

# New Endeavors in Indian Foreign Policy: India's Relation with a New-Nepal.

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## Abstract:

In this fast and keep changing world, it is so difficult to explain what should be the exact and precise foreign policy for a particular country. No country in the world would ever compromise with its national interest. We can also call foreign policy as a medium, of speaking of countries to each other at global level. India's struggle for independence, India's geographical location and India's all time search for peace has been the deciding factor in the making of India's Foreign Policy. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, successfully established the foundation of Indian foreign policy by adopting **Panchsheel** followed by the policy of **Non-alignment** and **Peaceful Coexistence**. After independence, India's goals revolved mainly around fostering new relationships with colonial and pre-colonial nations and to encourage peace and cooperation in light of international disputes such as the Cold War. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had become the first top dignitary to be accorded the privilege of offering special puja inside the Pashupatinath temple in Nepal since the abolition of monarchy in Nepal since 2008. His visit to Pashupatinath Temple has rejuvenate the old and traditional people to people bond between India and Nepal.

## Introduction:

In this fast and keep changing world, it is so difficult to explain what should be the exact and precise foreign policy for a particular country. It is a dynamic concept used by various countries to protect and promote their national interest. In the true sense it is an attempt to adjust the need of the nation as per the present scenario and give impetus to the national interest. No country in the world would ever compromise with its national interest. It is rooted deep in the behavior of a country. We can also call foreign policy as a medium, of speaking of countries to each other at global level. Foreign Policies are the true statement of the country related to its behavior with the outer world. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, successfully established the foundation of Indian foreign policy by adopting **Panchsheel** followed by the policy of **Non-alignment** and **Peaceful Coexistence**. It really analyzes India on geographical and economic grounds. He himself said that "India's foreign policy is rooted in India's civilization and traditions". It is also well believed in this changing world politics that Neither there are **permanent friends** and nor the **permanent enemy**. Every country must create an extra space in the International arena.

India's struggle for independence, India's geographical location and India's all time search for peace has been the deciding factor in the making of India's Foreign Policy. India's security concern, development and India's rightful place on the world stage makes the makes Indian foreign Policy very important. India's foreign policy has evolved a lot since independence. The fundamentals of Indian foreign policy is derived from India's long freedom struggle. The Indian foreign policy principals are the resultant of the thought power of great statesman of Indian politics in the 18th and 19th century. The policies adopted were critical in those times but progressive in nature. Basically from building global interactions to maintaining relation with close door neighbors. From making cultural interactions to linguistic interactions, India made a giant leap in the foreign policy front. Great thinkers like **Swami Vivekananda** and **Mahatma Gandhi** and social reformers who said a lot about Indian foreign policy. From time to time, all of them told the whole world about Indian foreign policy with their views. Vivekananda emphasized that India needed to become a 'messenger of peace' on moral grounds with justice and peace. He also told that India will not rule in terms of power or military might or economic prosperity but it will go ahead with its intellectual capacity.

According to **Mahatma Gandhi**, a commitment to maintaining peace in free and international relations in a democratic set-up while protecting diversity and individual liberty, and the promotion of thought power, is an essential element of Indian foreign policy. He also said that I do not support the policy of non-violence with respect to India because it is a weak country, but I want it to be conscious of its strength and follow the path of non-violence. There is no need of any training or weapons to walk on this path.

Later the political hire of Mahatma Gandhi the first Prime minister of India **Pt Jawaharlal Nehru** successfully took the charge of Indian Foreign Policy and carries it to the maximum level. In one of his greatest speeches few weeks before independence on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1946 **Pt Jawaharlal Nehru** had given a glimpse of India's foreign Policy by saying, "In spite of enmity and hatred and internal conflicts, the world is moving towards establishing close cooperation and building a commonwealth. In this new world, India has to move forward, a world where people will be co-operated freely, no matter what class or level you belongs to". At the time of attaining independence this is what the attitude of India towards the world. The increasing globalization and interdependence among countries around the world has increased the need for healthy diplomatic relations between all countries. International relation has become a broader vocabulary in global politics and

that's why a dynamic, strategic, contemporary, foreign policy is needed for effective trade and investment, and for achieving steady domestic progress.

After independence, India's goals revolved mainly around fostering new relationships with colonial and pre-colonial nations and to encourage peace and cooperation in light of international disputes such as the Cold War. India maintained its nature of non-interference throughout in these many years which later became a great trait of Indian Foreign Policy. It is also very true that though India maintained its very fundamentals of peace and cooperation but later on India faced a significant conflicts with neighbors such as China and Pakistan which led to necessary changes in the current Indian foreign policy. Now India's move was not to leave the country no longer neutral in its relations. Relations with the United States, the Soviets and many other countries were in constant flux. The reason is the formation of many non-state actors during both the Sino-India and Indo-Pakistani wars. This shift went by that far that is further increased the military preparedness in the region.

The development of foreign policies based on national interest now came to the core idea of nations and later the adaptation of industrial policy of liberalization 1991 turned India towards a mixed economy. India opened its market open for all. Privatization, global market, corporatization, borderless trade has become priority of every nation. Each and every nation started changing its economic and trade policies with the outside world. This opened up employment opportunities and manufacturing in various country and created a new avenue for cooperation and interaction with many countries of the world in that time.

### **Current Development of India's Foreign Policy:**

The current government of NDA (National Democratic Alliance) led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has won huge seats and huge number of hearts too in the year 2014. Entire country voted him to conduct a mutual cooperation and fearless Foreign Policy for India this time, as he promised many times during his election triumph. This government has been making active efforts to expand India's diplomatic footprint, promote stronger international ties, and use these global ties for mutual benefit and progress. India's Prompt Diplomatic Strategy at many fronts brought by the government was appreciated at many forums. This very method involves a more focused and proactive approach to building closer ties than in earlier times. This is achieved through increased participation in regional and international conferences and summits along with an increasing number of personal visits by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi to neighboring and other countries. This dynamic approach includes activities for the nation to move forward in a predetermined direction and to interact with each other to achieve specific goals. These visits has turned into millions and millions of Indians living in various countries across the world to feel the unitedness of Indians at global level. It also increased the capacity of Global Indian Diaspora where only Indian Diaspora was a key factor in the vast phenomena Indian Foreign Policy in the upcoming world.

### **Better Relations with Neighbors:**

India shares its borders with some of the major countries including Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, and Maldives in the region. They all have a strategic importance in the region so maintaining a healthy and cooperative relation with these neighbors are so clamant. At present the central government has placed a lot of emphasis on Bhutan, Myanmar, Pakistan, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka. Under this, relations with neighbors need to be given priority and it is also being implemented on priority. The process involves two basic approaches the first one is 'neighbor first' and second one is 'act east'.

### **'Neighborhood First Policy':**

It has become a core component of India's foreign policy. It focuses on peaceful relations and collaborative synergetic co-development with its South Asian neighbors. The Indian subcontinent is filled with many diverse range of topics, such as security, economic, technology, research and education, connectivity. This policy of the government aims to improve dialogue with its immediate neighbors and countries in the Indian Ocean region. It achieves various goals through a holistic approach to regional foreign policy. Connectivity is a major aspect of this policy, in which India enters into cooperation in the areas of trade, infrastructure, and commercial connectivity and transit facilities with various countries in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) through a major tool called Memorandum of Understanding.

These agreements ensure the efficient use of resources and the free flow of energy, goods, labor, and information about borders. Another important component of this approach is the provision of resources by India to its neighbors as well as assistance in terms of financial assistance, equipment, human resource training and diplomatic alliances. For example, India provided immense assistance in the form of more than 1,700 tons of relief material and medical aid to its neighbor Nepal after the 2016 earthquake. Regional organizations are important mechanisms for India to emerge as a regional leader in South Asia. Since China is also showing its dominance in south Asia it so important for India to show its reach in South Asia. In

addition, India has participated and invested in **SAARC** as a vehicle for development in this region. However, a new kind of group formation has also emerged nowadays which, even when there is no consensus, can achieve faster and more effective progress. One such example is Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (**BBIN**). Which is forming a group for development in some of the major sectors like energy sector, motor vehicles, hydro power management and power connectivity.

### 'Acting on East'

Former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao government introduced a 'Look East' policy in 1992. Due to the change in geopolitical and economic conditions, the present government has named it as 'Acting East', so that India's active role in integration into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and East Asian countries. In addition, the Prime Minister participates in the annual ASEAN Summit, and exchanges high-level talks with member countries. India's Role in BIMSTEC the Bay of Bengal Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation Initiative, an international economic cooperation organization of countries bordering or adjoining the Bay of Bengal, is an initiative of India as a mark of its commitment to its neighbors. India's 'Act East' policy is proved to be a diplomatic initiative to promote economic, strategic and cultural relations with the vast Asia-Pacific region. The country's eastward campaign since 1992 has its own geo-strategic and contemporary international relations relevance. Actually 'Act-East' and its early saga, 'Look- East' are not different, they are two sides of the same coin. It represents two significant, but continuing phases of India's policy towards the important Asia-Pacific region. When the Look East policy in 1991 was launched, India's economic stability, its global relevance and the overall external atmosphere were not what they are at present. It took many years for India to get adjusted to the newly emerging economic environment in the global perspective. India's Foreign Policy was modified and got appreciated at various level. A major policy shift came in the year 2014, when Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of the country. Immediately after he took charge in his office, he showed his foreign policy choices and Interests by inviting the heads of SAARC countries at New Delhi in his Prime Ministerial Oath Ceremony. Prime Minister Modi launched the Act East policy and it was appreciated by all at every level. India's economy was relatively strong and its global profile was getting higher and higher with the charismatic leadership of Prime Minister Modi which was not in the decades prior. Prime Minister Modi gave a new thrust to intensify economic, strategic and diplomatic relations with countries that share common concerns with India and China in this big strategic region. The growing economic and military strength of China and its implications over the various disputed areas were keenly observed. PM Modi made it clear that he did not want to compromise India's Geo-Strategic Interest with China in the region at any cost.

Like many early shifts in the foreign policy of Indian government, this one of them was the 'Look East Policy' (LEP) to 'Act East Policy'. The major changes or shifting in foreign policy of any country balances with the international order which basically affects the overall domestic and foreign factors of a particular country. For example; the rise of China and the fall of Soviet Union both has a huge influence over South and South East Asia. India formed the Look East Policy to tackle the various problems driven by these power blocks and to deal with this, a new kind of policy was also required to in different way in the region to secure all the National Interest in the region. The Domestic developments in the nation also persuaded the policy makers to change the course of the overall policy. Some of the very important factors like growing demand for energy, economic developments, health and infrastructure needed immediate change. India reformed its economy in 1991, when India adopted the liberalization policy and opened its door for all investment to boost its foreign policy. Several economic problems had forced the Indian state to liberalize its domestic policy for Privatization and vast economic liberalization. But along with this, if you see on a foreign policy ground, Look East Policy helped India in expanding its trade relations. It helped investment opportunities in the ASEAN region. These two major factors of changing the economy for betterment has transformed India's foreign policy at a different level in the region. India managed to increase its number of bilateral relations and investments in a dynamic global order in the very important region. With the changing of name from 'Look East' to 'Act East' policy, is a realization that India is shifting its trade to Eastern borders by a huge 50% now onwards. This shift has its own many drawing factors also like inability of SAARC for better economic unification in South Asia. The rise of Bangladesh, Myanmar and other countries of ASEAN in economic and geostrategic sense in the region. South Asian countries always have a high trade ratio with other parts of the world than involving this region. This has brought a very significant change in the overall approach of Indian Foreign Policy.

### India Nepal Relations-

India and Nepal have long ties in religion, culture, matrimonial ties, economic and political closeness and common destiny. The open border between the two countries has long been a symbol of the unique relationship. Despite the disparity in size, the two countries and peoples have nurtured an inextricable relationship since the time of Rama-Sita and Gautama Buddha. Both the 1950 treaty and the open border system reflect a strong relationship between the two countries, although there is also a demand to rethink both qualities in the changing political context. More than 7 million Nepalese live and work in India and the Indian Army has at least 46 battalions of Gorkha soldiers. Nepal is surrounded by India on three sides, which means that any political or economic imbalance will affect the relationship between the two countries. Almost every major political



change within Nepal has been very significant in its close relationship with India. Every new regime that has come to power in Kathmandu has had difficulty accommodating New Delhi's interests and concerns. The last few decades of India-Nepal relations have seen many lost and won opportunities, avoidable misunderstandings, costly misunderstandings, bigger lack of mutual trust and cooperation. Nepal's changing political landscape over the past few decades - including the recent regime shift from a constitutional monarchy to a republic - has kept India on balance with a good neighbor. New Delhi has helped Nepal during natural disasters by providing economic assistance, investments, education and infrastructure. Nevertheless, there are many challenges to be faced in order to strengthen the relationship.

### **The Greater Importance of Nepal:**

After coming to power in 2014 the NDA Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi set the stage of a new Indian Foreign Policy. That's why Nepal was among his first destinations abroad in August, 2014. Prime Minister Modi was keeping with his ambitious 'Neighborhood First' Policy reached Nepal. To engage close door neighbors like Nepal which has its own geo-strategic interest with India's neighborhood, it was a first bilateral trip by an Indian prime minister to the Himalayan nation in 17 years.

This kind of a bilateral visit to our close neighbor Nepal was long time due because the last one came in the year 1997. This was long due because of the Nepal's on-going political misbalance and insurgency. India was never out of touch with Nepal. The Maoist insurgency went long in Nepal which lasted from the mid-1990 to 2005. If you go deep you will find there was a delicate peace process which was initiated by India time to time. The new constitution-drafting exercise that started in 2008 has its own consequences. India was never felt comfortable with the 2015 constitution. Throughout the various process of Constitution making in Nepal, India has supported a federal, democratic, republican, and inclusive Constitution. India always hoped for an inclusive Nepal. The 2015 constitution is the result of more than seven years of debate and conflict in Nepal. It disturbed almost everything in Nepal. After abolishing the monarchy in 2008, Nepal has always struggled to create a government acceptable to its more than 100 of major ethnic groups. It has also become unnecessarily very popular in Nepal that Nepal does not rank very high in New Delhi's Foreign Policy priorities which is completely not true. Prime Minister Modi's visit to Nepal after 17 years has proved this completely wrong. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had become the first top dignitary to be accorded the privilege of offering special puja inside the Pashupatinath temple in Nepal since the abolition of monarchy in Nepal since 2008. His visit to Pashupatinath Temple has rejuvenate the old and traditional people to people bond between India and Nepal. The 2018 meeting and joint statement shows the priorities of cooperation between the two countries in some of the major sectors like agriculture, inland water-ways, railway line and increasing air connectivity. The broader implications includes a railway services agreement, additional air links connecting Lucknow, Pokhara and Nepalgunj. Setting up new achievements is always inevitable in this Himalayan region. The traditional pattern of India-Nepal relation or Nepal under the Indian security umbrella has getting changed. The old dominance of India in Nepal has been challenged time to time by China. The emergence of China as a new economic superpower in the region has established strong narratives in the south Asia and Himalayan region. Nepal slowly but effectively maintained its ties with China though Chinese investment. Though from the early days Nepal maintained its relation with China a little low key because of the Indian influence but somehow the increased ties between Nepal and China in the recent years it has become more popular both in Nepal and as well as in India. It will not be called superlative if we say that India is dealing in an indirect war situation on the infrastructure race with China in Nepal in the new millennium.

### **Conclusion:**

A new beginning based on the principles of "equality, mutual trust, respect and mutual benefit, cooperation is always helpful in India-Nepal Relationship. Since both the countries claim that they have a lot of evidence, they need to process towards finding a mutually agreed date for the diplomatic level meeting at the earliest. Until then, political leaders, civil society groups, the media and the general public should refrain from making hate comments of any kind. They should understand that this relationship is not going to end here. The border dispute between India and Nepal is an opportunity for them to modernize old ties for a shared vision of prosperity. India and Nepal should do more than just settle border issues. They must return to the original strength of their unique social, cultural, strategic, political and economic ties and modernize relations to directly link their people, markets, finance and technology for a better India-Nepal relations to the coming generation.

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