

ROLE OF GEOPOLITICS IN NEPAL'S FOREIGN POLICY

**A Dissertation
Submitted to
Department of International Relations and Diplomacy
(DIRD)
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Tribhuvan University
In Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Master's Degree
In
International Relations and Diplomacy**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and that it contains no materials previously published. This study has not used its materials for the award of any kind and any other degree. Where other authors' sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

I certify that this dissertation entitled “Role of Geopolitics in Nepal’s Foreign Policy” has been prepared by Gaurab Shumsher Thapa under my supervision. I hereby recommend this dissertation for final examination to the Research Committee of Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of MASTER’S IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY.

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Research Supervisor

APPROVAL SHEET

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Professor Dr. Khadga K.C., Department of International Relations and Diplomacy (DIRD) for his guidance during the process of my writing. His insights, suggestions and support have been valuable in carrying out this work.

I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. K.C. as well as all the permanent and visiting faculty members of DIRD for imparting their knowledge and providing support throughout the course of my Masters study.

ABSTRACT

Geopolitics involves the role of geography influencing politics in international relations. Geography is one of the most important determinants of foreign policy. Geopolitical influence of powerful states in international relations has been an integral part of global politics. The foreign policy maneuvers of small states are often limited which makes it difficult for them to adopt an independent foreign policy. Nepal is situated in a crucial geostrategic location in South Asia between two emerging powers China and India. Such a crucial location of Nepal makes it a strategically important for the vast Indo-Gangetic heartland of India adjoining Nepal as well as for the vast plateau of Tibet in China. Being a small and landlocked state between two giant neighbors, Nepal's foreign policy has often been influenced by geopolitical realities. While India has traditionally considered South Asia as its sphere of influence, the Chinese influence in the region has been increasing gradually. Non-alignment has been one of the fundamental pillars of Nepal's foreign policy which has helped Nepal navigate the difficult geopolitical challenges on its foreign policy at various points of time in history. Hence, aligning with one neighbor or trying to use one neighbor against the other would be detrimental to Nepal's sovereignty. Instead, fostering a relationship based on trust and cooperation would be in the best interests of Nepal. Nepal can remove its landlocked identity and become a land-linked state between the two giant economies to attain economic development which can enable it to adopt a more independent foreign policy. Therefore, Nepal should strive to conduct an independent foreign policy in spite of constraints and challenges to ensure its independence, sovereignty, prosperity as well as significance in the complex geopolitical scenario.

Key words: geopolitics, geostrategic, foreign policy, small state, non-alignment, landlocked, land-linked

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRI	:	Belt and Road Initiative
CPN (UML)	:	Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist)
DoP	:	Department of Publicity
EIC	:	East India Company
EU	:	European Union
MoFA	:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NAM	:	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NC	:	Nepali Congress
NMD	:	National Missile Defense
RLG	:	Royal Lao Government
SAARC	:	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
UNMIN	:	United Nations Mission to Nepal
ZoP	:	Zone of Peace

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Geopolitics involves the role of geography influencing politics in international relations. Cohen (2003) has termed geopolitics as “the analysis of the interaction between geographical conditions and political processes wherein both geographical settings and political processes are dynamic and influenced by each other” (p. 12). Highlighting the correlation between geography and politics, Napoleon Bonaparte had famously declared that “every state pursues the politics of its own geography” (Defay, 2005, p. 13).

Geography is ever-permanent and hence it is one of the major determinants and the most fundamental aspect of foreign policy (Spykman, 1944, p. 7). Geopolitical influence of powerful states in international relations has been an integral part of global politics. As a result, the foreign policy maneuvers of small states are often limited which makes it difficult for them to adopt an independent foreign policy.

Foreign policy is the combination of goals, policies and strategies that a state pursues in the conduct of its international relations with other states, international organizations and other actors (Jackson and Sorensen, 2013, p. 252). The primary objective of foreign policy of any state is to protect and promote its national interests in world politics. Foreign policy of a state is often influenced by domestic politics. A state with stable domestic political situation can possess the ability to demonstrate a strong standing in the international arena.

Nepal is situated in a crucial geostrategic location in South Asia between two emerging powers China and India. Being a small and landlocked state between two giant neighbors, Nepal’s foreign policy has often been influenced by geopolitical

realities. Historically, the primary objective of Nepal has been to survive as an independent state. Founder of modern Nepal King Prithvi Narayan Shah had famously proclaimed in the 18th century that Nepal was a “yam between two boulders” which emphasizes geopolitics to be a determinant of Nepal’s foreign policy (Bhattarai, 2017, p. 3)

Due to an open border as well as historical socio-economic and cultural linkages, Nepal relies heavily on its southern neighbor India for trade and economic activities. A long and rugged Himalaya terrain separates Nepal from its northern neighbor China creating difficulties in cross border connectivity. Nepal has been historically portrayed as a buffer between India and China. As Nepal is a small state sandwiched between its two giant neighbors, it is natural that its foreign policy is influenced by the geopolitical surroundings and considerations. Therefore, geopolitics in the neighborhood makes Nepal’s foreign policy complex and sensitive (Khanal, 1988, p. 1).

Nepal should maintain cordial and balanced relations with both its immediate neighbors to safeguard its national interests. While India has traditionally considered South Asia as its sphere of influence, the Chinese influence in the region has been increasing gradually (Jaiswal, 2016, p. 24). Although economic cooperation between India and China has increased over the years, their bilateral relationship has historically lacked mutual trust which has even resulted in a war. In this scenario, aligning with one neighbor against the other would be detrimental to Nepal’s sovereignty. Instead, fostering a relationship based on trust and cooperation would be in the best interests of Nepal (Simkhada, 2011, pp. 16-17).

Although the constitution has envisaged Nepal to conduct an independent foreign policy, the geopolitical uncertainties to achieve the same in reality have

remained plentiful. The decades-long political instability is now over and Nepal should now move in the path of economic development. Due to its location, Nepal is strategically important to both India and China. Nepal can remove its landlocked identity and become a land-linked state between the two giant economies to attain economic development which can enable it to adopt a more independent foreign policy. Therefore, Nepal should strive to conduct an independent foreign policy in spite of constraints and challenges to ensure its sovereignty, independence, prosperity as well as significance in the complex geopolitical scenario.

From the theoretical perspective, geopolitics has been examined from the angle of its impact on the foreign policy behavior of a state as a result of being situated in a sensitive geopolitical location. The research also relies on the theoretical perspective of the small states and foreign policy behavior of small states that has been contextualized to examine its bearings on Nepal.

1.2. Organization of the Study

This thesis has been divided in seven chapters hereafter. Chapter II deals with the review of literature where in the theoretical aspects of geopolitics and its role in foreign policy, characteristics of small state and their foreign policy behavior. The chapter also delves in the characteristics of Nepal as a small state and its foreign policy behavior as well as the role of geopolitics in the foreign policy behavior of Nepal. Chapter III is related to the research methodology part that explains the methodology adopted for conducting the study and presents a conceptual framework of the research. Chapter IV deals with the foreign policies of small states namely Austria, Switzerland and Laos from the perspectives of geopolitics and their distinct foreign policy strategies so that the analysis could be compared and contrasted with the case of Nepal. Chapter V reflects upon the geopolitics and foreign policy of Nepal

analyzing through the historical foundations of Nepal's foreign policy, its unflinching commitment to the principles of non-alignment and the delicate act of conducting its foreign policy in a sensitive geopolitical neighborhood. Chapter VI highlights the small state foreign policy behavior of Nepal from the standpoints of geopolitical location, various foreign policy strategies adopted by Nepal at different time periods and comparative analysis of Nepal's geopolitical situation and foreign policy behavior with some of the other small states. Finally, Chapter VII contains the discussion and conclusion part which summarizes the major findings of the research.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Nepal's foreign policy has placed a solid foundation in the principle of non-alignment which has helped it navigate difficult geopolitical aspirations and interests of its immediate neighbors. Aligning with a neighboring state or any other power will be detrimental to Nepal considering geopolitical vulnerabilities and its lack of capabilities to absorb the possible repercussions. As India and China are emerging powers of the 21st century, Nepal can enhance its image in international relations by not being identified as a landlocked and weak state but rather as a land-linked state between the two economic giants. Nepal can be termed as a small state due to its location being situated between two big and powerful neighbors. Therefore, maintaining a fine balance in conducting its relations with both its immediate neighbors India and China for promoting and protecting its national interests is a favorable foreign policy option for a small state like Nepal. The geostrategic location of Nepal provides it with not only challenges but opportunities also to achieve economic prosperity. Historically, Nepal's foreign policy has often been constrained due to geopolitical complexities. Therefore, the major question is whether Nepal will

be able to manage geopolitical vulnerabilities in its foreign policy by being firm in its resolve to abide by the principles of non-alignment.

1.4. Research Questions

- A. What is the significance of Nepal's geopolitical location?
- B. How does geopolitics influence Nepal's foreign policy from the small state perspective?
- C. Why does Nepal need to manage geopolitical challenges in its foreign policy?

1.5. Objectives of the Study

- a. To assess the significance of Nepal's geopolitical location
- b. To analyze the influence of geopolitics in Nepal's foreign policy from the small state perspective
- c. To explore the need for Nepal to manage geopolitical challenges in its foreign policy

1.6. Delimitation

The influence of geopolitics in the foreign policy of Nepal has been ever present in Nepal's history. However, as geopolitics itself is a vast subject, this research will be concerned with the role of geopolitics in the foreign policy of Nepal with respect to India and China. Out of several geopolitical concepts, the one proposed by Mackinder only be used to impose it to compare the geographical and geopolitical situation of Nepal with reference to India and China. Geopolitical considerations beyond the neighborhood will not be taken into consideration for this research. This research will put a strong emphasis on the small state foreign policy behavior of Nepal with a special focus on the comparative study of some of the other small states. Out of the innumerable foreign policy options of small states, this

research will examine only some of the strategies used by Nepal in different time periods.

1.7. Significance of the Study

The foreign policies of small states are constrained by several factors of which geopolitical factors are one of the most important. Small states also face significant interference in their internal matters and undue interference from foreign powers, especially their big and powerful neighbors. Moreover, small landlocked states face even more challenges in their foreign policy maneuverability due to their geographical position. The choice of foreign policy strategy for small states could be extremely a challenging task. Geopolitical factors play a very important role in determining the foreign policy behavior of small states.

Traditionally, the primary aim of Nepal's foreign policy has been to ensure its survival as a state and protect its sovereignty and independence due to the sensitive geopolitical neighborhood. Due to the tremendous rise of China and India at the global stage, it will be difficult for Nepal to adopt a proactive foreign policy independent of the influence of its big and powerful neighbors. Such a situation was possible during the Cold War period when Nepal tried to balance India with China which was counterproductive in the long run. Therefore, this study intends to highlight the fact that policy of non-alignment and maintaining balanced relations with India and China would be the best foreign policy option for Nepal to promote and protect its national interests instead of adopting strategies bandwagoning or trying to gain support from one neighbor against or at the cost of the other.

1.8. Definition of Key Terms

Geopolitics

The term *Geopolitik* (geopolitics) was coined in 1899 by Swedish political scientist Rudolph Kjellen who portrays states as biological organisms with a desire to grow with greater strengths (Cahnman, 1943, p. 57). Braden and Shelley (2000) have stated that geopolitics is “the study of international relations and from a geographical perspective” (p. 5). According to famous French diplomat Jules Cambon, “The geographical position of a nation is the principal factor conditioning its foreign policy.” (Sprout & Sprout, 1971, p. 187).

Foreign Policy

Padelford and Lincoln (1961) have defined foreign policy as “the course of action that a state pursues in world affairs within the limits of its strength and the realities of its external environment” (p. 197). Schleicher (1963) has stated that foreign policy involves “the objectives, plans and actions taken by a state relative to its external environment. (p. 129). According to Hartman (1967), foreign policy is “a systematic statement of deliberately selected national interests” (p. 677). Rodee (1967) argues that foreign policy “involves the formulation and implementation of a group of principles which shape the behavior pattern of a state while negotiating with other states to protect or further its vital interests” (p. 501). Geography is one of the key determinants of foreign policy (Muni, 1973, p. 35).

Small States

There is no universal definition of small states as scholars have defined small states in terms of both quantitative and qualitative terms. This research will focus on the qualitative aspects of small state deliberating on the smallness with respect to Nepal’s geopolitical location. According to Vital (1971), a state is ‘small’ only with

respect to a greater power (p. 36). Elman (1995) has argued that both internal and external factors are important for shaping the foreign policy of small states (p. 171). Doeser (2011) has pointed out that change in the domestic politics of small states could lead to changes in their foreign policy behavior (p. 225). East (1973) has claimed that small states are less active in the international system than bigger powers (p. 557). Goetschel (1998) has mentioned that small states are those that are seen as not being a threat to neighboring states (p. 13).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Geopolitics, Foreign Policy and Significance of Geographical Location

The term *Geopolitik* (geopolitics) was coined in 1899 by Swedish political scientist Rudolph Kjellen. Geopolitics tries to correlate the relationship between geography and politics and studies the power relation among states (Hlihor, 2014, p. 69).

Geography is one of the most important and fundamental aspect of foreign policy. The geographical factor in foreign policy cannot be ignored (Spykman, 1944, p. 7). Geopolitical influence of powerful states in international relations has been an integral part of global politics. As a result, the foreign policy maneuvers of small states are often limited which makes it difficult for them to adopt an independent foreign policy.

Joseph Frankel (1968) has stated that foreign policy “consists of decisions and actions which involve to some appreciable extent relations between one state and other” (p. 1). The foreign policy of a state is defined in terms of its national interests (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 570). Protection and promotion of national interests are the primary objectives of the foreign policy of a state. A state with stable domestic political situation can possess the ability to demonstrate a strong standing in the international arena. Foreign policy has profound geographical and geopolitical implications (Dodds, 1993, p. 73).

Neorealism provides a basis for explaining foreign policy on at least three levels. First, it provides a means for understanding specific foreign policy actions. Second, it provides a means for understanding the overarching themes in state foreign policies. Finally, neorealism offers a basis for explaining the general relationships in

international affairs that occur through the aggregation of foreign policy actions taken by several states (Palmer & Morgan, 2006, p. 14-15). Neorealism posits that is that the foreign policy of a state is directed at promoting and strengthening the security of the state in terms of military, economic and human security (Palmer & Morgan, 2006, p. 17).

Geopolitics is imbedded in geography so it would be prudent to define geography first. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines geography as “the study of the countries of the world and of the seas, rivers, towns etc. on the Earth’s surface.” According to the Encyclopedia Britannica geopolitics is the “analysis of the geographic influences on power relationships in international relations”. According to The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations, geopolitics is ‘a method of foreign policy analysis which seeks to understand, explain and predict international political behavior primarily in terms of geographical variables, such as location, size, climate, topography, demography, natural resources and technological development and potential.

Hagan (1942) has defined geopolitics as “contemporary rationalization of power politics” (p. 485). Toal (1996) has stated geopolitics as the “discourse about world politics, with a particular emphasis on state competition and the geographical dimensions of power” (p. 2). Haushofer (1998) has identified geopolitics as a “tool and guidance for political action” (p. 33).

Dodds (2000) has defined geopolitics in terms of distribution of power within the international system in which some states have the capacity to shape geopolitical understanding of the world (p. 36). Geopolitics considers knowledge of social, economic, political, cultural and environmental forces that shape a country’s activity in the globe (Braden and Shelley, 2000, p. 6). On geopolitics, Colin Gray (1988, p.

43) has stated that “the political behavior of a country is the reflection of that country’s history; and that country’s history is in great part (though certainly not entirely) the product of its geographical setting”. Geopolitics involves identification of international core areas consisting of naval and terrestrial powers (Osterud, 1988, p. 191).

It was British geographer and politician Sir Halford Mackinder (1861-1947), who founded geopolitics as a distinct field. He devoted a considerable amount of time in devising a theory aimed at the survival of Britain’s imperial power against possible threats posed by the two main emerging powers of that time: Germany and Russia. Mackinder espoused his famous Heartland theory in 1904 in an article titled ‘The Geographical Pivot of History’. He has analyzed and correlated the historical relationship between geography and politics (Mackinder, 1904, p. 425). He treated history as a struggle between land-based and sea-based powers for control of key global positions would lead to global supremacy. The conclusion of Mackinder’s survey over the world map and history is his well-known formula: Who rules the East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules the World-Island commands the World (Mackinder, 1904, p. 426).

Another famous scholar who contributed to the understanding of geopolitics was Dutch- born American Nicolas Spykman. He warned Americans that the end of the First World War was not the end of power politics and argued that the time of isolation and passivity in foreign affairs was definitely over for the United States. He considered geographical conditions as being decisive for international relations. He famously stated that ‘ministers come and go, even dictators die, but mountain ranges stand unperturbed’ (Spykman, 1942, p. 41).

Spykman correlated geography and foreign policy and argued that size, location, and regional location played a very important role in a state's foreign policy. He famously stated, "Geography does not argue, it simply is" (Spykman, 1938, p. 236). He wrote that 'it is the geographical location of a country and its relations to centers of military power that define its problem of security' (Spykman, 1942, p. 447). He pointed out that topography is critical too as landlocked states, island states and states that possess land and sea borders pursue different strategies in national defense (Spykman, 1938, p. 221).

Spykman, offered a geographical division of the world and identified Makinder's inner crescent as the Rimland and defined it as a key geopolitical arena. He envisioned an Old World (consisting of the Eurasian continent, Africa, and Australia), and the New World, (consisting of the Americas). According to him, the US dominated the Old World and he thus proposed an active, non-isolationist foreign policy for the US to construct and maintain a balance of power in the Old World and prevent a challenge to the US (Flint, 2006, p. 22). He espoused his famous Rimland Theory which states "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia, who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world" (Sharma, 2007, p. 140)

South Asia is a distinct geographical region that lies behind a barrier of deserts and mountains with an opening to the rest of the world via the Indian Ocean (Cohen, 2015, pp. 349-351). Dahal (1997) has highlighted that 'Nepal occupies a pivotal position in the Himalayas – between the Central and South Asian regions, a part of Eurasian landmass', to use Mackinder's terminology (p. 27). Due to geographical proximity, cultural and socio-economic relations, India is the most influential power in Nepal. Considering the strategic location of Nepal, it is clear Nepal is very important for its immediate neighbors India and China (Cohen, 2015, p. 356).

2.2. Small States and Their Foreign Policies

Although there is no universal definition to define small states, their classification is mainly based on population, geographic area and economic capacity and position within the international system (Crowards, 2002, p. 143). Keohane (1969) has claimed that small states are those that are “system ineffectual” by which he means that such states are not able to influence the international system (p. 291). Rothstein (1968) has portrayed small states as weak within the international system requiring outside help for their security (p. 15). Small states lack defensive capabilities and are more concerned about their security due to external environment rather than domestic political situation (Vital, 1971, p. 38).

As small states are primarily concerned about their security, small states prefer international organizations and multilateral forums in order to pursue their foreign policy goals more effectively (Rothsetin, 1968, p. 18). Keohane (1969) has further argued that small states are those whose leaders consider that such states cannot make a significant influence on the international system either acting alone or in a group (p. 296).

The foreign policy behavior of small states is shaped by various factors. Vital (1967) has suggested that some of the factors that influence the foreign policy behavior of a small state are economic condition, geographical location, domestic political stability and its value to great powers (p. 39). Singer (1972) has noted that although small states possess lack the ability to use coercive force, they might possess ‘attractive power’ which could increase their importance to other states to use it in their favor for foreign policy success (p. 22).

Chong (2010) has believed use of soft power is the best foreign policy option of small states to enhance their importance in the international arena (p.383).

Academics who have researched on small states and their foreign policy behavior have generalized some of their characteristics that include exhibiting a low level of participation in global affairs, addressing a narrow scope of foreign policy issues, limiting their behavior to immediate neighborhood, emphasizing on multilateral diplomacy and international law (Pace, 2000, p. 112).

Scholars have noted that there are both opportunities as well as challenges for small states to pursue an active foreign policy. Vital (1971) has cautioned that mistakes by leaders of a small state could prove to be beyond repair (p. 45). There are two important factors that determine foreign policy initiative of small states. The first is the stability of the domestic politics as a state with an instable political environment is least likely to pursue an active foreign policy. The second condition is the susceptibility of a state's external environment as their lack of internal abilities will not allow them to pursue an active foreign policy (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982, p. 2)

Pace (2000) has claimed that there is no universal definition of small states (p. 113). Some of the factors that have been used to define small states include geographical size, population and degree of influence in the international system (Vital, 1967). Although size has been a very important factor in the definition of small states, lack of influence in the international environment or lack of immunity against such an influence have also been crucial factors in defining the degree of smallness of states (Clarke and Payne, 1987). Smallness can also be a matter of perception if the people and institutions of a certain state feel or another state perceive it to be small (Hey, 2003).

The World Bank and Commonwealth have defined small states as the ones with a population of 1.5 million (Charles, 1997). Kuznets (1960) has stated that a small state is the one with a population of 10 million or less (p. 14). These definitions

might look like a very narrow definition of small states. Crowards (2002) has defined small states as the ones that have a population of 2.7 million or less, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) less than USD 25 billion and a total land area of 40,000 square kilometers (p. 144).

Bjol (1971) has argued that a state is only small in relation to a bigger one and hence the concept of smallness is relative (p. 18) This can be a good definition with respect to Nepal as it is small compared to its immediate neighbors India and China but not small at all if compared to other small South Asian states like Bhutan and Maldives. Steinmetz and Wivel (2010) have portrayed small states as those that are the weak part in an asymmetric relationship (p. 4). This view might reflect the case of the relationship between a small state and a big and powerful neighboring state.

Zahariadis (1994) has advocated that small states are more influenced by external factors than powerful states (p. 649). Rosenau (1990) has cited that small state foreign policy behavior should be analyzed from three levels of analysis: system, state and individual levels. He also further elucidated that small state foreign policy behavior is largely influenced by the international system and individual leaders than in the countries that were more developed where institutions and bureaucracy mattered more (pp. 174-175). The realist perspective views small state foreign policy as being conditioned by comparative limitations in size and resources (Jervis 1978, p. 180).

Small states are characterized by low levels of participation in global affairs, narrow geographic range of concern in foreign policy, normative position on international issues and avoidance of antagonizing the powerful states in the system (East, 1973, p. 558). There are various foreign policy strategies that a small power may adopt. It might be the policy of aligning with the imminent threat termed as

bandwagoning or joining an alliance to negate the powerful actor known as balancing (Lake, 2009, p. 68). Small states may also adopt the policy of strategic hedging in which they do not want to take any sides due to fear of higher security risks and thus adopt mutually beneficial policies from potential threats (Lee, 2017, p. 23).

Researchers have highlighted that small landlocked states may be even more vulnerable in the international arena. Landlocked small states who are economically dependent on another state find it difficult to pursue an independent foreign policy (Partem, 1983, p. 5). Gallup, Sachs, and Mellinger (1999) have noted that small landlocked states are not only face constraints due to their geographical position but are also impacted by the policies of their neighboring states (p. 18). From the perspective of neorealism, small states can be viewed as adopting the foreign policy strategy of balancing or bandwagoning. Balancing refers to allying with another state against a prevailing threat (state) whereas bandwagoning refers to aligning with the same state from which it is feeling the threat (Walt, 1987, p. 17).

2.3. Nepal as a Small State: Foreign Policy Imperatives

Nepal is a state in South Asia that borders India in the East, West and South and China in the North. The country lies south of the Himalayas and takes the shape of an elongated rectangle with an area of 147181 square kilometers with an average length of about 800 kilometers and breadth of 160 kilometers (Gurung, 1971, p. 1). The latest national census of 2011 put Nepal's population at 26.4 million (Ministry of Population and Environment, 2017, p. 10). The Gross Domestic Product of Nepal in 2018 was 29 billion US dollars (The World Bank, 2020). Considering Nepal's population, it cannot be termed as a small state but fits into the category due to economic factors and relative position in the region.

India has historically considered the Nepal-China Himalayan border at Tibet as a vital defensive frontier. India has remained cautious and alert about the Himalayan frontier being breached which can threaten the security of the Indo-Gangetic plains in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar that constitutes the most significant part of India's landmass, population, agriculture and resources (Bandhyopadhyaya, p. 36, 2003). Delivering a speech in the Indian parliament in 1950, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru stated that the Himalayas had acted as a natural frontier for India's security since time immemorial and India could not afford it to get penetrated (Muni, 2015, p. 399). China considers Nepal strategically important for the security of Tibet and perceives it as part of its concentric inner Asian defensive system. India too views that Nepal's Terai falls within its inner security perimeter. Both India and China consider the Himalayas as their natural outer security perimeter between themselves (Limbu-Angbuhang, 2011, p. 58).

The Constitution of Nepal has envisaged that the policies regarding Nepal's international relations shall be "to conduct an independent foreign policy based on the Charter of the United Nations, non-alignment, principles of *Panchsheel*, international law and norms of world peace for safeguarding the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and national interests" (Nepal Law Commission, 2015). Khanal (1988) has stated that "Nepal's foreign policy is a difficult, serious and sensitive subject owing to its nature of geopolitics and underdevelopment" (p. 1). He further elaborates, "Our foreign policy will breakdown at the point where either India or China loses faith in us and concludes that their vital national interests and sensitivities do not receive proper recognition in our conduct of relations" (Simkhada, 2011, p. 14).

Nepal's geostrategic location and its geopolitical significance can be analyzed by seeking correlation from the perspectives of geopolitical theories. Nepal is situated between Tibet (China) and Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (India). China strongly resists any attempt by Tibet to seek independence for which it does not want Tibetans to defect to Nepal and carry anti-China activities. Similarly, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are highly populous and resource rich heartland of India which share socio-cultural and economic linkages with Nepal (Dahal, 2001, p. 27). India and Nepal share an open and contiguous border. India considers Nepal to be a part of its northern security system and is not comfortable of any other country's influence in Nepal feeling it will undermine its own security concerns (Nayak, 2014, p. 3). The anti-China activities by Tibetan refugees in Nepal before the 2008 Beijing Olympics forced China to redraft its Nepal policy and necessitated it to take a more proactive role to secure its interests considering the geopolitical factors (Nayak, 2014, p. 3).

Nepal occupies a key position between India and China as it forms a northern gateway to the Indo-Gangetic plains. India is greatly concerned about its security as China's increasing influence in Nepal would put the agricultural and industrial Indian heartland of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh at risk. Military mobility is easier from north to south than vice-versa which gives an added advantage to Chinese forces based in Tibet (Singh, 2010, p. 1285-1287). Apart from geopolitical considerations, Nepal is crucial from the security perspective of India due to an open border between the two countries which can be vulnerable to terrorists, criminals, arms and fake currency smugglers, human traffickers, drug racketeers among others (Singh, 2016, p. 67).

Nepal and China are geographically separated by a 1,415-km Himalayan border. Despite ethnical-cultural similarities of people of Upper Himalayan region in Nepal and Tibet, the interaction is limited due to the geographical difficulties. Nepal

has become strategically more significant to China after its occupation of Tibet in 1950 and establishment of diplomatic relations in 1955. Nepal-China relations are based on the principles of *Panchsheel* which essentially implies that China will not interfere in Nepal's domestic politics and Nepal will respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity with respect to Tibet and Taiwan adhering to the 'One-China' policy (Adhikari, 2012, p. 90). India perceives China is trying to counter its influence in South Asian by penetrating through Nepal and other countries in India's neighborhood. China has managed to project itself in Nepal as a disinterested neighbor and a remarkably attractive alternative to India (Kumar, 2011, p. 5).

A harmonious balance is never easy between a big power and smaller power in geopolitics. Nepal could emerge as the premier transit nation between South and Central Asia and a major growth centre of the southern Himalayan region (Rana, 2013, p. 60). India perceives that China is using smaller states in the South Asia region not only to balance it but diplomatically and militarily isolate it (Townshend, 2011). Although bilateral trade between India and China has skyrocketed over the years, their relationship lacks trust and India remains highly suspicious of Chinese intentions with regards to China's strategy of courting India's South Asian neighbors (Sitaraman, 2014, p. 95).

For a geographically sandwiched state like Nepal, foreign policy maneuverability in international politics is limited by number of factors like location, economic development, size, landlocked position and asymmetric economic dependence among others (Sangroula, p. 4). Nepal's scope for independent foreign policy has decreased in recent years due to domestic political situation and shrinking the foreign policy domain mainly to relations with India and China (Baral, 2018, p. 10). However, one of the fundamental facts which Nepal should acknowledge and

abide by has been succinctly put by Shaha (1955) when he stated that "the security, independence and integrity of Nepal hinge on the performance of cordiality between India and China" (p. 38).

Existing literatures have delved into the geopolitical influence of immediate neighbors in Nepal's foreign policy. However, this research has tried to identify certain gaps in the existing literature regarding the role of geopolitics in Nepal's foreign policy by analyzing in a combined manner from the angles of Nepal's geographical position, geopolitical complexities vis-à-vis India and China, Nepal's historical small state foreign policy behavior, and comparative analysis of Nepal's foreign policy behavior with some of the other small states.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology has been adopted for this research which is descriptive and analytical in nature. The research has focused on conducting content analysis and the secondary data has been collected through sources of literature such as books, journal articles, government publications, international reports, web sources and newspaper articles. Geopolitics will be the independent variable of this research while Nepal's foreign policy will be the dependent variable. The research is subjective in nature as it has relied on reaching conclusions through interpretations of events that have taken place in history regarding the research topic. The research has taken a deductive approach as it has analyzed the concerned topics from a broad historical perspective to narrow down to appropriate conclusions.

3.1. Theoretical Framework for the Research

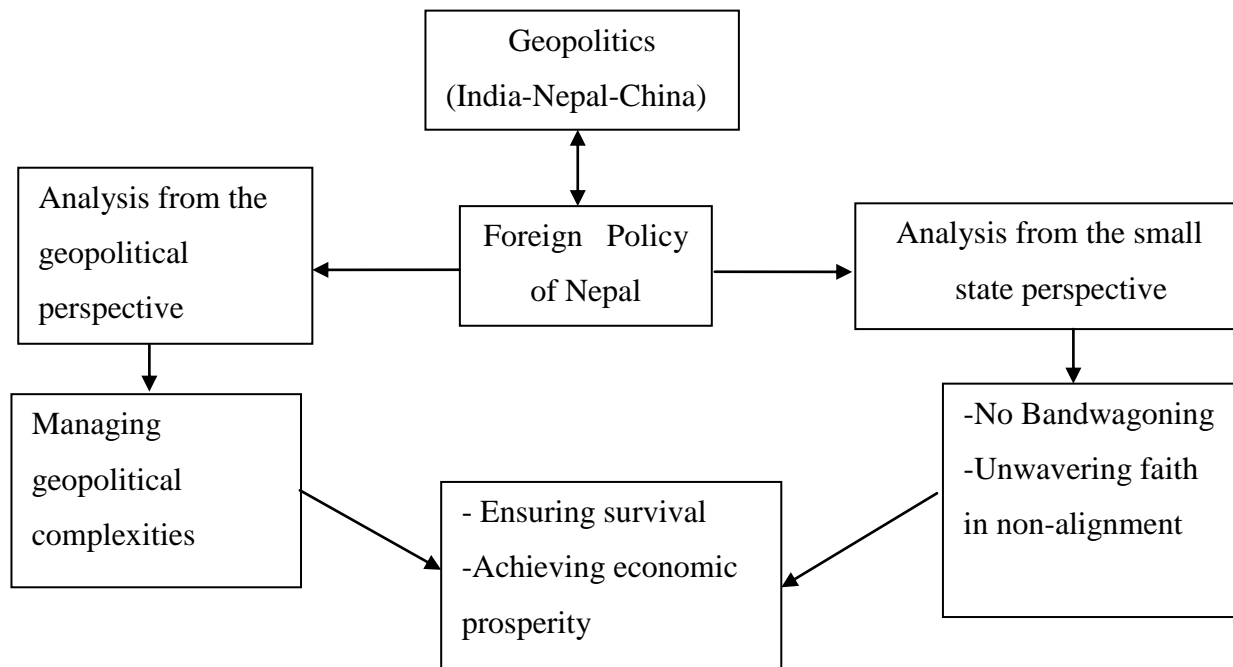


Fig (i): Theoretical Framework

Considering Nepal's geopolitical location, the concepts and theories related to geopolitics and its role in foreign policy shall be examined. The location of Nepal in

South Asia between two powerful neighbors India and China presents both challenges and opportunities to Nepal's foreign policy maneuverings. Therefore, the research will first analyze the significance of Nepal's geostrategic location with respect to both India and China from the perspectives of geopolitical theories. As Nepal faces vulnerabilities as a small state, the perspectives of Nepal as a small state and the analysis of the same through historical context to the present context shall be analyzed with respect to the influence of geopolitical factors in the foreign policy of Nepal. Similarly, the comparative analysis of Nepal as a small state and its foreign policy behavior will be carried out with some of the other small states. Both India and China are aware of Nepal's strategic importance for them. Therefore, if Nepal can manage its neighborhood geopolitics and attain economic prosperity, it will enable Nepal to conduct its foreign policy in a more independent and effective manner. The research has relied on the premise that geopolitical vulnerabilities will always be there for Nepal and even in such conditions, it will have to ascertain its strategies according to the situation if it intends to become a land-linked state from a landlocked one to promote and protect its national interests.

3.2. Data Collection and Processing

The data for this research has been collected through secondary sources such as books, journal articles, government publications, international reports, web sources and newspapers by adopting a qualitative approach focusing on content analysis. The collected data has been analyzed through the historical perspective to the current context so as to understand and infer conclusions regarding the underpinnings of geopolitical factors on Nepal's foreign policy and its foreign policy behavior as well as the courses it should adopt apart from the current approaches.

CHAPTER IV

GEOPOLITICS AND FOREIGN POLICY: CASE STUDY OF AUSTRIA, LAOS AND SWITZERLAND

4.1. Austria's Small State Foreign Policy of Neutrality

Geopolitics has played an important role in determining the foreign policy of states. Austrian foreign policy has been characterized by its neutral policy and small state strategy. Austria was an independent country until it was annexed by German Chancellor Adolf Hitler in March, 1938. A joint declaration by the US, UK and Soviet Union in November 1943 decided to free Austria from the German domination. Austria regained its independence in 1945 when Soviet troops defeated the Germans (Hey, 1995). The major geopolitical challenge for Austria was the question of whether it had achieved full independence even after the end of the German occupation as it was now divided into different zones and ruled by four of the victorious Allied Powers US, UK, USSR and France (Luif, 2003, p. 95).

Historically, neutrality has often been viewed as the policy of small states to preserve their sovereignty as well as avoid getting into alliances with great powers (Rickli, 2010, p. 182). As the Cold War ensued to its heights from 1950 to 1952, the Austrian government began pursuing the Western powers to push USSR out of Eastern Austria. After lengthy negotiations, the USSR finally agreed to withdraw its troops from Austria in April 1955 on a precondition that Austria adopt "neutrality" as its foreign policy principle and not join any military alliance, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Luif, 2003, p. 96). The neutrality would be like the one maintained by Switzerland and not the type of non-alignment maintained at that time by countries like Yugoslavia and India (Verdross, 1978, p. 26).

Once all the troops of the four Allied powers left Austria in October 1955, the Austrian parliament passed a constitutional law adopting its perpetual neutrality as well as its decision not to take part in any sort of military alliance in the future. Austria's neutrality is different from the one that is practiced by Switzerland because the Swiss neutrality is limited not only to military restrictions but also subjected to shunning any political and economic unions (Luif, 2003, p. 97). However, Austrian Chancellor Julius Raab had no intention of interpreting Austria's neutrality in such a broad sense. He introduced a bill in the parliament terming Austria's neutrality as "military neutrality" that would not have any obligations in the economic and cultural fields. Unlike Switzerland, Austria then joined the UN in December 1955 and the Council of Europe in April 1956 (Gebhard, 2013).

Austria's plan to join the European Economic Community (EEC) was foiled due to Soviet military intervention near the Austrian border to crush the Hungarian uprising. Many experts of international law were of the opinion that a neutral country could not be a member of the EEC. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968, Austria's cause for neutrality grew more pronounced. This led to Austrian foreign minister Kurt Waldheim to define Austria's neutrality in such a way that it was not limited to military neutrality but also conducting a foreign policy even during peace time that would keep Austria away from getting involved in any political or armed struggles. At the same time, he also emphasized on the need for a neutral country to actively participate in international cooperation (Luif, 2003, p. 99).

This was an early sign of significant changes that were about to take place in Austria's foreign policy. The government of Chancellor Bruno Kreisky reoriented Austria's foreign policy between 1970 and 1983 by focusing less on Western Europe and creating a more globalist outlook which he called "active neutrality" (Luif, 2003,

99). As a result, Austria made significant contribution for the realization of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) along with other neutral and non-aligned countries. Kurt Waldheim got elected and took office as the Secretary General of UN in January 1971. Austrian representatives served as chairmen of important UN commissions. The voting pattern in UN General Assembly showed that Austria had developed an independent position of its own without being influenced (Kramer, 1996, p. 164).

After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the US started pressurizing Western countries, including the neutral Austria, to control high technology exports which could be beneficial for the communist bloc. The Austrian government led by Kreisky rejected such demands initially citing that it was politically motivated. However, due to US threats, Austria had to sign a mutual customs agreement with the US in 1986 and make changes to its foreign trade act accordingly. Other neutral countries like Sweden also faced the same pressure with regards to the rules made by the West against trade related to high technology with the East (Luif, 2003, p. 101). Therefore, renewed tensions between the West and East led to reduced foreign policy maneuverings of neutral countries and a more cautious approach was adopted by them instead of an active approach.

The general elections in 1986 changed the political landscape of Austria as the government of right-wing liberals was replaced by the socialists. It declared that expanding relations with the European Commission (EC) was the central objective of its foreign policy and Austria applied to join the EC in July 1989 with a neutrality clause. Austria, along with Finland and Sweden, joined the European Union (EU) in January 1995 without any exception to its neutrality. In fact, they had to sign a joint declaration promising to actively participate in the Common Foreign and Security

Policy (CFSP) of EU as well as modify their domestic legal provisions accordingly in conformation with the CFSP (Luif, 2003, p. 103).

The Kosovo crisis of 1999 highlighted the difficulties in Austria's neutrality policy as NATO forces started bombing Serbian forces in Kosovo and Serbia without mandate from the UN Security Council. Austria did not allow NATO military aircrafts to fly over its territory while taking such actions forcing the NATO airplanes to take significant detours around Austria whereas it supported the EU statement justifying the military action against Serbian forces (Luif, 2003, pp. 104-5). While the government and some of the political parties were in favor of retaining neutrality, the far rights were in favor of discarding neutrality. However, removing neutrality from the constitutional law was not possible as it required two-thirds majority in parliament to do so. In an opinion poll conducted in an uncertain security environment in the aftermath of the Kosovo crisis, more than 80% of Austrians supported neutrality (Meyer, 2007).

The Socialists lost the election in October 1999 which gave rise to the Neo-Nazi far right Freedom Party led by their leader Jorg Haider. The EU was quick in condemning Haider and declared that it will not deal politically with the Austrian government as well as not support Austrian candidates in international organizations. It imposed political and diplomatic sanctions on Austria in February 2000 (Freeman, 2002). Fearing backlash against the Jews, Israel recalled its ambassador from Vienna. There was a significant reduction in Austria's tourism industry, particularly due to the decline of Belgian and French tourists. However, all these measures against the Austrian government were ineffective and caused resentment among the public against the EU move (Luif, 2003, p. 107).

After a lot of struggle between the EU and Austria, a three-member panel was finally formed to assess Austria's human rights records and a decision on lifting the sanctions would be based on its report. The panel recommended for lifting of the sanctions claiming that continuation of the same would be counterproductive (Ahtisaari, Frowein and Oreja, 2000). The EU declared an unconditional end to the sanctions on September 12, 2000. Chancellor Wolfgang Schussel declared that Austria and EU needed to work in close cooperation and Austria would adopt a neutral foreign policy in a sense that it would not take part in wars, join any military alliance or allow any military bases to be stationed in its territory (Reinprecht and Latcheva, 2003).

Austria is still a *de jure* neutral state under its constitutional law, but in practice it has already deviated from its neutral position. Although it is not a member of NATO, it is already a part of EU as well as NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP), which it joined in 1995 (Gebhard, 2013, p. 288). Geostrategic circumstances after the end of the Cold War and globalization have exposed neutral countries like Austria to new challenges and made their foreign policy maneuverings difficult and limited. Adopting an active foreign policy during the Cold War was more of a strategic decision than a normative one (Gebhard, 2013, p. 293). As a small power in the shadow of bloc confrontation during the Cold War, there was hardly any scope for an autonomous foreign policy profile for Austria. Austrian leaders, however, successfully established an image of Austria as an ideal partner and mediator in conflict situations (Gebhard, 2013, p. 293).

4.2. Geopolitical Impacts on the Foreign Policy of Laos

Laos has an area of 236,800 km² and is situated in the heart of the Southeast Asia. It borders five other larger countries and has no access to the sea. In terms of its

size, Laos may not be a small state but due to its positioning among other larger states, it could comparatively be perceived as a small state in terms of area. Laos shares a 1,754-km Mekong River border to the west with Thailand. To the east, Laos's border with Vietnam extends for 2,130 km. Laos also shares a mountainous 423-km border with China to the north, a 235-km-long Mekong River border Myanmar to the northwest, and shares a 541 km border with Cambodia to the south. Therefore, considering the geographical size and location of Laos, it can be perceived as a small and land-locked state surrounded by more powerful neighbors (Kittikhoun, 2009, p. 38). With reference to its size and location, it has often been portrayed as a victim of regional power dynamics and its foreign policy has always been influenced by external environment (Gunn, 1988, p. 3).

It is to be noted that the Lao communist revolutionary movement could not have been successful without capitalizing on the state's geographical location and period in the global context. The historical political context of Laos can be viewed through various levels of analysis, namely, national (hostility between Laos and Thailand), regional (rivalry between Thailand and Vietnam over Laos), and international (Cold War geopolitical competition between the US and USSR/China) (Kittikhoun, 2009, p. 39).

The relationship between Laos and Thailand is complicated and has got historical roots (Stuart-Fox, 1997, p. 25). The Lao and Thai people originated from the same Tai race in Southern China and moved into Southeast Asia in the eighth century to escape from Chinese expansion (Kittikhoun, 2009, p. 40). Lao-Thai relations were cordial and warm up to the end of the eighteenth century till Siamese King Taksin invaded the Lao kingdoms in 1779 and made them vassal states (Ngaosyathn, 1985). He also took away the sacred Emerald Buddha from Vientiane

where it had been for 300 years and which was considered by the Lao people as “the supreme symbol of politico-religious legitimacy”. This physical, religious, and psychological act would serve as the catalyst for Lao political mobilization against Siam/Thailand in the future (Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn, 1998, pp. 55–56).

Apart from enmity between Laos and Thailand, there was historical rivalry between Thailand and Vietnam also. After Vientiane was annexed by King Taksin of Siam in 1779, smaller Lao principalities that owed allegiances to Vientiane transferred the same to Bangkok (Wolters, 1982, pp. 16–17). This led to cessation of Laos’s status as a buffer state between Siam and Vietnam. As a defensive measure, Vietnam then put the remaining Lao territories under its direct control which led to a long war between Siam and Vietnam in the 1830’s-1840’s (Kirk 1971, pp. 3–15).

In 1827 the ruler of Vientiane, Lao King Anou, staged an unsuccessful revolt against Siamese dominance and rule but was brutally suppressed. This created a great rift between the Lao and Thai people and cemented King Anou’s image as national hero among the Laotians (Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn, 1998, p. 60). The year 1893 marked significant geopolitical consequences in South Asia in the form of French colonialism which carved out the present day boundaries of the region. Although Siam was able to safeguard its sovereignty, it was compelled to give all Lao territories on the east bank of the Mekong River to France (Winichakul, 1994, pp. 141-146).

French colonialism divided half of Laos into Siam and the other half into French Indochina (Christie, 2001, p. 113). The Laotians realized that if the French had not intervened, the Lao nation/state could have been extinct at the hands of its more powerful neighbors (Stuart-Fox, 1986, p. 435). Since the French gave away large chunks of Lao territories to Siam, it further ingrained the feeling of animosity in the minds of Laotians against the Siam (Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn, 1998, p. 30).

Laos under the French rule did not see any significant development apart from a bit of their investment in tin mines (Stuart-Fox, 1997, p. 76).

Geopolitical factors played a major role in the gradual rise of the Laotians against the French rule. At the onset of the Second World War, Japan invaded Indochina and encouraged Laos to declare its independence from France. Envisaging that France would be weakened due to wartime commitments, Thailand started nurturing its ambition of annexing Laos. As a counter measure, France started stirring Lao nationalism among the people against Thailand and even offered to concede the political authority in northern Laos (Kittikhoun, 2009, p. 44). Considering geopolitical calculations in the region, French became more conciliatory towards Lao demands for greater autonomy. A convention was held in Paris in July 1949 that created the semi-autonomous Associated State of Laos within the French Union. However, the nationalists rejected outcome of the 1949 Paris Convention and allied with the communist Viet Minh, joining other Vietnamese backed communists. As a result, a Lao communist revolutionary movement called the Pathet Lao came into being in the early 1950s (Kittikhoun, 2009, p. 45).

When Japan was defeated in August 1945 in the aftermath of WW II, France's attempt to reestablish colonial authority in Laos came in direct contact with the nationalism in which they previously cultivated. As France was defeated in the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, Laos got its independence under the Geneva Convention (Kittikhoun, 2009, p. 47). The geopolitical setting of Laos combined with an animosity towards its hegemonic neighbor Thailand was pivotal in the success of the communists who took power through a revolution in 1976 by taking advantage of these historical anecdotes in reviving the Lao nationalism (Kittikhoun, 2009, p. 41).

Laos had to undergo great geopolitical rivalry between the US and USSR/China during the Cold War. The fundamental interest of the US in Southeast Asia was to arrest the expansion of communism spread by USSR, China and Vietnam. The US was particularly interested in Laos due to its crucial geopolitical location of sharing its border between the communist China and Vietnam. The US logic was that if Laos became a communist state, it would open the floodgates of communism to the rest of Southeast Asia. The US set up the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) with an aim to contain communism in 1954 with Thailand as its main ally (Sirikrai, 1979, p. 8). Due to the Sino-Soviet divide, support for communists in Indochina was fragmented as Vietnam had to balance relations with the competing interest of the USSR and China so that it could get aid from the both. The Lao communists, who were close to the Vietnamese communists, benefited from this foreign policy behavior of the Vietnamese as they too received such aids (Kirk, 1971, pp. 263–265).

The US provided huge economic aid to the Royal Lao Government (RLG) and its military to counter Vietnamese, Chinese, and Soviet support to the Lao communists (Stuart-Fox, 1997, p. 91). Cohen (1963) argues that if relatively weak states have exercise considerable influence on the world political scene, it is not because of their power but due to their particular location in the world (p. 27). In the case of Laos, external influence “entered the scene with such insistence that Lao leaders had less and less control of their own destinies” (Brown and Zasloff, 1986, p. 55). A series of neutralist and rightist governments came to power in Laos and fell at the behest of US influence between the late fifties and sixties due to which the communists began their armed struggle against the state (Evans, 2002, p. 111).

As the US got entangled in the Vietnam War, the US-favored RLG received less aid from them. Once the US forces were defeated in Vietnam in April 1975, the Pathet Lao communists seized control and created a one-party socialist state aligning itself closely with the communist Vietnam. During the Cold War, Laos acted as the client state of USSR and had little contacts outside its bloc. Its foreign policy moved beyond neighborhood when forayed into regional by finally joining the Association of South East Asian Nations in 1997 (Abuza, 2003, p. 171). Although its economy is now growing at a rate of 7-8% per annum, Laos still remains a Least Developed Country (Anan, 2017, p.1).

After the end of Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union, Laos was divided over whether to continue its old affiliation with Vietnam or build closer relations with China to accelerate economic growth in order to balance Thailand, with whom it has had a historically strained relationship. Although Laos and Thailand have longstanding border disputes, they signed an agreement to make the Mekong River a zone of peace and cooperation. While relations with Thailand have improved over time, Laos still views Thailand as a military threat (Abuza, 2003, p. 161).

As part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Laos and China are constructing a railway link connecting it to Kunming in China's southwestern province of Yunnan with northeastern Thailand in its aspiration to become a land-linked country from a landlocked one. Formally announced in 2015, the railway is part of BRI, and is widely seen as a major step in the Laotian government's long-held desire to turn the country from being land-locked to land-linked (Financial Times, 2013). The railway will be a of great geostrategic and economic benefit for China as well since it will reduce the shipping routes to reach Southeast Asian market and provide access to the Indian Ocean. However, the key success of the project will only be realized if there

can be sufficient movement of goods and people between China, Thailand and rest of the region for Laos to get benefit from the huge project cost of US\$ 6 billion (Freeman, 2019).

The geopolitical significance of Laos is such that it has to delicately balance relations with its bigger and powerful neighbors Thailand, Vietnam and China. While it is ethnically and culturally close to Thailand, it is ideologically close to Vietnam. In recent times, its participation in the China-led BRI has led it to be economically and strategically more close to China (Albert, 2019). As a small state constrained by geopolitical considerations, Laos has exhibited limited foreign policy maneuverings. Considering the rich resource and geo-strategic importance of Laos, it could be very well be perceived that China, Vietnam, Thailand will continue to stamp their influence over “the land of ten thousand elephants” (Abuza, 2003, p. 183).

4.3. Switzerland’s Neutrality: A Value in Itself

Switzerland has viewed itself to be a small state in a historical geopolitical setting wherein it is situated in a location between geographically and demographically much larger immediate neighbors (Goetschel, 2004, p. 573). Historically, its understanding of neutrality was based on the notion of not involving itself in the military affairs of other countries (Frei, 1969). At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the great powers recognized Switzerland as a neutral state that guaranteed its “permanent neutrality” (Argirakos, 2005, p. 133). The geographical location of Switzerland with strategic passes over the Alps, the geopolitical requirement to maintain its balance between bigger and powerful neighbors and the balance of power system of the eighteenth century was crucial in its quest for adopting neutrality as the guiding principle of its foreign policy (Bonjour, 1978, pp. 7–14). Additionally, neutrality has also become a symbol of common identity for an ethnically and

linguistically diverse Swiss population underlying its role in Swiss foreign policy (Freymond, 1990, p. 177).

It has widely been assumed that neutral states would not enter into military alliances or undertake actions and policies that might involve them in conflict with other states (Subedi, 1993). Neutrality was enshrined in the Swiss constitution in 1848 (Freymond, 1990, p. 181). After the end of the Second World War, Swiss neutrality was seen as a successful means of promoting world peace and human rights as well as defending its independence (Carrel, 1990, p. 81). Along with federalism and direct democracy, which Switzerland has practiced since centuries, neutrality has become a central element of Swiss identity. Direct democracy entails the involvement of Swiss public in foreign policy decision making. The federal constitution also requires the executive and legislative branches to cooperate and coordinate with regards to the foreign policy domain (Wildhaber, 1992, p. 132).

The end of the First World War in 1918 brought about many shifts in the international order. US President Woodrow Wilson envisaged creating the League of Nations for collective security (Walters, 1952, p. 20). Switzerland was undecided on joining the League of Nations due to the conflicting nature of the concepts of neutrality and collective security till it finally did so in 1920 after its perpetual neutrality was recognized in the Paris Peace Treaty. It was implied that Switzerland would remain militarily neutral but would support economic sanctions as decided by the League (Swiss Federal Council, 1919, pp. 27-40).

Switzerland's entry into the League was necessitated by geopolitical considerations also. Rising nationalism in the backdrop of tensions between the German and French-speaking Swiss had amplified during the First World War. The aftermath of the war meant that the European balance of power system had changed

with Britain and France in a strong position, the US making its presence felt in Europe and the belligerent power Germany defeated. Therefore, there was a debate in Switzerland about the relevance of neutrality in the absence of balance of power system (Vogeli, 1949, p. 39). The inability of the US to join the League severely dented the chances of the League fulfilling its stated objectives and turned it into a loosely knit organization (Rappard, 1927).

When Italy invaded Abyssinia in Africa in October 1935, the League decided to impose economic sanctions against it (Ross, 1989, p. 49). Switzerland faced great foreign policy challenges due to its dual obligation to neutrality and international solidarity in the form of the League's decision. The League ultimately lifted the sanctions within a year, but this episode led Switzerland to believe that traditional neutrality was its best foreign policy option (Morgenthau, 1939). Germany's annexation of Austria in 1938 necessitated Switzerland to revert to traditional neutrality in its strictest terms to preserve its independence and territorial integrity and its involvement in the League thus got irrelevant thereafter (Morgenthau, 1938, p. 562).

After the end of the Second World War and the formation of UN, Switzerland showed no interest in becoming its member. However, it found its own ways to remain engaged with the UN. As the League's got dissolved in 1946, Switzerland handed over its Geneva offices to UN and ensured that no UN military action would be directed from its land (Gunter, 1976, p. 132). With the beginning of the Korean War in 1950, Swiss involvement in the peacekeeping process began which was interpreted as its "active neutrality" foreign policy. It was described as participation in the service of peace with a moral obligation (Gunter, 1976, p. 144).

Another neutral country Austria joined the UN in 1955, but Switzerland stood firm on its position until debates on joining the UN surfaced in 1965. Some of the major reasons for this change in perception were that the Swiss felt cooperation with the UN had not hampered their neutrality thus far and that other neutral countries had also joined the global organization at various points of time. A referendum was held in 1986 for joining the UN but the Swiss people overwhelmingly rejected it (Karsh, 1988). The end of the Cold War allowed small states to be less entangled in superpower conflicts and thus more keen to join international organizations (Wivel, 2005). Neutrality was thought to be viable in the post-Cold War era only when states had a favorable geostrategic location and a willingness to keep out of wars. Since Switzerland fulfilled these conditions, it has been able to continue its policy of neutrality even in the post-Cold War period (Daniker, 1992, p. 7).

Switzerland refined its concept of neutrality in the post-Cold War era from a passive nature to a more active and cooperative one by continuing to stay out of wars yet promoting a civilian approach to peace making (Rickli, 2010, p. 194). New challenges to Switzerland's policy of neutrality started emerging, especially during the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and NATO bombings of Kosovo in 1999. Switzerland remained neutral but supported the sanctions against Iraq and Serbia in these respective cases (Judah, 2000, pp. 143-144). However, challenges and deviations in its foreign policy of neutrality was observed when it continued its sanctions against Serbia as the NATO bombings began while at the same time it also continued to supply military equipments to NATO states (Gemperli, 2010, p. 15).

The biggest challenge faced by Switzerland with regards to the crisis in former Yugoslavia was in the form of a steep rise in migration of citizens of former Yugoslavia into Switzerland making them the largest foreign group in the country.

The influx of such immigrants into Switzerland led to increase in organized crime (Gross, 2006). The 2001 September 11 attacks at New York Twin Towers changed the whole approach in dealing with terrorism. In many instances, Islamic immigrants were generalized as terrorists (Leiken and Brooke, 2006). Being home to so many immigrants, Switzerland had to be cognizant of the potentials threats of terrorism. The Swiss police caught Islamic migrants, who were plotting to blow up the Spanish Supreme Court and an Israeli plane flying from Geneva, in 2004 and 2006 (Whitlock, 2006).

The Swiss gradually felt that the policy of neutrality was not protecting them from being a target of terrorists. Emergence of non-traditional security challenges such as migration, organized crime and terrorism led to Switzerland's growing engagement with international organizations (Hagmann, 2007). After a national referendum, Switzerland finally joined the UN in 2002 while still preserving its neutral status. Any thoughts that Switzerland had practically done away with its policy of neutrality was vanquished when it declared itself to be neutral after the US forces invaded Iraq in 2003 without any UN resolution (Goetschel, 2004, p. 574).

Switzerland is a small state with a diverse population that includes people of French, German, and Italian origins. Therefore, neutrality has not only been important in protecting the country but has also acted as a factor for uniting the people of a nation that lacks common history among its diverse linguistic groups. This is one of the major reasons Switzerland has not joined the EU because the Swiss fear that they will lose their identity as a neutral state along with other tenets of their foreign policy including federalism and direct democracy (Morris and White, 2011, p. 107). Due to these reasons, Switzerland has refrained from being a member of the EU (Bruner, 1989, p. 284). The Swiss population is not yet convinced to join the EU although

neutral states like Austria, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden are already members of the regional bloc. Sweden and Ireland modified their position on neutrality for economic reasons to join the EU. Perhaps the historically strong Swiss economy has also played a significant role in convincing the Swiss to remain outside the EU (Morris and White, 2011, p. 109). Neutrality, which was initially conceived as a tool to prevent Switzerland from getting involved in external conflicts, has now become a value in itself known as “Swissitude” (Church, 2000, p. 148). It will be a challenge for Switzerland to stay out of the EU but still take advantage of the cooperation and coordination with EU member states (Egger, 1998, p. 98).

CHAPTER V

GEOPOLITICS AND FOREIGN POLICY OF NEPAL

5.1. Formative Years of Nepal's Foreign Policy

Modern Nepal came into being in 1768 through the unification campaign of Gorkha King Prithvi Narayan Shah defeated the Malla kings of Kathmandu valley. Until then Nepal was divided into innumerable small principalities with the valley itself divided into the small kingdoms of Kantipur, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur (Sharma, 2006, p. 3).

Identifying Nepal as a “yam between two boulders”, King Prithvi Narayan Shah advocated for a foreign policy that would maintain friendly relations with both Tibet/China and East India Company (EIC) of Britain being well aware of the military and economic capabilities of Nepal's immediate neighbors (Jaiswal, 2016, p. 18). Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors continued the unification campaign and by 1809, the Nepali territory was spread between Sikkim (Teesta River) in the east and Sulej (Kangra) in the west (Shaha, 1955, p. 8). Nepal had traditionally been the principle route of trans-Himalayan trade between India and Tibet. Nepal and Tibet fought two wars between 1788 and 1792 over trade and indemnity agreement issues, but the Nepali troops were forced to retreat after China supported Tibet. Peace was established after the Treaty of Betravati in 1792 and the practice of sending quinquennial mission from Nepal to China was initiated from then onwards (Upadhya, 2008, p. 18).

The British were wary about Nepal's growing military strength that could pose threat to British domination in South Asia. A war between Nepal and the British loomed large. Border disputes in Butwal and Seuraj in Western Nepal initiated the Anglo-Nepali war in 1814 (Sharma, 1951, p. 255). Nepal could not withstand the

superior military capabilities of the British. After losing at several fronts, the Treaty of Sugauli was signed in 1816 which ended the war. Nepal lost a third of its territory in this war and its boundary was limited between the Mechi River in the east and Mahakali River in the west (Upadhyaya, 2008). The war led to a tradition of Gurkha recruitment by the British in April 1815 (Kandangwa, 2009, p. 128).

Nepal reeled under turmoil in domestic politics for a couple of decades after the war which ultimately led to the rise of Jung Bahadur Rana as prime minister in 1846 after successive falls of Bhimsen Thapa and Mathbar Singh Thapa (Upadhyaya, 2008, pp. 26-28). In the Indian subcontinent, British domination was on the rise and Chinese Empire was on a decline. This situation was not an ideal one for Nepal as its survival was dependent on maintaining balanced relations with its southern and northern neighbors. Realizing that the British would remain unchallenged in the Indian subcontinent for a foreseeable future, Jung Bahadur decided to adopt the policy of appeasement of the British to ensure the survival of Nepal as well as his own hereditary rule (Sharma, 2006, pp. 10-12).

In pursuit of maintaining friendly ties with the UK as well as legitimizing his grip on power, Jung Bahadur embarked on a yearlong trip to the UK and France in 1850 and thus becoming the first head of government from this part of the world to visit Europe in official capacity (Whelpton, 1983, p. 99).

Jung Bahadur decided to cancel the quinquennial mission to China in 1847 to please the British only for him to restore the same in 1854 with a view of not displeasing the Chinese too much and trying to gain trade benefits (Rose, 2010, p. 107). He was well aware of the importance of Nepal's relations with Tibet. The Kerong route linking Nepal with Tibet, which was discovered in the seventh century, became the mainstay of trans-Himalayan trade. It drastically increased the

geopolitical and strategic importance of Nepal bringing not only prosperity but also increasing Nepal's bargaining capacity with its neighbors (Rose and Fisher, 1968). The Nepali quinquennial mission of 1854 was mistreated while passing through Tibet and it acted as a trigger for the long dormant Nepali ambition of seeking control over Tibet as Nepali troops attacked Tibet upon the orders of Jung Bahadur in 1855 resulting in victory of Nepali forces in Kuti, Kerong and surrounding areas (Rose, 2010, p. 110). After a year's fighting, the costs of war had risen significantly forcing both the countries to sign a treaty. According to the treaty, Tibet was required to pay Rs. 10,000 annually to Nepal and Nepali forces had to withdraw from the occupied territories and Nepal was allowed to post an envoy in Lhasa (Mukherjee, 1909).

5.2. Nepal's Policy of Appeasement of the British

The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 by Indian soldiers against the British regime provided Jung Bahadur with an opportunity to impress the British. He personally led thousands of Nepali forces into Lukhnow to quell the rebellion. Impressed by his support, Britain returned some of the territory in western Nepal ceded through the Sugauli Treaty to Nepal (Upadhya, 2008, pp. 32). The assassination of Prime Minister Ranoddip Singh as well as many of the family members of Jung Bahadur in 1885 by nephews of the prime minister brought Bir Shumsher Rana to power.

Prime Minister Bir Shumsher was fearful that the sons and grandsons of Jung Bahadur, who were expelled to India, might launch a challenge to his rule with the support of the British. Therefore, he felt it was necessary to strengthen relations with China, and so he resumed the quinquennial mission to China. He thus tried to use balancing as a foreign policy option against the British by cozying up to China. The British were mindful of the threat that could be posed by an alliance between Nepal, Tibet and China. They made a strategy that in case China asserted its strong influence

in Nepal in association with Bir Shumsher, it would counter the same by supporting the descendants of Jung Bahadur living in exile in India (Rose, 2010, pp. 144-145). Soon a serious dispute arose between Britain and Tibet in 1888 over trade route through Sikkim which led to the British forces expelling the Tibetans forces from Sikkim. Realizing that China was not in favor of antagonizing the British, Bir Shumsher deftly reoriented Nepal's foreign policy of aligning more with the British than the Chinese. In the process, he further eased the regulations and process regarding Gurkha recruitment (Rose, 2010, pp. 148-149). Thus he reverted back to the policy of appeasement of the British.

Due to his vulnerable domestic position post the power struggle, the British felt that they could take maximum advantage of the new prime minister. Therefore, the British were successful in gaining concessions from Bir Shumsher regarding some of the stringent restrictions for the recruiting process of the Gurkhas (Rose, 2010, pp. 139-143). Bir Shumsher died in 1901 and was succeeded as the prime minister by his half-brother Dev Shumsher. However, he was deposed via a coup early into his tenure by his brother Chandra Shumsher. In 1903, the British forces crossed the Jelep pass and entered the Tibetan territory and occupied Lhasa in 1904. Chandra Shumsher provided Nepal's logistical support to Britain in this endeavor in anticipation of gaining British goodwill for Nepal as well as his regime (Whelpton, 2005, p. 64). When Tibet sought Nepal's support citing the obligations of the 1856 Treaty, Chandra Shumsher interpreted that such obligations were limited to advice and counseling rather than armed support much to the annoyance of the Tibetans.

The British adventure in Tibet did not yield the desired outcomes as expected and resulting in their withdrawal in 1905. China got established as the preeminence force in Tibet and compromising Britain's influence. However, the British were clear

in their policy that any attempt by China to interfere in the affairs of the states south of the Himalayas would be strongly resisted. The Chinese Revolution of 1911 that established China as a republic led to the withdrawal of Chinese forces in Tibet (Rose, 2010, pp. 168-169).

The start of the World War I in 1914 provided an opportunity for Chandra Shumsher to further gain goodwill of the British government. He dispatched around 20,000 Nepali troops as well as allowed the British to recruit more troops in their army. In total, nearly 1,00,000 Nepali men fought in the war suffering heavy casualties. The British were extremely grateful to the support extended by Chandra and provided him with personal accolades. However, they were quick in rejecting his proposal made in 1919 to return the lands in Terai that were ceded to the British in 1816 and not restored in 1858 (Upadhya, 2008, p. 36). In 1923, Chandra Shumsher was able to secure the Peace and Friendship Treaty between Nepal and Britain which formally recognized the independence of Nepal and facilitated provisions related to Nepal's trade, transit and import of arms (Basnet and Sharma, 2015). This was a historic moment in the bilateral relations between the two states as Britain had always been reluctant to admit the full independence of Nepal.

Chandra Shumsher mulled invasion against Tibet in 1928 against the frequent complaints regarding treatment of Nepali businessmen and people in Tibet. However, his death in 1929 eliminated such a prospect. Ties between Nepal and Britain were further consolidated in 1934 when Britain agreed for the establishment of the Nepali Legation in London (Rose, 2010, pp. 170-172). When the World War II broke out in 1939, Nepal was quick to declare support to Britain and the Allied Powers.

5.3. Nepal's Foreign Policy Post Second World War

The end of the Second World War saw emergence of the US and Soviet Union as the two super powers of the world. India gained independence from the British in 1947 after which they withdrew from the subcontinent. With the departure of their main support, the Ranas were compelled to make changes in Nepal's foreign policy. The Ranas became fearful that leaders of the newly independent India might be tempted to annex Nepal into their union. Furthermore, the domestic politics of Nepal was also changing with anti-Rana activities gaining a slow but steady momentum (Sharma, 2006, p. 25).

As a first step, Nepal tried to seek the attention of US and China. The Ranas tried to revert to old ways by trying to balance the power in India by using China as a counterweight. However, the Chinese could not pay attention to Nepal's overtures as the Chinese nationalists were mired in a domestic political struggle with the communists (Rose, 2010, p. 179). The US was more forthcoming in its approach as it was advised by Britain before departing India of the need to protect Western interests in South Asia (Caroe, 1951, p. 42). US President Harry Truman sent a special envoy to Nepal in April 1947 leading to the signing of friendship and commerce agreement and establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and the US (Upadhyaya, 2008, p. 41). Thus the US was the second country after Britain with which Nepal established its diplomatic relations; even before it established formal diplomatic relations with its immediate neighbors India and China.

Nepal established formal diplomatic relations with India two months later in June 1947 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Taking its diplomatic initiative forward, Nepal applied for membership of the UN in February 1949 only for it to be rejected due to veto by the Soviet Union in September 1949 (The New York Times, 1949).

Domestic politics was also on the change as the Rana regime was facing stiff resistance from the Nepali people. Therefore, it is prudent to assume that Mohan Shumsher felt it was necessary to have the backing of India for safeguarding the Rana regime as well as sovereignty and independence of Nepal. To maintain the traditional relations with India, Rana Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher adopted the foreign policy technique used by predecessors by sending ten battalions of Nepali troops to quell the unrest in Hyderabad in 1948 (Sharma, 2006, p. 28).

5.4. Geopolitical Changes in the Neighborhood and its Influence on Nepal's Foreign Policy

The geopolitics of South Asia changed drastically in the late forties after India's independence. The Communist Party of China led by Mao Zedong captured state power in October 1949 which led to a changing the security dynamics of the region as India became fearful that the Himalayan frontier could be breached China might push further south and invade Nepal. It led to India expediting the signing of Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Nepal in July 1950 (Rowland, 1967, p. 146). It abrogated all previous treaties that were signed between Nepal and Britain. Indian anxiety was further heightened when China annexed Tibet later that year and China's border now extended up to Nepal. Tibet, which was considered by India as a buffer protecting South Asia from potential Chinese aggression, could no longer serve the purpose (Yahuda, 2000).

The 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Nepal and India became controversial immediately after the signing and it is a matter of debate even till today (Upreti, 2014). The anti-Rana movement for its overthrow and establishment of democracy was gaining steam. It reached its peak when King Tribhuvan sought asylum at the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu in November 1950 and then fled to New

Delhi (Sharma, 2006, p. 40). The Nepali Congress (NC) party immediately began its armed struggle against the Rana regime across the country. Indian prime minister strongly supported Nepal's struggle for restoration of democracy. It finally resulted in the "Delhi Compromise" in which the monarchy was restored to its original status, the hereditary Rana regime was abolished, democracy was introduced and a Rana-NC coalition government was formed (Upadhyaya, 2008, p. 44). However, the arrangement was short-lived and the coalition failed resulting in the appointment of NC leader Matrika Prasad Koirala as the prime minister.

India's influence and interference in day-to-day affairs of Nepal also greatly increased creating resentment among the public (Sharma, 2006, p. 87). A few controversial events related to the bilateral relations between Nepal and India took place during this period. There was a growing national sentiment against the Indian Military Mission that arrived in Nepal in February 1952 to assist in the organization and training of Nepali Army (Das, 1986, p. 239). The signing of the Koshi hydropower project by the Matrika Prasad Koirala led government with the government of India in 1954 became highly controversial. The Nepali people were resentful of the fact that it provided 97% of the water to India while severely limiting Nepal's share in electricity and irrigation (Upadhyaya, 2008, p. 52).

The newly independent India was eager to carry on the legacy of the British in order to exert its preeminence in the region. Nepal was considered to fall under the sphere of influence of India (Fisher and Bondurant, 1956). During this time, various comments started coming out from Indian leaders that were demeaning to Nepal's independence and sovereignty. Indian Prime Minister Nehru, during a debate in the Indian parliament in 1950, caused uproar in Nepal when he claimed that Nepal was not fully considered independent since the time of the British due to its foreign

relations being strictly limited to British India (Lok Sabha Debates, 1954). He also stated that Nepal's foreign policy should be coordinated with India (Jha, 1986, p. 144). Such comments were and heightened anti-India sentiments in Nepal.

Nepal's relations with China during this period were completely subdued by Nepal's relations with India. Nehru signaled India would not object to Nepal's desire of establishing diplomatic relations with China in view of the warming of relations between India and China after signing the Sino-Indian agreement and formulating the principles of *Panchsheel* in April 1954 (The Hindu, 1954). Nepal did not expand its diplomatic relations with other countries but focused on enhancing relations with which diplomatic relations had already been established. In this regard, Nepal and the US agreed to elevate their diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level in August 1951 (Chaturvedy and Malone, 2012, p. 292). King Tribhuvan was planning to undertake a trip to the US in 1955, but his untimely death in March 1955 ended such a possibility (Upadhyaya, 2008, p. 53).

The period after the end of Rana regime till the death of King Tribhuvan saw instability in domestic politics and Nepal's foreign policy being highly influenced by India. It also saw the level of Indian interference in the internal matters of Nepal. It led to rise of nationalism and anti-India sentiments among the Nepali public. However, it also marked a period when Nepal abandoned its isolationist policy and established diplomatic relations beyond its neighborhood.

5.5. Non-Alignment in Nepal's Foreign Policy and its Geopolitical Bearings

5.5.1. Diversification of Foreign Policy under King Mahendra

King Mahendra's accession to the throne brought major changes in Nepal's domestic politics and international relations. Nepal's foreign policy was in a fluid situation marked by lack of resolve and character in the preceding years before his

accession. He can be credited for giving a definite shape and dynamism to Nepal's foreign policy during his rule (Singh, 1983). The year 1955 turned out to be an important year in Nepal's diplomatic history. Nepal participated in the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 setting the stage for Nepal's active involvement in the international stage (Sharma, 2006, p. 92). Nepal was able to get the membership of UN which was interpreted as universal recognition of its sovereignty (Shaha, 2001, p. 241). This was indeed an historic achievement considering Nepal's membership request had been rejected a couple of years ago.

One of the most important developments in Nepal's international relations and diplomatic history was the establishment of diplomatic ties with China in August 1955 (Sharma, 2006, p. 93). India reacted with caution when Nehru declared that the new development would in no way affect India's relations with Nepal. King Mahendra gave an indication that he wanted to reorient Nepal's foreign policy when he appointed anti-Indian Tanka Prasad Acharya, who advocated neutrality in Nepal's foreign policy, as the Prime Minister in January 1956 (Sharma, 2006, p. 106).

The Acharya government was clear in its motive to expand ties with China which led to the signing of a trade and intercourse agreement between the two governments in September 1956 based on the principles of *Panchsheel*. This agreement abrogated all previous treaties between Nepal and China/Tibet, and recognized Tibet as part of China and provided trade agencies for Nepal in different parts of Tibet (Muni, 1973, p. 99). The Chinese side provided an economic aid of 60 million Indian Rupees to Nepal without any conditions attached for its use (Ray, 2013, p. 427).

Indian media were critical of the Indian government for not doing enough to keep Nepal at bay from China. India hosted pro-China turned pro-India leader Dr. K.

I. Singh in a bid to counter the influence of the Acharya government. However, Acharya declared that it was normal for Nepal to have relations with China with whom it shared a border of more than 500 miles (The Statesman, 1956). Responding to the growing intimacy between Nepal and China, Indian President Dr. Rajendra Prasad visited Nepal in October 1956 before Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai was to visit Nepal. While he was in Nepal, he declared that relations between India and Nepal were “not of body but of soul” (Sharma, 2006, p. 116).

Chinese Premier Zhou visited Nepal in January 1957. Aware of the sentiments of Nepalis towards India, he declared that China and Nepal were blood brothers and pledged China’s support for Nepal’s development. Zhou also assured Prime Minister Acharya that a roadway linking Kathmandu with Lhasa would be constructed as per the wish of Nepal’s government. The relationship between the two countries further blossomed in September 1958 when Nepal was one of the six countries to cosponsor the Indian resolution in the General Assembly for China’s admission to the UN (Sharma, 2006, pp. 117-119). Parliamentary elections were held for the first time in Nepal in February 1959 that catapulted NC to an overwhelming majority and elected B. P. Koirala as the prime minister in May 1959.

Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Nepal in June 1959 and stressed on the need to strengthen the Himalayan frontier for the security of both India and Nepal (Singh, 2009, p. 132). Towards the end of 1959, the Koirala government entered into an agreement with the Indian government on the Gandaki River for harnessing its irrigation and hydropower potentials. It created a severe political uproar in Nepal as it was estimated that although the project was capable of yielding water for five million acres of land, only a fraction of it was allocated for Nepal under the treaty (Mihaly, 1965, p. 150).

The aftermath of the treaty led to the nationalists charging the Koirala government of being considerate to India's interest rather than that of Nepal. The NC started showing concerns about Chinese intentions with a minister saying that China had started concentrating its troops along the northern border which could post a security threat to Nepal (Upadhya, 2008, p. 61). At the same time, King Mahendra also declared that he would not hesitate to take necessary steps at whatever cost for the sake of preserving Nepal's sovereignty and national integrity, improving relations with other countries and initiating actions for public good (His Majesty's Government, 1967).

Koirala embarked on a visit to India in January 1960 and was accorded a very warm welcome. The Indian side provided an aid of 100 million Indian rupees. They were willing to give better deal to Nepal for a revised Trade and Transit treaty which was finally signed in September that year (Sharma, 2006, pp. 135-136). While there were strong opinions about his government being pro-Indian, Prime Minister Koirala embarked on a visit to China in March 1960 where he emphasized on Nepal's foreign policy of non-alignment during his talks with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. During the visit, the Chinese leadership laid claim over Mount Everest which created anti-Chinese demonstrations in Nepal (Tiwari, 2013, p. 210). Zhou visited Nepal in April 1960 against the backdrop of his failed talks over border issue with Indian Prime Minister Nehru in New Delhi. A Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Nepal and China was signed during this visit. It was only when Zhou clarified during his visit to Nepal in April 1960 that China had never laid claim on Everest (Upadhya, 2012, p. 99).

Even during his short tenure in office, Prime Minister Koirala took some bold steps in diversifying Nepal's diplomatic relations. Nepal established diplomatic

relations with Pakistan in March 1960 (Chengappa, 2004, p. 119). Similarly, he made a historic decision to recognize Israel and establish diplomatic relations in June 1960 even before India had done the same (Abadi, 2004, p. 313).

On the domestic politics front, King Mahendra was getting impatient with the handling of state affairs by the Koirala government. In view of diversifying the scope of Nepal's foreign policy beyond the neighborhood, he visited the two superpowers, USSR and USA in 1958 and 1960 respectively. He also visited Pakistan, Israel, UK and US in a span of few years. Soviet President Klementei E. Voroshilov visited Nepal in February 1960. It was mainly aimed at bolstering the influence of his country in South Asia against the growing Western influence. It also highlighted the desire of Nepal to diversify its foreign policy beyond the neighborhood (Werake, 1992).

The domestic politics of Nepal took a turn when King Mahendra dismissed the first democratically elected B. P. Koirala government and dissolved the parliament in December 1960. He accused the Congress government of ignoring the interests of the nation and the people and justified his move for the sake of safeguarding nationalism and sovereignty (Sharma, 2006, p. 161). Indian Prime Minister Nehru criticized King Mahendra's takeover as a setback to democracy (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1961). His move took place at a time when the world order was undergoing profound changes with super power rivalry dividing the most of the countries in different blocs. Once he assumed power, King Mahendra started taking active initiatives in Nepal's foreign policy domain in the backdrop of the NC launching an armed struggle for restoration of democracy (Joshi and Rose, 1966, p. 458).

King Mahendra visited India in April 1962 to persuade Prime Minister Nehru to stop supporting the armed insurgency carried out by NC from the Indian soil. The talks did not yield the desired results as Nehru denied India supported such elements and asked the king to directly negotiate with the insurgents. By September, King Mahendra had become more and more critical of the Indian government for sponsoring the NC' armed insurgency (The New York Times, 1962a). India imposed an economic blockade on Nepal leading to severe shortage of essentials although it officially denied doing the same. While such a confrontation was going on, Chinese Foreign Minister Marshal Chen Yi declared in October that China would stand by Nepal if it is attacked by a foreign power (Sharma, 2006, p. 179).

The statement greatly alarmed India and made it realize that China was trying to breach its sphere of influence. This ultimately led Nehru to state that India would try its best to make sure that its territory would not be used by Nepali insurgents. Soon a border conflict between India and China erupted leading to a full scale war. It prompted New Delhi to take a more conciliatory approach in its relations with Nepal. The bilateral relations between Nepal and India warmed up after the 1962 war. Nehru started engaging with Nepal's palace and the NC suspended its armed revolt against the regime (The New York Times, 1962b).

High level visits were exchanged subsequently by King Mahendra and Indian President Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. King Mahendra stated in New Delhi that peace and friendship could be ensured if honest efforts were made towards respecting each other's equality and adopting the policy of complete non-interference in each other's internal affairs. Nehru's death in 1964 led to the soft-spoken Lal Bahadur Shastri being named the Indian Prime Minister. He visited Kathmandu in 1965 and emphasized that Nepal and India shared strong bonds and any differences could be

sorted out through mutual consultations to the satisfaction and advantage of both the countries (Khanna and Kumar, 2018, p. 148). During her visit to Nepal, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi stated that friendship between Nepal and India was unshakable and reaffirmed support for Nepal's endeavor to gain prosperity. It was taken as a sign of growing warmth in Indo-Nepali relations (Muni, 1973).

Steady relations with India would however gradually worsen in the subsequent years from the view point of a wide range of issues ranging from border dispute at Susta to trade issues. Indian defense minister's Dinesh Singh's comment in June 1969 that Nepal and India were bound together by defense relations citing 'special relations' between the two countries caused a controversy in Nepal. Soon after, Prime Minister Kirti Nidhi Bista called for the withdrawal of Indian armed forces stationed at Nepal's northern border. In line with King Mahendra's desire to assert Nepal's sovereignty and quest for an independent foreign policy, Bista asserted that Nepal could not compromise its sovereignty for the sake of India's security and resented the claims of Nepal-India 'special relations' (Acharya, 2002).

Addressing the visiting heads of state and government at the wedding ceremony of Crown Prince Birendra in February 1970, King Mahendra reiterated Nepal's need for trade and transit facilities in accordance with the international practices. His visit to India and meeting with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in August 1970 also did not yield any positive outcome. Speaking at the Third Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Lusaka in September 1970, King Mahendra reminded the world about the rights of the landlocked countries with regards to transit (Sharma, 2006).

India has resorted to coercive diplomacy whenever Nepal has disagreed to toe its line in the internal matters of Nepal. The removal of the entire Indian troops from Nepal's northern border by December 1970 was taken as a symbolic assertion of

Nepal's sovereign and independent status (Acharya, 2002, p. 100). The Treaty of Trade and Transit between Nepal and India was about to expire in October 1970 and thus New Delhi's plan was to corner Nepal economically in lieu of the brewing tensions in bilateral relations. The Trade and Transit treaty was not renewed affirming India's objection to Nepal's quest for trying to move away from its sphere of influence. Subsequently, it imposed an economic blockade on Nepal leading to severe shortage of petroleum products which affected the daily lives of the Nepali people (Sharma, 2006, p. 209).

It had always been Nepal's endeavor to have two separate treaties of trade and transit with India. However, the Indian side was adamant to have a combined treaty for both. During his visit to India in June 1971, an agreement was reached between King Mahendra and Prime Minister Gandhi for renewal of Trade and Transit Treaty. It was finally renewed after a month in Kathmandu. However, Nepal's request for two separate treaties was rejected. Moreover, the duration of the treaty had been decreased to five years instead of the earlier ten years (Ghosh, 1995, p. 126). This showed India's toughening stance against Nepal. India's rigid posturing was enhanced by the fact that its preeminence in the South Asia region was bolstered by the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation and its victory over Pakistan leading to the birth of an independent Bangladesh (Khanna and Kumar, 2018).

5.5.2. Geopolitical Ramifications of the Zone of Peace Proposal

King Mahendra's sudden demise in January 1972 led to the accession of West-educated King Birendra to the throne of Nepal. Although there were expectations of the new king enacting reforms in the partyless *Panchayat* regime, he opted for the status quo. However, he laid special emphasis for peace and development as his vision to build a prosperous Nepal. The exiled NC upped its armed struggle for the

restoration of democracy leading even to a hijack of Nepal's national carrier to India (Upadhyaya, 2008, p. 78). King Birendra tried to downplay political differences with India when he stated during the visit of Indian Prime Minister Gandhi to Nepal in February 1973 that Nepal valued India's cooperation for the economic development of Nepal. During his early days as the monarch, King Birendra highlighted that his foreign policy would have a hallmark of Nepal's desire for peace, security and development (Khatri, 1983).

Reiterating Nepal's desire to build friendship with neighbors based on peace and cooperation with an understanding of each others' problems and aspirations, King Birendra declared that intimidation of any sort would not be able to suppress the courage and spirit of Nepali people who were so proud of their nation's independent history. In October 1973, he paid a state visit to India where he mentioned that Nepal and India should constantly endeavor to remove problems in a spirit of peace and amity appreciating each others' views. He also paid a state visit to China two months later where he praised China for being one of Nepal's closest neighbors and providing assistance for Nepal's development. In an indirect hint to India, he stated that the idea of a country exerting pressure on another country was unacceptable to Nepal (Sharma, 2006)

India conducted its first nuclear test in 1974. The annexation of Sikkim by India in 1975 created an uneasy environment for smaller states in South Asia. Massive demonstrations were held in Nepal in objection of the move. Foreign Minister Gyanendra Bahadur Karki expressed concern by declaring that Nepal was firm in its policy that there should be no foreign interference in the internal affairs of any country. New Delhi was upset with the public uproar in Kathmandu and sternly noted that it knew how to deal with hostility. The unfolding geopolitical scenario over the

past couple of years made King Birendra realize that it was necessary to protect Nepal from being a militarized zone (Upadhya, 2008).

During his coronation in February 1975, King Birendra proposed that Nepal be declared as the 'Zone of Peace' to institutionalize peace. The ZoP proposal gave a new dimension to Nepal's policy of non-alignment. Although the proposal was endorsed by 116 countries, India considered it as being contradictory to the 1950 Treaty and did not support it. On the contrary, China was one of the first countries to support the proposal (Duquesne, 2011, p. 148).

The Trade and Transit Treaty with India was about to expire in 1976, but Indian Prime Minister Gandhi was in no mood to accommodate two separate treaties of trade and transit as per the longstanding Nepali demand. India's domestic politics was soon to see troubled times with Gandhi imposing emergency and jailing her opponents that included many socialist leaders close to B. P. Koirala. The move ultimately backfired for her and led to the formation of non-Congress government in 1977 headed by Morarji Desai who became the first prime minister from a party other than the Congress (Gale Research Company, 1979). It raised the prospects of better Indo-Nepali relations and ultimately separate treaties for trade and transit were signed in 1978 (Parajulee, 2000, p. 188).

Winds of change started blowing in Asian politics in 1979 leading to the Islamic Revolution in Iran and hanging of Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. It precipitated student demonstrations in Kathmandu and some of the Indian leaders including Chandrashekhar urged the King Birendra to take cue from the Iranian Revolution and restore democracy. Bowing to national and international political environment, King Birendra proposed a referendum to choose between the *Panchayat* system and multi-party democracy in 1980 (Bhattarai and Khatiwada,

1993). Although the *Panchayat* camp won the vote to retain the system, King Birendra was forced to enact reforms. B. P. Koirala's death in 1982 was a blow for the democratic movement in Nepal. King Birendra's international stature reached its peak when US President Ronald Reagan endorsed the ZoP proposal during King Birendra's state visit in December 1983 in spite of India still not lending its support for the same (Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, 1983).

India's imposition of an economic blockade over Nepal in 1989 over an arms purchase deal with China led to huge difficulties in the daily lives of the Nepali people due to the absence of commodities such as fuel, food, medicines and daily consumables (Dash, 2008, p. 71). The move exposed Nepal's over dependency on India and served a reminder to Nepal's political leadership the need to diversify Nepal's trade and transit options. China could not serve as an option at that time due to the lack of good connectivity.

The domestic politics of Nepal soon took a turn when the NC and major communist parties decided to form an alliance against the *Panchayat* regime for restoration of multiparty democracy. During the convention of the NC in January 1990, Indian leader Chandrashekhar threw his weight behind the political parties and urged King Birendra to restore democracy. The *Panchayat* regime considered this act as a blatant interference in the internal affairs of Nepal. With the political and moral support of India, a People's Movement was launched which ultimately forced King Birendra to restore multiparty democracy in April 1990 and appoint NC President Krishna Prasad Bhattarai as the new Prime Minister (Bhattarai and Khatiwada, 1993).

5.5.3. Foreign Policy of Nepal in the Era of Multiparty Democracy

Prime Minister Bhattarai visited India in June 1990 and after his talks with Indian Prime Minister V. P. Singh, India agreed to reopen all the border points which

would thereby end the economic embargo on Nepal after more than a year (Singh, 2009, p. 267).

One of the fundamental changes in Nepal's foreign policy after the regime change was discarding of the ZoP proposal. The promulgation of a new constitution in November 1990 and parliamentary elections in May 1991 ushered a new era in Nepal's newly born multiparty democratic process. Newly elected Prime Minister from the NC Girija Prasad Koirala visited India in December 1991 at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao and reassured him that Nepal would not import arms from China in the future (Hindustan Times, 1991). Furthermore, the visit courted controversy as to whether the Tanakpur Barrage issue agreed with India by Koirala was in fact only an agreement as mentioned by the prime minister or a treaty. The main opposition Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) was of the view that Tanakpur Barrage had encroached Nepal's land and had given more benefits to India rather than Nepal in the form of electricity and irrigation (Upadhyaya, 2008).

Nepal faced a critical foreign policy challenge when Nepali origin Bhutanese were expelled from Bhutan and crossed over to Nepal via the open Indian border in October 1991. Although Koirala requested Rao for intervention in sorting out the issue, he did not pay heed to the request thereby burdening Nepal with thousands of refugees. The fall of the Koirala government over the Tanakpur issue led to elections which resulted in a hung parliament allowing CPN (UML) Chairman Man Mohan Adhikari to become the first democratically elected communist prime minister of Nepal in November 1994 (Adhikari, 2015, p. 187). During his visit to India in April 1995, the review of 1950 Treaty figured prominently during the talks with Rao, and this was the first time the issue had been raised by Nepal formally at this level. In response to Kathmandu's request, New Delhi refused to grant transit access to

Bangladesh citing security reasons as it ran too close to the strategic “Chicken’s Neck” in West Bengal (Sharma, 1998, p. 266). Adhikari reiterated Nepal’s commitment to India’s security concerns. However, he maintained that the concept of Nepal being under India’s security umbrella was outdated (Thapliyal, 1998, p. 169).

Political upheavals led to the fall of the communist government resulting in gradual political instability and frequent changes in governments. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) began an armed insurgency in February 1996 (Niroula, 2011, p. 69). The visit of Indian Prime Minister I. K. Gujral to Kathmandu in June 1996 brought optimism that Nepal-India relations would blossom in the days ahead. He had espoused the ‘Gujral Doctrine’ which did not seek strict reciprocity in India’s relations with its neighbors. His short tenure did not allow his foreign policy to truly serve its intended goals. Nevertheless, his decision to provide access for Nepal through the Phulbari route in West Bengal for trade with Bangladesh and other countries can be taken as a significant milestone in the bilateral relations between the two countries (Ray, 2013).

Nepal’s significance to China was highlighted by the fact that King Birendra was invited as the chief guest of the Boao Economic Forum during his state visit to China in February 2001. This was part of its efforts to show a strategic interest in Nepal in the aftermath of India’s nuclear tests and growing partnership with the US. In May 2001, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji visited Nepal. During a banquet given in his honor, he made observations against hegemony and the need to protect the sovereignty and independence of states in an indirect reference to India and the US (Josse, 2001). He also sought to dispel the belief that China supported the Nepali Maoists as reported by the Western and Indian media. Zhu’s visit also highlighted the geopolitical bearings of the region. US-China relations were going through a rough

patch after Beijing was irked by Washington's National Missile Defense (NMD) system. Nepal's geo-strategic importance was highlighted once again when it was perceived in the media that the US might be mulling to station its surveillance, navigation and intelligence system in Nepal to counter China (Rana, 2001). India supported the NMD, therefore, it was apparent that Nepal would have to come to terms with the geopolitical pressures associated with the situation (Josse, 2001).

The Royal Palace massacre of June 2001, that killed King Birendra and many members of the royal family, altered the political course of Nepal. King Birendra's brother, Gyanendra, acceded to the throne. After the 9/11 attacks on Twin Towers in New York, global politics took a turn with a focus on war on terrorism. Nepal's role as a geopolitical hotspot was again highlighted when US Secretary of State Colin Powell visited Nepal in January 2002 in the backdrop of growing Maoist influence in Nepal (Frontline, 2002). Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba became the first Nepali Prime Minister to visit the Oval Office where he was received by US President George W. Bush. Deuba sought US support in Nepal's war against the Maoists (Upadhya, 2008, p. 160).

King Gyanendra embarked on a visit to India in June 2002 where he reiterated Nepal's policy of not allowing any anti-India activities from its soil (The Times of India, 2002). India seemed to be particularly concerned with the situation in Nepal as it felt its traditional pre-eminent role in Nepal was being threatened due to growing influence of China, US and UK (The Telegraph, 2002). King Gyanendra paid a visit to China the next month where he pointed out that Nepal would not allow its territory to be used against Chinese interest. Similarly, Chinese President Jiang Zemin declared support to the Nepali government's fight against the armed insurgency (The Washington Post, 2002).

With the Maoists making inroads in Nepal's domestic politics, India was increasingly growing concerned with the political instability in Nepal (The Hindu, 2004). On February 1, 2005, King Gyanendra dismissed the Sher Bahadur Deuba government and assumed power himself inviting international condemnation, including that of India. However, China described the royal takeover as an internal matter of Nepal contrasting the view of most of the major powers (Upadhyaya, 2008, pp. 184-185). India kept on pushing King Gyanendra and the Nepali government for release of political prisoners and restoration of democracy while China seemed keen on engaging with the King and invited him to attend the upcoming Boao Conference. During a sideline meeting at the Asia-African Conference in Jakarta in April 2005, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh urged the King to restore democracy at the earliest in order to deal with the Maoists (Press Trust of India, 2005).

As requested by Nepal, China delivered military hardware to Nepal in its fight against the Maoist rebels in November 2005. This incident greatly alarmed New Delhi's policy vis-à-vis the monarchy as it could no longer sit back on the rapid gains made by China in Nepal's affairs (Indian Express, 2006). The US too threw its support behind the agitating parties for restoration of democracy and declared that it would work with India in that regard (Upadhyaya, 2008, p. 201).

5.5.4. Geopolitical influence in Nepal's Foreign Policy in the Republican Era

The demonstrations against the royal regime by the SPA and Maoists reached its peak in April 2006. Amid escalating violence, India sent senior Congress party leader Karan Singh as special envoy to Kathmandu. King Gyanendra restored parliament and Girija Prasad Koirala was appointed as the prime minister. It appeared that India's influence continued to be the deciding factor in the political changes that have taken place in Nepal since 1950. India was also instrumental in facilitating

dialogue between the Madhesh-based parties and government during the Madhesh movement in 2007 (Bhattarai, 2018, p. 65-66). The arrival of United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) in January 2007 for the peace process related mandate was not to the liking of India as it felt that its interests and influence in Nepal would be compromised (Nayak, 2014, p. 29).

The Constituent Assembly elections of 2008 brought the Maoists to power and its Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' became the prime minister in August 2008. China's growing role in Nepal was emphasized by the fact that 38 official Chinese delegations visited Nepal during Prachanda's tenure while the number of Indian delegations was one-fourth of that (Kumar, 2011). Similarly, the defense collaboration between the two countries was enhanced as China doubled its military aid to Nepal from USD 1.3 million in September 2008 to USD 2.6 million in December 2008 (Singh and Shah, 2016, p. 61). After a series of government changes, the Maoists returned to power again in 2011 with Dr. Baburam Bhattarai as the prime minister in August 2011. He was considered close to India and he believed that Nepal was dependent more on India than China in economic terms. Spelling out his foreign policy, Bhattarai declared that Nepal should act as a 'vibrant bridge' between India and China rather than be portrayed in the conventional notion of a 'yam between two boulders'. Engagements with India increased during his tenure and led to the signing of Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (Nayak, 2014, p. 34).

Interestingly, in spite of China's growing influence in Nepal, it is ironic that Chinese President Hu Jintao did not visit Nepal during his tenure. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao landed in Kathmandu in early 2012 for a four-hour visit in which numerous agreements were signed, including upgrading of Pokhara Airport and construction of 750 MW West Seti Hydropower project (Parajuli, 2012). Nepal's

importance to China was highlighted by the new Chinese leadership when Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) Chairman Prachanda became the first political leader from South Asia to meet newly elected Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing in April 2013 (Nayak, 2014, p. 103).

Political changes took place in India in 2014 when the Bharatiya Janata Party won the elections ending decades of Congress party's rule and elected Narendra Modi as the prime minister in May 2014. Espousing his "neighborhood first" policy, he invited the heads of government of SAARC countries for his swearing-in ceremony (Baral, 2016, p. 185). Modi visited Nepal within three months of taking office thus highlighting the importance he had placed relations with Nepal and it was the first bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Nepal in seventeen years (Bhattarai, 2018, p. 66). Modi won plaudits for his remarks in Nepal's Constituent Assembly in which he heaped praise on Nepal. He also announced a concessional line of credit of USD 1 billion to Nepal (India Today, 2014).

Major political parties and Madhesh-based parties had been embroiled in a tussle during the constitution drafting process as the Madhesh-based parties had reservations mainly regarding the proposed provisions on citizenship, inclusion-based proportionate parliamentary representation and revision of provincial boundaries (Jha, 2018, pp. 101-102). During his second visit to Nepal for attending the 18th SAARC Summit in November 2014, Modi indirectly supported the Madhesi demands when he advised the government and the major political parties to draft the constitution through consensus and not through the numerical strength in the Constituent Assembly (Baral, 2016, p. 185-186). His views created controversy in Nepal as it was felt that India was trying to influence the constitution drafting process. India must

have taken such a position from its own security perspective considering a fluid situation in the plains of Nepal could have a spillover effect into its territory.

China-India competition in Nepal was apparent when Nepal was hit with a massive earthquake in April 2015. Both the countries immediately sent aircrafts, rescuers and relief materials within hours of the earthquake. India pledged USD 1 billion for post-earthquake reconstruction which was almost double to that of China (Chand, 2016, p. 108).

As the Constituent Assembly was about to promulgate the constitution, India sent Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar as Special Envoy on September 18, 2015 to persuade Nepali leaders to defer the promulgation to address the demands of the Madhesi parties. However, two days later the Constituent Assembly promulgated the constitution with an overwhelming majority (Bhattarai, 2018, pp. 67-68). Upset with the outcome, the Ministry of External Affairs of India issued a press statement merely 'noting' the promulgation of Nepal's constitution and urged the Nepali government to resolve internal differences through dialogue for ensuring broad-based ownership and acceptance of the constitution (Ministry of External Affairs, 2015).

Angry that its suggestions were ignored, India imposed an economic blockade on Nepal few days after the promulgation of Nepal's constitution (Uprety and Subedi, 2019, p. 647). India never acknowledged that it had imposed such a blockade and pointed out to the disgruntled Madheshi people and parties of disrupting the movement of essential goods through the border points. The inhuman blockade caused enormous trouble for the Nepali people. It also severely eroded India's image in Nepal and created an anti-India sentiments among the Nepali population (Singh, 2016, p. 164). The incident once again exposed Nepal's asymmetric dependence on India. It led the Nepali leadership to realize that diversification was necessary in trade

and commerce. Nepal indirectly hinted for the need to end the inhuman action during a speech at the UN Headquarters in Geneva by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Kamal Thapa (MoFA, 2015).

Unlike India, China supported the promulgation of Nepal's constitution. It did not directly push India to end the unofficial blockade. However, Chinese President Xi Jinping, during his statement in the UNGA in September 2015, made a veiled reference to Nepal's situation. He noted that the big countries should not bully small countries and that the rights of countries' to independently choose their social and development paths should be upheld (Sonnad, 2015).

After the promulgation of the constitution, a government led by CPN (UML) Chairman K. P. Sharma Oli was formed in October 2015. He took a strong nationalist stance against the economic blockade. A historic agreement was signed between China and Nepal for the supply of petroleum products in October 2015 which ended the monopoly of Indian Oil Corporation (The Kathmandu Post, 2015). The blockade ended in February 2016 after which Oli visited New Delhi to clear misunderstandings and normalize bilateral relations. However, Nepal and India failed to issue a joint statement at the end of the visit mainly due to differences on how to view the promulgation of Nepal's constitution (Pandey, 2016). In a balancing act, Oli visited China after a month in March 2016. It would turn out to be a historic one as Nepal and China signed an Agreement on Transit Transport (Nepali Times, 2016). Although immediate results could not be expected from this agreement, it was a huge psychological victory for landlocked Nepal as the country could conduct its trade from a different country other than India in the future.

India was not pleased with the developments. The CPN (Maoist Centre) soon pulled out the government and Oli had to resign from his post in July 2016. Prachanda

became prime minister for the second time. He visited India in September 2016 and assured India Prime Minister Modi that legitimate demands of the people would be accommodated. His remarks caused a huge controversy in Nepal as former Prime Minister Oli accused Prachanda of providing space to a neighboring country to interfere in the internal affairs of Nepal (Bhattarai, 2018, p. 75). Ironically, at a time when the Prachanda-led government was accused of being pro-India, a Memorandum of Understanding on bilateral cooperation under the framework of the BRI was signed between the governments of Nepal and China in May 2017 (Xinhuanet, 2017). This came as a surprise to many within and outside Nepal. It yet again proved that any government in Nepal could not fully ignore China and solely embrace India in matters concerning Nepal's international relations.

The parliamentary elections held in November-December 2017 led to the victory of the alliance between CPN (UML) and UCPN (MC). It led to CPN (UML) Chairman K. P. Sharma Oli being elected as the prime minister for the second time in February 2018 (Agarwal, 2019, p. 173). It was anticipated how Oli would conduct relations with India and China during his second term considering Nepal's poor relations with India and blossoming relations with China during his first term. Oli embarked on a visit to India in April 2018. It was seen as a move to normalize his strained relations with India. During the visit, Oli and Modi witnessed the groundbreaking ceremony for constructing a cross-border Motihari-Amlekhgunj petroleum pipeline as well as understanding on construction of Kathmandu-Raxaul railway link and inland waterway connectivity (MoFA, 2018a). During the visit Modi announced that in New Delhi that "we want to connect Everest to the ocean" (Nepali Times, 2018). This was clearly an indication that Modi did not want Oli to move away from India's orbit after the fallout from the 2015 economic blockade.

To cement the ties further, Modi immediately paid a reciprocal visit to Kathmandu the following month in May 2018. Prime ministers Oli and Modi jointly laid the foundation stone of 900 MW Arun III Hydropower Project (MoFA, 2018b). He also made religious visits to Janakpur and Muktinath which was interpreted as trying to woo Hindu Indian voters in the upcoming Indian general elections. Two bilateral visits at such a close interval showed that both the leaders wanted to leave the past behind and move towards a new direction. Oli embarked on a visit to China in June 2018. Among the several highlights of the visit was the understanding on establishing Kerung-Kathmandu railway connectivity (MoFA, 2018c). If successful, the connectivity could have far reaching economic and geopolitical bearings in the future. However, the geological and economic costs for the same could be a factor in its success.

Continuing the engagements with China, President Bidya Devi Bhandari visited Beijing in April 2019 during which a protocol to the Agreement on Transit Transport was signed between the two governments. This allowed Nepal to have access transit facilities through four Chinese sea ports - Tianjin, Shenzhen, Lianyungang and Zhanjiang and three land ports - Lanzhou, Lhasa and Shigatse, for third-country trade (Giri, 2019). This was an historic achievement as it ended the monopoly of Indian ports for third-country trade. Due to connectivity issues and geographical distance, these ports could not be a substitute for Indian ports but rather serve as additional ones for the sake options in Nepal's trade and commerce.

During this period, Nepal-India relations moved steadily without hiccups. However, one major concern among the Nepali policymakers was the disinterest shown by the Indian side over acceptance of the joint report prepared by Nepal-India Eminent Persons' Group formed in January 2016 to review the whole gamut of Indo-

Nepali bilateral relations, including the 1950 Treaty (Republica, 2018). The delay till date to accept the report indicates the unwillingness of the Indian side to change the status quo.

Nepal-China relations received a major boost when Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Nepal in October 2019 (MoFA, 2018d). He became the first Chinese President to visit Nepal since Jiang Zemin in 1996. This visit had great geopolitical significance in the light of China trying to expand its influence in South Asia in general and Nepal. Xi declared during his speech in Kathmandu that China would help Nepal to become a land-linked country from a landlocked one (The Rising Nepal, 2019). Xi's visit had already created ripples among the political circles a month earlier when the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) conducted a training program in conjunction with the Communist Party of China. An event like this that was conducted by the CPC was unprecedented in Nepal which showed China's proactive approach in dealing with Nepal through the ruling party.

Nepal's geopolitical standing has traveled a long distance since Nehru claimed that the Himalayas in Nepal were the actual frontiers of India. Times have certainly changed since Chinese Premier Li Peng, during his visit to Kathmandu in November 1989, stated that although China understood the difficulties faced by Nepal due to blockade by India and wanted to help the Nepali people, the geographical map could not be changed as the access to sea was not possible due to high mountains in the north (Executive Intelligence Review, 1989). As time passes, it is becoming more realizable that the Himalayas would definitely not remain impregnable.

CHAPTER VI
SMALL STATE FOREIGN POLICY BEHAVIOR OF NEPAL: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

6.1. Significance of Nepal's Geopolitical Location

Nepal is situated in a crucial geostrategic location in South Asia between two emerging powers China and India. Being a small and landlocked state between two giant neighbors, Nepal's foreign policy has often been influenced by geopolitical realities. Historically, the primary objective of Nepal has been to survive as an independent state. Founder of modern Nepal King Prithvi Narayan Shah had famously proclaimed in the 18th century that Nepal was a "yam between two boulders" which emphasizes geopolitics to be a determinant of Nepal's foreign policy (Bhattarai, 2017, p. 3)

Considering the area and population, Nepal may not be categorized as a small state. However, with reference to Bjol's argument that a state is only small in relation to a bigger one, Nepal's location of being situated between huge neighbors India and China definitely makes it a small state or a small power in international relations. Nepal occupies a crucial position in the Himalayan region between the Central and South Asian regions which, according to Mackinder's definition, is a part of the Eurasian landmass. Nepal shares a 1590 kilometer-long border with Indian states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Therefore, Nepal's geostrategic setting is critically important for the security and stability of its Gangetic belt heartland where majority of its human and agricultural resources is based (Dahal, 2001, pp. 26-27).

Nepal's central location on the South of the Himalayas that separates the Tibetan plateau from the Gangetic belt of India has always influenced its history and foreign policy (Rose, 2010, p. 3). India has traditionally considered the Himalayas as

a natural barrier against threat from China and Nepal as its security buffer. In a speech to the Indian parliament in 1950, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru highlighted the role played by the Himalayas as a natural frontier for India's security since time immemorial and affirmed that India could not allow it to be breached (Muni, 2015, p. 399). Indian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, during his visit to Nepal in October 1992, emphasized Nepal's importance for protecting India's Gangetic plains from the floods caused by rivers originating in Nepal (Upadhya, 2008, p. 96). Thus Nepal's strategic and geopolitical significance for India's security has been expressed explicitly at various points of time in history. Therefore, viewing from Mackinder's heartland theory, Nepal might appear to be a crucial variable for the security and vitality of India's heartland. During Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kathmandu in 2014, he highlighted the vast importance of Nepal's water resources to India. By declaring that water does not remain in the hills but rather flows downhill, he hinted at harnessing Nepal's water resources for the benefit of India (Shekhar, 2015, p. 113)

Nepal's geostrategic significance to China has been known for centuries. The British started exploring the idea of trading through a land route with China via Tibet which threatened Nepal's monopoly over the trans-Himalayan trade. In spite of reservations from Nepal, the British created a route in 1877 through Sikkim into Chumbi valley in Tibet. This ended Nepal's monopoly over the trans-Himalayan trade which did not please all the stakeholders. China was not comfortable with the direct entry of the British into Tibet due to its security concerns. It felt that there was a need to keep Nepal and Bhutan as buffer states because if the British established their total influence in these two countries, then Tibet would be vulnerable to British penetration which, in turn, would expose the Chinese province of Sichuan (Rose, 2010, p. 134-

138). Chinese leader Mao Zedong had controversially compared Nepal as one of the five fingers of the palm of Tibet that should be made a part of China. From the strategic point of view, the need for a buffer zone between India and China had been necessitated after Tibet was annexed by China in 1951 (Singh, 2013). It was no wonder that Chinese President Xi Jinping highlighted Nepal's strategic importance to Nepal when he mentioned that China would help Nepal become a land-linked country from a landlocked one (Pant, 2019).

In an interview to Newsweek magazine in 1973, King Birendra highlighted Nepal's geographic position stating that Nepal is not a part of the Indian sub-continent but rather a part of Asia which touches both China and India (Prasai, p. 2, 1983). Nepal shares a 1414 kilometer-long border with China's Tibet Autonomous Region. Nepal has historically been considered by China as crucial for the security and stability of the restive Tibet. The Chinese feel that instability in Nepal could lead to Nepal being a breeding ground for anti-Chinese activities of the Tibetans for the cause of their independence movement (Dahal, 2001, pp. 27-28).

Due to an open border as well as historical socio-economic and cultural linkages, Nepal relies heavily on its southern neighbor India for trade and economic activities. A long and rugged Himalaya terrain separates Nepal from its northern neighbor China creating difficulties in cross border connectivity. Nepal has been historically portrayed as a buffer between India and China. Therefore, geopolitics in the neighborhood makes Nepal's foreign policy complex and sensitive (Khanal, 1988, p. 1).

The British EIC had long sought the trans-Himalayan route via Nepal for trade with Tibet which Nepal had no intention of sharing. This highlighted the geopolitical and strategic significance of Nepal during those days (Sharma, 1951). Considering the

rugged terrain and fighting spirit of the Nepali warriors, the British were more interested in making Nepal smaller, weaker and more accommodating to their interests rather than colonizing it. An independent but weak Nepal would serve as an ideal buffer between the Chinese/Tibetans and the British (Rana, 1970, p. 78).

Nepal should maintain cordial and balanced relations with both its immediate neighbors to safeguard its national interests. While India has traditionally considered South Asia as its sphere of influence, the Chinese influence in the region has been increasing gradually (Jaiswal, 2016, p. 24). Although economic cooperation between India and China has increased over the years, their bilateral relationship has historically lacked mutual trust which has even resulted in a war. In this scenario, aligning with one neighbor or trying to play one neighbor against the other would be detrimental to Nepal's sovereignty. Instead, fostering a relationship based on trust and cooperation would be in the best interests of Nepal (Simkhada, 2011, p. 16).

6.2. Nepal's Small State Foreign Policy Strategy: Historical Perspective

Nepal's location of being situated between two big and powerful neighbors has historically instilled a sense of "smallness" in the psyche of Nepali rulers, leaders, political parties and the public in general. Since the time of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the foreign policy of Nepal has been guided by the motive to survive as an independent nation by maintaining a fine balance in its relations with big and powerful immediate neighbors India and China. Apart from comparing Nepal as a "yam between two boulders" he also proclaimed in his divine counsel that Nepal needed to keep good relations with both its northern and southern neighbors (Nepal Law Commission). Therefore, he advocated Nepal for maintaining equidistance with both the neighbors.

The wars waged by Nepal against Tibet under the leadership of regent Bahadur Shah were in contrary to the foreign policy espoused by King Prithvi Narayan Shah (Rose, 2010, p. 65). Similarly, Nepal's participation in the war against the EIC was also in contrary to his policy. Jung Bahadur's rise to power as the Prime Minister in 1846 also resulted in a major reorientation of Nepal's foreign policy. He was aware of the continuous decline of Chinese power and ascertained that China would neither come to help Nepal if there was any confrontation with the British nor was it in a position to challenge British hegemony in the region (Rose, 2010, p. 106). Nepal's involvement in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 also marked a turning point in Anglo-Nepali relations. Jung Bahadur became convinced that the British strength could not be challenged in the region and it would be better for Nepal to cooperate with them to ensure Nepal's independence and survival of his regime (Upadhyaya, 2008, pp. 32). Therefore, by adopting a policy of appeasement, he decided to bandwagon with the British power.

Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher continued to bandwagon with the British as he supported them both during the Tibet attacks in 1904 and the World War I in 1914. Chandra Shumsher signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Britain in 1923 (Bhattarai, 1990, p. 62). After this event, it was clear that Nepal's foreign policy was wholly tilted in favor of the British. The policy of aligning with and appeasing the British was continued by Prime Minister Juddha Shumsher when he decided to send two hundred thousand Nepali troops to fight for the British (Upadhyaya, 2008, p. 38). India's independence from Britain in 1947 and withdrawal of Britain from India led to a major foreign policy shift in Nepal's diplomatic history which led to the Ranas seeking to expand their diplomatic relations beyond its southern neighbor and led to the abandonment of its centuries old isolationist foreign policy (Sharma, 2006, p. 26).

The signing of the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between India and Nepal was an attempt by the Indian side to not let Nepal slip away from its sphere of influence. The Indian side was of the view that the treaty implied Nepal had to follow 'special relations' with India. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru explicitly stated that Nepal should coordinate its foreign and defense policies with that of India (Pyakurel, 2020, p. 860). On the foreign policy front, King Tribhuvan mentioned that Nepal would follow the principle of neutrality and not get involved in the conflicts of two big neighbors (Nepalese News Bulletin, 1952). Prime Minister Matrika Prasad Koirala also declared that his government would adhere to the policy of non-alignment. In reality, Matrika aligned himself closely with India and he was seen as favoring a "special relationship" with India. He stated that Nepal and India were linked geographically, culturally and politically. He professed that certain geographical compulsions demanded Nepal to have closer relations between the two countries (Hindustan Times, 1953).

6.3. Non-alignment as the Basis of Nepal's Small State Foreign Policy

Behavior

King Mahendra gave dynamism to Nepal's foreign policy. The policy of non-alignment was the highlight of his foreign policy. It was he who took Nepal out of diplomatic isolation and pursued a proactive foreign policy which enabled Nepal to carve out its identity in the international arena (Singh, 1983, pp. 14). The time during which he acceded to the throne was a challenging one for Nepal as it was finding it difficult to assert its independent status in the international arena due to its isolation from the rest of the world. The policy of non-alignment was the hallmark of his foreign policy while Nepal also adopted the policy of neutrality at certain instances.

Nepal's showed glimpses of pursuing an independent foreign policy when it supported Hungary against the Soviet action in the UNGA (Sharma, 2006, p. 107). This was a clear deviation of Nepal's foreign policy with that of India considering Nehru had called for coordination of Nepal's foreign policy with that of his country. During the visit of Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya's historic visit to Beijing, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai praised Nepal's policy of peace and neutrality and both the leaders declared that they would work towards further enhancing the bilateral ties abiding by the principles of *Panchsheel* (South China Morning Post, 1956). During his address to the UNGA in September 1960, Prime Minister B. P. Koirala reiterated Nepal's belief in its foreign policy of non-alignment. Highlighting the importance of UN from the small state perspective when he declared, "Nepal regards the UN not only as a bulwark of her independence but also as a protector of her rights and independence." (United Nations, 1960).

During a joint session of the US Congress in April 1960, King Mahendra emphasized on Nepal's policy of non-alignment and non-entanglement (Upadhyya, 2008, p. 61). The policy of non-entanglement was not heard of before. Perhaps non-entanglement meant that Nepal would not be party to any sort of disputes that may arise between the two superpowers or Nepal's immediate neighbors India and China. He was also able to secure an economic aid of fifteen million dollars from the US. As Nehru was displeased very much by King Mahendra's abolition of multiparty democracy, the king started using multilateral forums to highlight the plight of Nepal's foreign policy concerns. During the first NAM summit in Belgrade in September 1961, he emphasized on Nepal's adherence to the policy of non-alignment and declared that peace was only possible when complete non-interference in the internal matters of a nation was not only preached but thoroughly practiced which was

an indirect reference to India's policy vis-à-vis Nepal (Department of Publicity, 1962).

King Mahendra's foreign policy also saw an act of standing up to India by cozying up to China when he realized that Nepal's sovereignty was being threatened by the southern neighbor. China's support to Nepal for protecting Nepal's sovereignty and independence and India's loss in the Sino-Indian War of 1962 forced Nehru to adopt a more conciliatory approach towards Nepal. King Mahendra took a neutral stance during the Sino-Indian War of 1962 in line with Nepal's policy of non-alignment when he deftly stated, "Mr. Nehru's hair has grown grey striving for peace...and I know the Chinese Premier has faith in *Panchsheel*" (Upadhyaya, 2008, p. 69). In line with Nepal's policy of non-alignment, Nepal did not take sides in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 when King Mahendra declared during his visit to India that friendship and peace should be established between the two countries (DoP, 1965). He reiterated Nepal's policy of non-alignment, given during a speech at the banquet in honor of the visiting Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, when he stated that any problem could only be solved peacefully on the basis of equality and no problem could be solved by force or by interfering in other's internal affairs.

At the fourth NAM summit in Algiers in September 1973, King Birendra affirmed that the UN resolution of declaring the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace reinforced the principles of non-alignment and ensured the small states from foreign interference and aggression. He also spoke on the problem of Nepalese landlockness and the transit right for landlocked countries (Upadhyaya, 1983, p. 21-22). The highlight of King Birendra's foreign policy was the Zone of Peace proposal. It was necessitated due to the uncertain geopolitical situation in the neighborhood which he felt was threatening Nepal's independence. During his coronation in February 1975,

King Birendra declared that Nepal needed peace for security, independence and development and therefore hoped that the ZoP proposal would ensure Nepal to achieve these stated goals (Khatri, 1983, pp. 41-43). Although India never supported the ZoP proposal, it was neither Nepal's deviation from past commitments nor its policy of non-alignment.

In June 2017, India and China entered into a military stand-off in Doklam (Khanna & Kumar, 2018, p. 358). As usual, it was felt that Nepal would be dragged into choosing sides in the geopolitical dispute between its powerful neighbors. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Krishna Bahadur Mahara stated that Nepal had not been pressurized either by India or China to take sides and noted that Nepal favored a resolution of the disputes through negotiations between the conflicting parties (The Himalayan Times, 2017). This view was in line with Nepal's policy of non-alignment. Nepal had adopted a similar neutral position during the Indo-Pakistani War and Sino-Indian War.

6.4. Counterproductive Foreign Policy Strategies for Nepal

At certain points of time in history, Nepal has tried to adopt the strategy of trying to gain support from one of the neighbors against the move made by the other. However, such a strategy has been counterproductive to the incumbent regime in Nepal due to the lack of its long term viability and geopolitical considerations. The act was deftly used by King Mahendra at a time when India was supporting the exiled NC leadership who were causing problems for the *Panchayat* regime. He visited India in August 1961 and tried to clarify misunderstandings about his regime, but his efforts proved to be futile which further hampered the already tense bilateral relations between Nepal and India (The New York Times, 1961). He then embarked on a visit to China in late September 1961 during which a border treaty and an agreement to

build a road linking Kathmandu with Tibet was signed. This was a historic step which further caused frictions with India as it feared that its security would be threatened due to the proposed construction (Upadhyay, 2008, p. 68).

During the reign of King Birendra, relations with India soured in 1987 when Nepali settlers faced expulsion from some of the Indian states and Nepal responded by setting up a work permit system for Indians working in Nepal. As a response, Nepal signed an agreement to purchase weapons from China in 1988 which India considered as a violation of the 1950 Treaty. Things got from bad to worse when India decided not to renew the trade and transit treaties in March 1989 and closed the border points leading to an economic embargo (Pyakuryal and Chaturvedi, 2016, p. 96). The move to purchase arms from China would prove to be costly for King Birendra as the India's support to the Nepali political parties led to the fall of *Panchayat* regime and restoration of multiparty democracy.

Geopolitical reverberations on Nepal's foreign policy was soon to be felt when King Gyanendra pulled off a surprise by proposing China as a SAARC observer during the SAARC Summit in Dhaka in November 2005. India was dismayed by the King's action and the Indian media was quick to denounce Nepal for playing the 'China card'. It was felt that the subsequent signing of the twelve-point agreement between the agitating Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the CPN (Maoist) was facilitated by India due to its disillusionment with King Gyanendra's anti-India foreign policy (Upadhya, 2008, p. 199).

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' visited China to attend the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games in September 2008 breaking a long historical tradition of Nepali prime ministers visiting India after assuming office. Although he undertook his first official visit to India soon after, the message that was

sent by his visit to China instilled a suspicion in the Indian establishment the Maoists planned to use China as a balance to India (Nayak, 2014, p. 33). Nepal's relations with China grew stronger during Prachanda's premiership. However, he had to resign in 2009 on a controversy surrounding his sacking of the army chief. After resigning, he stated that India had played a role in his ouster as it was not pleased with his government's efforts to forge stronger ties with China (Srivastava, 2016, p. 33).

6.5. External Impacts on Nepal's Foreign Policy

External factors have had a major influence in Nepal's domestic politics and foreign policy. The aftermath of the Sugauli Treaty resulted in the involvement and influence of the British in the internal affairs of Nepal. After the British left India following India's independence, it was India that sought to play the role of the British in the domestic politics of Nepal (Kumar, 2011). As a result, India has had a role in every political change that has taken place in Nepal since 1950.

During his visit to Nepal in October 1956, Indian President Dr. Rajendra Prasad stated that any threat to peace and security of Nepal would be considered as a threat to India as well. His did not go down well with the Nepali population as it was felt that such a thought was intended towards bringing Nepal under the security umbrella of India (Singh, 2009, p. 126). Indian Prime Minister Nehru declared in the Indian parliament in November 1959 that any aggression against Bhutan and Nepal would be considered as aggression against India. Prime Minister B. P. Koirala tried to reassure the public regarding Nepal's sovereignty and independent foreign policy as well as sought to clarify that Nehru's claims should be taken as an expression of friendly concern. However, the people were not satisfied as they felt that India was trying to infringe upon Nepal's independent foreign policy (Kavic, 1967, p. 79). However, Nehru was quick to point out the provisions of the letters of exchange of the

1950 Treaty which highlighted, “Neither government should tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor. To deal with any such threat, the two governments shall consult with each other and devise effective countermeasures.” (Jha, 1975, pp. 37-39).

Prime Minister B. P. Koirala again stoked controversy in June 1960 when he protested against the alleged description of Mt. Everest as China's. This move was quite surprising considering Zhou had already clarified China's position on the matter during his visit to Nepal. The very next day, Chinese troops crossed into Mustang in Nepal and began firing on Nepali soldiers killing one and abducting sixteen (MoFA, 1960). The Nepali government termed the incident as an infringement upon Nepal's sovereignty and registered a strong letter of protest to Beijing (Prasad, 1989, p. 75). The Chinese were quick to realize that the incident could push Nepal into the Indian arms. Zhou sent a letter to Koirala expressing deep regrets over the incident and also informed the Government of Nepal that Chinese forces had been withdrawn ten kilometers from the border (DoP, 1960). After the Mustang incident, the Koirala government seemed to realize that such incidents could threaten the existence of the country and started professing for the need to have close relations with China (Sharma, 2006, p. 154). Coincidentally, China opened its embassy in Kathmandu soon after the border dispute.

At times, Nepal has been caught in geopolitical vulnerabilities between its two neighbors. The hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu to Kandahar in Afghanistan exposed Nepal's security vulnerability. India was displeased by the incident and suspension of Indian flights to Kathmandu disrupted the overall inflow of tourists in Nepal (Ramachandran, 2002, p. 93). As soon as the crisis with the southern neighbor had subsided, Nepal had to face another crisis at the northern border. The

Karmapa Lama fled from Tibet to Nepal in January 2000 and transited to India much to the displeasure of China. These incidents severely exposed Nepal's vulnerability in managing geopolitical concerns (People's Review, 2000).

Nepal was caught by surprise when India and China, during Indian Prime Minister Modi's visit to Beijing in May 2015, agreed to enhance border area cooperation by means of trade and pilgrimage through Lipu Lekh. The Sushil Koirala-led government lodged a protest against both the governments as it was related to an outstanding border dispute between Nepal and India concerning the broader Kalapani area of which Lipu Lekh is a part (Bhattarai, 2017, pp. 32-33). This incident showed how a small state like Nepal, sandwiched between two big powers, could be totally ignored when the interests of big powers aligned and exposed the limitations of Nepal's foreign policy. It also proved that Nepal needed to increase its diplomatic capabilities to let its voice heard in resolving outstanding issues.

6.6. Comparative Analysis of Nepal's Foreign Policy with Other Small States

The comparative study of small state foreign policies of Nepal, Laos, Switzerland and Austria suggest that the best comparison can be made between Nepal and Laos. The most common aspect between these four states is that they all are situated among big and powerful neighbors. While Switzerland and Austria have adopted permanent neutrality in their constitution to preserve their independence, Nepal follows the policy *Panchsheel* and non-alignment. While the term neutrality was seen in texts till the rule of King Mahendra, non-alignment has replaced it in all the documents, speeches and statements thereafter. It may not be irrelevant to state that had the Zone of Peace proposal been accepted globally, Nepal would have gained a near status of being a neutral country. In many ways, Nepal has a lot of

commonalities with Laos as they both are landlocked countries situated in a sensitive geopolitical location among big and powerful neighbors.

Cohen (1963) has identified Southeast Asia, along with the Middle East, as a 'shatterbelt', i.e., a strategically located geographical region composed of a number of conflicting states that are also caught between the contradicting interests of great powers (p. 83). Politics of Southeast Asian states should not be viewed only from the vantage point of domestic politics but rather from their relations with neighboring states or with extra-regional states (Cohen, 1963, p. 259).

Historically, Laos had to face an onslaught from its powerful neighbor Thailand. Similarly, Nepal had to fight a war with the British who were in control in India. The NC and other political parties conducted their struggle against the Rana regime from their base in India while the Pathet Lao communists started their struggle for independence against French colonialism in close coordination from the communists in Vietnam. India has been often accused of interfering in the internal affairs of Nepal. Similarly, Thailand has had the history of trying to threaten the sovereignty and independence of Laos. During the Cold War, Laos maintained good relations with other communist countries like USSR, China and Vietnam for resisting the influence of Thailand and US (Anan, 2017). Similarly, due to the uncertain geopolitical situation, Nepal relied on getting support from China, US and other countries in trying to reduce the influence on India.

Both Laos and Nepal are part of the China-led BRI. Both the countries have expressed their desires to become a land-linked country from a landlocked one. While the railway link to connect Laos to China and Thailand is already underway, the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Nepal in October 2019 has raised hope that the construction of the Kerung-Kathmandu railway link would be a reality in the future.

Both Nepal and Laos face geopolitical vulnerabilities. However, both the countries can overcome the complex geopolitical environment in their neighborhood by adopting a strategy of maintaining friendly relations with their powerful neighbors while at the same time extracting economic benefits through win-win strategies.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Geography and geopolitical factors are one of the most important determinants of foreign policy. Such factors play an important role in determining the relationship between states. Geography is something that cannot be changed, but geopolitical factors can change according to time and situation. The foreign policy behavior of small states are greatly influenced several factors out of which geopolitical factors are one of the most significant due to which their foreign policy maneuverability is limited. Historically, survival has been the primary goal of states which becomes more crucial in the case of small states. In today's world context, the nature of survival of small states may have changed as there are different manifestations of challenges for small states. While certain geographical conditions may come to the benefit of small states to exhibit an independent approach in their foreign policy, landlocked countries face challenges in their quest to adopt proactive foreign policies.

The geographical location of Nepal has been of strategic importance. To its North is China: the most populous state in the world and one of the largest in terms with an economy second only to the US. To its South is India: the second most populous state in the world moving forward with an upward economic trajectory. Both these states are great civilizations with great military strength. Nepal occupies a crucial position in the Himalayan region between the Central and South Asian regions which, according to Mackinder's definition, is a part of the Eurasian landmass. Such a crucial location of Nepal makes it a strategically important for the vast Gangetic heartland of India adjoining Nepal as well as for the vast plateau of Tibet in China. While Nepal's geographical location makes it is significant for India in terms of the economic and security of its Gangetic heartland, the strategic value of Nepal for

China lies in the security perimeters the frontiers provide to Tibet and the scope Nepal may provide as an opening to the vast and populous markets of Indian heartland.

Therefore, Nepal should strive to enhance its value to both its neighbors so that it can create a win-win situation for all concerned.

Historically, the British felt it safe to keep Nepal as a buffer between India and Tibet/China for the probable threat to its security from China. After India's independence, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru felt the Himalayas would provide a natural protection barrier against threat from China. Gradually, India envisaged harnessing economic benefits from the hydro potential of Nepal in terms of irrigation and hydropower considering its geographically and agriculturally important Gangetic belt. Traditionally, Nepal had remained as an important route as part of the Himalayan Silk Route for trade between Nepal, Tibet and China which gradually lost relevance with time. However, in view of China's concept of the BRI in the present context, Nepal's important geostrategic location has once again come to light.

Small states have been viewed through different lenses by scholars. This research tried to view it through small state in the context of Nepal in relative terms. Nepal may not fit into being a small state in the strict terms of its size and population in global terms. However, the fact that it is sandwiched between two big and powerful neighbors definitely makes it a small state. Furthermore, the economic condition of Nepal and its dependency on its neighbors and other states classifies it as a small state. Historically, Nepal fought wars with Tibet and British East India. It also defeated the Tibetans and the British on numerous occasions although it had to cede one-third of its territory to the British after the Nepal's war with the EIC. Such types of military confrontations have also highlighted the limitations of Nepal as a small state militarily.

Small states are known to adopt several types of foreign policy behavior to preserve their sovereignty and independence as well as achieve economic prosperity. King Prithvi Narayan Shah had advocated for maintaining friendly relations with both the southern and northern neighbors as he had already gauged the military and economic strength of the two immediate neighbors. It is a question of different matter on how history could have been shaped had Nepal and Britain not fought the Anglo-Nepalese War. Having gauged the British power, the Rana rulers adopted the policy of bandwagoning with the British to safeguard Nepal's independence. Bandwagoning guaranteed the survival of Rana regime but while their regime flourished, the country and the common people were forced to live in an era of human and economic darkness. This was a proof of how geopolitical compulsions and interests had an influence in Nepal's foreign policy. Keohane's definition that a small state is one whose leaders feel that it cannot make a significant impact on the system perhaps applied to how the Ranas wanted conduct Nepal's foreign policy as they thought it was best to appease the British rather than antagonize them.

The political landscape of the region experienced massive changes middle part of the twentieth century resulting in the independence of India, end of Rana regime in Nepal and annexation of Tibet by China. India, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, wanted to carry on with the British legacy in trying to preserve the influence over Nepal in view of threats from China. The 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship curtailed Nepal's scope of foreign policy maneuverability as Nehru wanted Nepal to come under the security umbrella of India as well as Nepal to have foreign policy coordination with India. King Mahendra's accession to the throne changed the foreign policy dynamics of Nepal and saw Nepal adopt a proactive foreign policy. The establishment of diplomatic relations with China in 1955 ended the possibility that only India would

remain a geopolitical influence in Nepal. The emphasis put on the policy of non-alignment became the fundamental aspect of Nepal thereafter. Bandwagoning as a foreign policy strategy was discarded totally.

King Mahendra's foreign policy also saw an act of cozying up to China to counter India when he realized that Nepal's sovereignty was being threatened by the southern neighbor. China's support to Nepal for protecting Nepal's sovereignty and independence and India's loss in the Sino-Indian War of 1962 forced Nehru to adopt a more conciliatory approach towards Nepal. India also felt that King Birendra's Zone of Peace Proposal propounded in 1975 was also a ploy to reduce its preeminence in the region. It concluded that Nepal was trying to move out of its sphere of influence by purchasing arms from China in 1988. Similarly, India perceived Nepal was trying to act against it when King Gyanendra proposed during a SAARC Summit in Dhaka for China to be SAARC observer. All such foreign policy strategies adopted by Nepal at various points of time in history have been counterproductive as they have resulted in fall of the regime.

Geopolitical factors have played a very important role in changing the domestic politics of Nepal. Particularly, India has had a role in the political changes of 1950, 1990 and 2006. Interestingly, China has always supported the policy of engaging with whoever is in power in Nepal. Trying to gain support of one neighbor against the other as a foreign policy option for Nepal has not been successful as China would never want to dampen its relations with India for the sake of Nepal. As a small state, Nepal has faced pressures and interference in its internal matters from India from time to time. During such events, India has resorted to adopting coercive means as evident during the economic blockades of 1989 and 2015. India was able to resort

to such means by taking advantage of Nepal's geographical limitation of being a landlocked state considering it was the sole transit provider for Nepal.

The diversification of transit facilities with China is a welcome step but establishment of railway connectivity might turn out to be the most crucial factor for its success. Only then can the asymmetric dependence on India be reduced. Nepal's participation in the BRI should thus be taken in a positive light. However, the financial modality and feasibility for the successful outcome from the venture should be gauged in advance. There is no denying that due to geographical ease, India would continue to remain the easiest option for trade and transit. Nevertheless, the very fact that an additional route for transit is available will change the whole geopolitical dynamics from Nepal's viewpoint.

The comparative analysis of Nepal's foreign policy with other small states gives a fair amount of idea on the commonalities of challenges and opportunities faced by small states. Non-alignment has been one of the fundamental pillars of Nepal's foreign policy which has helped Nepal navigate the difficult geopolitical challenges in its foreign policy at various points of time in history. Austria and Switzerland are neutral countries as enshrined in their constitutions. The policy of neutrality has helped these states to secure their independence and sovereignty. In spite of the fact that Nepal is not a neutral state, the policy of non-alignment has helped it to adopt neutral postures during complex geopolitical situations in the neighborhood, including the 1962 Sino-Indian War, 1965 Indo-Pakistani War and India-China Doklam standoff in 2017. Nepal's positions during these crises have shown that it is indeed possible for small states to steer clear of big power rivalry by not aligning with any of the conflicting parties. The comparative geopolitical situation of Laos and Nepal depicts a lot of similarities of being situated between big and

powerful neighbors with limited foreign policy maneuverability. Both the countries have set a vision for being a land-linked country from a landlocked one.

Geographical conditions in which Nepal is situated will remain constant. Being a small state situated between powerful neighbors India and China, Nepal's foreign policy is bound to be influenced by geopolitical realities. However, Nepal stands to gain if it can add value to its strategic significance to both its neighbors while at the same time not engaging in policies that might hurt the interests of either of the two. Nepal should remain true to the principles of *Panchseel* and non-alignment. Therefore, this research has identified that Nepal can manage geopolitical complexities in its foreign policy only by sticking solemnly to the principles of non-alignment and maintaining cordial relations with both its neighbors, and it has discarded the option for Nepal to adopt the strategy of bandwagoning or to gain the support of one neighbor against or at the cost of the other.

The notion of the “yam between two boulders” as espoused by Prithvi Narayan Shah might have changed over the centuries. However, the fundamental conditions that have defined Nepal's survival throughout history have remained the same. Nepal may not be considered to be a small state in terms of its size and population but fits in the category by virtue of its economic capacity and position in the international system with respect to its geopolitical surroundings and foreign policy maneuverings. Although the constitution has envisaged Nepal to conduct an independent foreign policy, the geopolitical uncertainties to achieve the same in reality have remained plentiful. The decades-long political instability is now over and Nepal should now move in the path of economic development. Due to its location, Nepal is strategically important to both India and China. Nepal can remove its landlocked identity and become a land-linked state between the two giant economies to attain economic development which can enable it to adopt a more independent foreign policy.

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