetheless, India's silence has infuriated Nepal. Furthermore, violence and conflicts have escalated in multiple Terai regions as a result of political groups based in Terai staging rallies against the recently passed constitution (Bhattarai, 2018, para. 1-3).

After being shuttered for around four and a half months, the Raxaul-Birgunj control point on the border between Nepal and India reopened on February 5, 2016. Birgunj is said to be the entry point for about 70% of Nepal's imports, hence its shut down caused severe disruptions to trade and transportation throughout the nation, greatly affecting day-to-day living in most of it (Nepal Economic Forum, 2016). Stores of food and medication held for a while, but the disruption in the fossil fuel supply soon proved extremely difficult. But the border checkpoint had been "closed," not just "closed." Outrage over Nepal's new constitution had led to its physical banning as a form of protest. The previous ten months had been quite turbulent; especially when you

consider that the new constitution was adopted less than four months after a terrible earthquake completely shattered Nepal.

The debate about Nepal's relations with India after the new constitution was adopted was discussed during a meeting between Nepali Prime Minister Sushil Koirala and Indian Ambassador Ranjit Rae on September 23, 2015, in Kathmandu (Bhattarai, 2015a). Prime Minister Koirala assured Ambassador Rae that he would lead the effort to resolve disagreements with rival Terai-led parties and encouraged him to participate in broader consultations and, if necessary, amend the constitution (The Rising Nepal, 2015).

On September 23, 2015, in New Delhi, Deep Kumar Upadhayay, the ambassador of Nepal and Ajit Doval, the Prime Minister of India's national security advisor, at the time, held a meeting that was equally important. That did occur, and Upadhayay received the message that political discourse and stakeholder consensus are desperately needed (Bhattarai, 2015a, October).

Thereafter, several high-level discussions took place. The prime minister of Nepal, KP Sharma Oli and Indian ambassador, Rae, and the had a discussion on October 12, 2015, in Kathmandu regarding how to mend the strained relations between their countries as a result of the conflict. These discussions centered on an unofficial trade embargo that India had imposed. Prime Minister KP Oli underlined the government's goal of a solid and long-lasting relationship with India for the benefit of both countries, while Ambassador Rae reiterated the assertion that India did not impose the blockade (RSTV, 2015).

Prime Minister Oli sent Foreign Minister Kamal Thapa to India during the third week of October 2015 as part of ongoing high-level discussions to persuade Indian political leaders to ensure cross-border trade in vital commodities.

In response, the Indian side stated that the reason for the disruption of vehicular movement was not India itself, but rather the instability of the border between Nepal and India. Some told him he should answer the phone right away. Following the visit of Nepal's foreign minister to India on December 31, 2015, Prime Minister Oli spoke with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In the course of their 20-minute conversation, Oli talked about the challenges faced by Nepali and Indian border crossings and urged Prime Minister Modi to take action to speed up the flow of necessities via these crossings. By engaging the opposition parties in discourse, Prime Minister Modi reaffirmed the necessity of locating the "Sahamati" in the constitution. Additionally, he extended an invitation to Oli to visit India (Giri, 2015).

Prime Minister Oli accepted this invitation and traveled to India for six days, from February 19 to 24, 2016. Prime Minister Oli had simply been to India in accordance with his long-standing stance to hold off on travel until the blockade was lifted. From September 15–18, 2016, PM. Prachanda paid an official visit to India with the goal of fostering better ties between the two countries. While praising his efforts to strengthen ties between Nepal and India, his counterpart Modi suggested reaching a wide agreement with all factions, including the agitation section (MoFA, 2016a, September 16).

But unless India's demands are satisfied, India's Foreign Minister Jayshankar has indicated

that he won't leave the Madhesh issue. Additionally, he thought that Nepal's constitution sought to fully execute it by simply acknowledging the complaints of all societal segments, which at the time were absent (The Hindu, 2016).

Thus, Nepal's legislative standing indicates that India's relationship with Nepal is hegemonic rather than patriarchal, as opposed to what Hast (2016) thought under the spheres of influence theory of international relations. International relations experts claim that the blockade violates a number of international laws and agreements. The Vienna Convention of 1965 (United Nations, 1965) allowed landlocked countries to import goods from other countries without restriction. It also established the Convention on Transit and Trade of Landlocked Countries.

The Asian Highway Agreement (ESCAP, 2003), which was signed by Asian countries like Nepal and India in order to connect highways for intraregional trade, was also broken by the blockade. The goal of the embargo was to undermine the South Asian Free Trade Association (SAFTA), an agreement designed to promote commerce and business in the area. According to SAFTA rules, no nation may place limitations on the exporting of commodities from another country (Subedi, 2017, pp. 53-96).

Discussion

In the seven decades of Nepal-Indian socio-economic and political relations, India has three times imposed blockades on Nepal. We are taking India's support for bringing political charges in Nepal instead India is taking gratitude of its cooperation and pressuring Nepal to follow its line and interests into consideration while debating these blockades and their hidden and overt causes and repercussions.

Although India stated "administrative reasons" for halting the flow of commodities across the border during the earlier blockades in 1962 and 1989 (pp.99 &113), Whelpton (2005) asserted that the timing of these administrative mistakes was, to put it mildly, obvious. In the same paragraph, Nayak (2016) expresses the belief that King Mahendra's attempt to reclaim absolute power for the monarchy was probably the cause of the 1962 "lapse" of trade and transit accords (p. 105). Additionally, Whelpton (2005) asserts that during one of the numerous border disputes between India and China, Nepal's increasingly pro-China movements appeared to be the cause of the 1989 agreement's lapse. This "lapse" contributed to the building resentment against King Birendra's de facto rule and the then-autocratic "panchayat democracy" reaching a boiling point. After 15 months the embargo ended, the autocratic monarchy was overthrown and political parties were restored (p. 113).

According to Tiwari (2015), who has drawn comparisons between the blockades and the economic sanctions that India put on Nepal in 1988 and 1990, several media analysts in 2015 noted the parallels between the current border tensions and those events, but few mentioned the 1962 tragedy. The Nepali government was quick to blame India for the protests and blockade that began in 2015–16, accusing their neighbors of attempting to punish Nepal for refusing to accede to Indian's suggestions' over changes to the new constitution (Kathmandu Post, 2015).

Formally speaking, though, India could only be charged with indolence for not participating actively enough in border clearance or truck rerouting. According to Sengupta (1989), the Indian government had previously allowed a number of trade agreements to expire on purpose.

Only one border point was closed in 2015–2016, compared to thirteen out of fifteen border posts being closed during the 1989 “blockade.” However, Nepali nationals were the ones obstructing the border crossing this time, leading some analysts to blame the government’s failure to settle internal disputes (Acharya, 2015). However, the lack of cargo passing through any of the border crossings suggests that Nepal’s neighbor was involved in keeping cargo stuck in India.

Ritesh (2016) stated that local Nepalis, who were tired of the repercussions of not having access to the border or supplies, broke the most recent roadblock. The political group Madhesi Morcha, however, refuted this, claiming that all other kinds of agitation would continue as before and that it was halted voluntarily in response to the nation’s current problems and “citizens’ suggestions” (Kathmandu Post, 2016). The blockade ended with a whimper rather than a bang, depending on who terminated it—the agitators, the villagers, a change in Indian interests, or a combination of all three. Cutting off the nation’s primary supply of products was effective in drawing attention from the public and government, but its value gradually diminished. The most necessary goods were eventually transported into Kathmandu through alternative entry points by a different supply chain that was created through illicit networks, in which the Nepali state was purportedly engaged (Jha, 2016a). This meant that after a while, rather than being targeted by protestors, the top political brass was the target of the blockade, making necessities like liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), which is used for cooking, far more expensive and difficult, if not impossible, to acquire for those who were already impoverished.

The discourse in Nepali during the blockade on the Indian state is examined in the section that follows. The Madhesi people, who live in the southern region of Nepal, are now seen as an unfavorable representation of Indian dominance in the nation in addition to India’s monopoly on the country’s fossil fuel resources. The main goals of Madhesi political groups are more local autonomy and better participation in the national government (Sijapati, 2012). Due to shared cultural characteristics with their neighbors across the Indian border, although being officially recognized as Nepali just like other communities, they have historically been neglected and looked with distrust. Two historical incidents then provide more perspective for Nepal-Indian relations. This helps to explain why, despite India’s denials of any participation, both well-known Nepali officials and residents of Lubhu town accused the Indian state of being involved in the cutoff of Nepal’s fuel supply.

According to Trouillot (2015), the geopolitical histories of India and Nepal provided context for questions concerning the blockade, such as “what was it about?” that at first glance seemed simple. I consider the responses to these queries to be historical accounts (p. 22). The relationship between India and Nepal is a plot whose “narrative matrix” (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 171) took center stage during the blockade, with India typically portrayed as the antagonist. This occurred in spite of India’s insistence on its innocence and the fact that Nepalis were keeping the

Raxaul-Birgunj Bridge physically blocked.

There were two primary interpretations of the blockade, which is similar to Trouillot's (2015) observations on reinterpretations of the battle of the Alamo. One focused on Nepal's internal problems, where the government was in charge of addressing and settling the complaints of the Madhesi demonstrators in the southern region of the nation. The other focused on questions of Nepali sovereignty concerning India, accusing India of being the one who started the blockade. Therefore, a lot of the time, focus can determine what is considered significant to examine or even what is "true." Conflicting accounts can then give rise to fresh inquiries into the details of an incident. Therefore, historical narratives are important to the extent that they have an impact on the world, and the veracity of a narrative is frequently only called into question when confronted with a "counter narrative." (p. 9)

Storylines don't have to compete with one another, though. Instead, one story may support or enhance another that already exists. Even prior to the blockade, I had heard multiple times in the Nepali context the claim that "Nepal is run by India" (Nepal Indiale chalchha). It appears that Nepal is doubt Nepal's sovereignty through such expressions and stories. To be sure, the story of Indian hegemony and involvement also contributed to the explanation of why the Nepali government performed so poorly and why Nepali politicians were so careless. Although this perception of India is based on events that are scarcely entirely false, it is also not entirely accurate.

India has clearly influenced Nepali politicians and politics on a variety of problems for decades, as Jha 2014; & Muni 2015 have demonstrated. This does not imply, however, that all politicians in Nepal are subject to India. The blockage case can be used as evidence against the conventional wisdom of Indian intervention, or it can be used to reinforce it. Then-prime minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, sometimes referred to as "KP Oli," adopted a tough stance against the (claimed) injustice of Indian intervention in Nepali affairs rather than, in a sense, yielding to India. After the blockage, though, KP Oli lost a lot of support.

This ultimately made it possible for there to be a change of administration in August 2016, perhaps helped by Indian encouragement (Jha, 2016b). Remarkably, the last time a change in Nepal's administration was brought about by an Indian embargo was not as significant as this one. The 1989 blockade's shortages, "particularly of kerosene" (Whelpton, 2015, p. 113) accelerated the end of the Panchayat era's autocracy and helped multi-party democracy return.

Although reports of India's (alleged) wishes during the most recent blockade remain unclear, it is possible that India was acting in self-interest when it attempted to force a change in trade and transit arrangements in 1989 rather than genuinely intending to restore democracy in Nepal.

Instead, reports cited unofficial demands for changes to Nepal's recently promulgated constitution directly or, in a less intrusive manner, demands that the government hold talks with protestors. The residents of Lubhu were well aware of Nepal's historical ties to India. This also permeated perceptions of Madhesis, who were occasionally referred to as Indians rather than Nepalis, whether they were residents of the Terai or had traveled to Lubhu in search of employment. Speaking to people informally, this was conveyed as criticism or outrage against

India's intervention in and/or exploitation of Nepal; in certain instances, this was combined with implausible allegations.

One such assertion, mentioned one afternoon in a tea shop, was that Indian men had made a concerted effort, assisted by the Indian government, to cross the border and marry Nepali women, bringing up children whose primary allegiance was to India. After federalism was implemented, the Terai districts would have the ability to secede from Nepal with a majority vote, which would allow India to conquer the region. This version of a "birthed conspiracy" was used by some as justification for opposing both the expansion of Terai district autonomy and the application of federalism more broadly. Others asserted that the Madhesis merely desired to be recognized as Nepali on an equal footing with everyone else, while simultaneously highlighting the paradox that these kinds of claims were likely the very thing driving Madhesis towards India. These others accepted little or none of the arguments' foundation or substance.

According to Jha (2014), allegations of Indian intervention during the blockade were made but not definitively proven. That does not, however, imply that it is unfounded. Holding political office in Nepal has traditionally depended on one's ability to work with or against Indian interests there. Indeed, supporting Indian interests or not was frequently a deciding element throughout the recent transition from a civil war to a federal republic (pp. 120–157). However, another reading of the so-called "anti-Indian" discourse holds that it is merely rhetoric, used to draw attention away from the ruling government's lack of political success.

It is clarified that Oli was justified in taking a tough stand against India and that India was coerced into ending the blockade by the conclusion of a trade deal with China. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that similar actions would force India to end a border blockade two decades later, considering that they previously started a blockade on Nepal in 1989 in part because they purchased weapons from China rather than just India as the then-active trade agreement purportedly prohibited (Blanchard & Ripsman, 2013).

Furthermore, it is still completely impractical for China and Nepal to trade via the Himalayas in order to supply Nepal with the same volume of goods that India does now. Although the most recent agreement between China and Nepal sent a strong political message, it appeared to be nothing more than a paper dragon in terms of commerce and Nepal's geopolitical position. Since the embargo in 2015–16, relations with China have gained attention as a potential route out of Indian dependency. Building a railway connection via the Himalayas is one of China's "Belt and Road Initiative" goals, which aim to lessen India's influence over Nepal (Lintner, 2018).

An outraged newspaper editorial compared the embargo to a "Indian siege" and drew comparisons between imperialist nations like Russia and Britain and modern-day India. Given its reliance on India, it also questioned Nepal's status as a sovereign nation. As with many articles on the embargo, energy security was a major topic. A section that illustrated the historical foundations of the so-called "Indian siege" and pointed both inwards at India and outwards at the nation's leaders summed up a lot of Nepalis' dissatisfaction with the state of affairs:

Prior to this one, there had been two Indian blockades; the most recent one took place in

1988–1989 and resulted in a 13-month border closure between India and Nepal. This should have allowed Nepal's successive rulers ample time to establish a long-term plan for import diversification and self-sufficiency. Neither of us did. And the most obvious effects of those mistakes are here for everyone to see: an economy that is completely dependent on oil, electricity shortages in a nation that ought to be exporting excess electricity, a highway that connects Kathmandu to India that deviates by an absurd 200 kilometers, the maintenance of just one flimsy highway link to the northern border, active discouragement of electric public transportation, etc (Nepali Times, 2015).

Conclusion

India and Nepal are close neighbors with a shared civilization and a long history of cordial relations. However, because of the Indian big brotherhood attitude and the contentious Peace and Friendship Treaty of the 1950s, which was signed with the trembling Rana rulers, anti-Indian sentiments have grown. Nonetheless, it is impossible to overlook India's overt and covert collaborators in Nepal's political and development spheres. However, India helps Nepal politically on the one hand, but with the new government, it wants to fulfill its vested interest, which directly violates sovereign equality, and it ignores all national and international complaints. It has repeatedly imposed blockades against Nepal in order to further its proprietary interests, which goes against the traditional goodwill that Nepal and India often share. India constantly aims to drive its interest in Nepal by different regimes for that reason it forgets basic rights of landlocked countries even. Sometimes this is due to geopolitical senility, other times it is because Nepal falls under its sphere of influence, and other times it is due to constructivist theory and dependency theory of IR. Because of this, scholarly works raise concerns about the need for Nepal and India to preserve friendly relations based on reciprocal sovereignty and argues that any purported covert or overt blockades lined up by India against Nepal serve to exacerbate rather than to improve relations between the two countries.

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