

ISSN: 2990-7993(P)

Dhaulagiri Journal of Contemporary Issues

Vol 3, Issues 1

June, 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/djci.v3i1.79662>

Published by: Research Management Committee,
Dhawalagiri Multiple Campus, Baglung
Home Page: <https://dmcjournal.edu.np/index.php/DWJCI>

Geostrategic Imperatives and Prospects: Re-conceptualizing Nepal's Foreign Policy amidst a Transforming Global Landscape

Dilli Raj Gautam, PhD

Lecturer in Political Science, Dhawalagiri Multiple Campus Baglung

Email: dilli.gautam@dmc.tu.edu.np

Abstract

This paper highlights the geostrategic imperatives that encompass the essential strategic priorities. A nation must address to safeguard its sovereignty, security, and national interests within the context of its geographic positioning and global geopolitical dynamics. Nepal's foreign policy focuses on balancing its strategic location between India and China while managing regional and international alliances to safeguard national interests. Since King Prithvi Narayan Shah's era, Nepal has followed a non-aligned approach, likening itself to a "yam between two boulders." Despite occasional tilts toward either neighbor, Nepal has generally sought diplomatic balance. A major shift occurred after the promulgation of new constitution in 2015. Afterwards, the elected government emphasized trade and transit diversification, particularly strengthening ties with China. This paper explores the historical development of Nepalese foreign policy and examines how it is being redefined in a changing global context. The existing literature is still insufficient to fully reveal Nepal's foreign policy priorities in the current scenario. This article is basically an analytical overview of foreign policy in reference to federal context of Nepal. Contrasting the previous relevant research articles, the author has focused on a qualitative approach based on secondary textual data. Relevant journal articles, books, and authentic websites are reviewed while preparing this article. For Nepal, to establish a unified foreign policy that reflects its long-standing political stability, all political parties must work together and harmonize their approaches for ensuring national interests as defined in the new constitution.

Keywords: Geostrategic imperatives, interferences, non-alignment, 'Panchasheela', 'Zone of Peace'

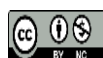
Article Information

Received: 9 February, 2025 **Reviewed:** 12 February, 2025 - 14 March, 2025 **Revised:** 15 March, 2025- 4 May, 2025

Accepted: 7 May, 2025

Published: 2 June, 2025

Corresponding Author: Dilli Raj Gautam



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Introduction

The concept, "Geostrategic imperatives" denotes to the crucial, geographically driven needs or priorities that a country or group of countries must address to preserve their economic prosperity, political clout and security on the global stage. These imperatives frequently involve securing access to strategic locations, trade routes, or vital resources based on their geographical position. In other words, the crucial steps of a country must be standardized on the basis of its geographical context in order to accomplish its strategic goals. Geopolitics studies how geography influences politics and international relations by focusing on the struggle for control over geographical entities and their strategic use for political advantage. (Flint, 2016, p.16). It is one of the inevitable parts of foreign policy of a nation.

Foreign policy refers to a government's strategy for interacting with other nations and international organizations. It involves a series of decisions and actions designed to promote a country's interests, values, and objectives on the global scale. Nepal's foreign policy is often criticized for its lack of consistency, as it focuses more on ideals than on addressing pressing issues and safeguarding national interests in line with the people and country's needs. It remains highly fluid due to frequent changes in government. Historically, Nepal has been ruled by successive dynasties, each shaping its own system of governance, society, and culture, contributing to a continuous process of change and continuity (Khanal, 1996). No exception exists; Nepal's foreign policy defines the nation's interactions with other states and provides a framework for diplomatic negotiations.

Nepal's foreign policy is frequently criticized for being inconsistent; it fails to address the national interest in accordance with the needs of the country and its citizens and instead discusses ideals rather than putting issues into tangible form. It is constantly changing due to governmental shifts. No matter whether party is in power, the fundamental tenets of foreign policy should not be altered in order to further the interests of the country. The basic tenets of foreign policy, which give all individuals and stakeholders a sense of ownership or recognition for their involvement and representation, should be understood by the political parties at the very least (Upadhyaya, 2024). Since the objectives of the foreign policy of coastal states differ from those of landlocked nations like Nepal, each state's geopolitical location has an impact on its international relations.

Foreign policy of a sovereign state governs international relations. It is designed to achieve national goals and followed by a nation in its dealing with other nations. It guides the nation in its activities, relationships and interactions with other states or international community. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal, the fundamental objective of the foreign policy is to enhance the dignity of Nepal in the international arena by maintaining sovereignty, integrity and independence of the country. Nepal's foreign policy follows the United Nations Charter and a neutral stance. The key principles include respecting each country's borders and independence, not interfering in other nations' internal matters, treating all countries equally, avoiding conflict, solving disputes peacefully, and working together for mutual benefit. According to Acharya (2065 BS, p.251), a country's foreign policy is determined by a number of elements, including its geographical position, history, language, religion, culture, economy, forces, business, commerce and political leadership.

There are four different kinds of foreign policies that are used worldwide. The first is known as the "free foreign policy of the world," and it is spearheaded by the US and other countries. The second, which is headed by socialist nations, is known as socialist foreign policy. The third is known as non-alignment foreign policy, and the fourth foreign policy is neutral or isolationist (The Thematic Committee on National Interest Protection, 2066 BS, p. 80). It's the sovereign choice of Nepal to adapt the favorable one.

Regarding the Nepalese, the People's Movement of 2006 was founded on the 12-point agreement that the CPN-Maoist and an alliance of the seven major parties signed in New Delhi, India, on November 22, 2005. Political actors agreed to hold a constituent assembly (CA) with a commitment to human rights, enduring peace and state restructuring to ensure social inclusion and a competitive multiparty democratic system, or Loktantra, as a result of the People's

Movement.

The country's major power ties have shifted since the April 2006 political conversion, and the palace, which served as the "nucleus" of power relations, has diminished since the king's position has been entirely suspended. After the first Constituent Assembly held in 2006, the Maoists became one of the major political forces in Nepal following the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement between the seven-party alliance (SPA) government and the Maoist Communist Party of Nepal on November 21, 2006 (Upreti, 2007). Nepal became a federal democratic republic on May 28, ending around 240 years of Shah Monarchy through a decisive 560 votes out of the total 601 members in the Constituent Assembly (Naidu, 2016). The first CA meeting implemented the republican agenda of the Interim Constitution 2063 BS, making Nepal a republic and granting full sovereignty to its people.

As a result, the shifting power dynamics in Nepal has impacted and shaped the conduct of important political figures. People who once participated in politics and benefited from the king's protection are now excluded from the political mainstream and are thus unable to directly utilize state resources and power after the king's suspension from the political power. The shifting of power was accomplished through constitutional arrangement i.e. building a new constitution by CA. The first CA elected in 2008 could not write a constitution so that second CA election was held on November 19, 2013. Thus, the journey of the second CA ended successfully with the promulgation of the new constitution on September 20, 2015.

For the first time in Nepal's history, the preamble and several schedules of the Constitution contain provisions and a federal structure. The preamble of the Constitution states "Do hereby pass and promulgate this constitution, through the Constitution Assembly, in order to fulfill the aspirations for sustainable peace, good governance, development and prosperity through the federal, democratic, republican system of governance" (Constitution of Nepal, preamble). The main objective of this paper is to examine Nepal's foreign policy's geostrategic needs and opportunities in the context of changing global environment. In addition, the specific goals are to evaluate the shifting patterns and trends of Nepalese foreign policy within the federal republic political system and to provide a succinct overview of the country's foreign policy's development and evolution.

Methodology

During the early stages of nation-building, Nepal managed to sustain its reality notwithstanding geostrategic limitations. Adopting an appropriate foreign strategy made it possible. However, as time has gone on, developing and implementing foreign policy has grown more difficult. In order to change Nepalese foreign policy under a democratic republican system, the paper primarily discusses the shifting patterns and trends of Nepalese foreign policy throughout history. Thus, a descriptive and analytical design has been used to make the study. Books, journals, newspapers, agreements, documents, and earlier study projects are examples of secondary sources from which the necessary materials have been gathered and applied. The data is qualitative in nature.

Literature Review

Geostrategic imperatives are the geographically driven priorities a country must address to maintain its economic prosperity, political influence and security. They involve securing strategic locations, trade routes or vital resources based on geographical context and are a crucial aspect of a nation's foreign policy.

Given the dynamic nature of international relations and the evolving regional landscape, Nepal must formulate its foreign policy and diplomacy by carefully analyzing contemporary global and regional trends, understanding their implications, and adapting its strategies to safeguard and promote its national interests (Acharya, 2023). "The Himalayan range is a natural 'wall' between Nepal and China," according to Buddhi Narayan Shrestha (2003), one of Nepal's leading border specialists. Conversely, the Indo-Nepal border is devoid of both man-made and natural walls. At the local, national, and international levels, Nepal's identity has been called into question by the porous or open

border in the south.

Paudel (2024) suggests that as Nepal actively engages with the international community, it encounters various challenges and opportunities in formulating its foreign policy. Therefore, incorporating theoretical perspectives such as realism is essential for gaining a deeper understanding of and effectively addressing these dynamics. Likewise, Khanal (1996) asserts that Nepal's foreign policy has evolved along two parallel yet interconnected trajectories: one strategic and the other political. The effective implementation of both approaches necessitates political stability and economic advancement within the nation. Defining 'Total Diplomacy' of Nepal after 1990, K.C. and Pandey (2018) conclude that the major challenges are politicization and lack of consensus followed by undefined national interest, neighboring countries' influence, institutional weakness, role of diplomat and perception of the stakeholder.

Defining geostrategic political imperatives of Nepal, Shrestha (2024) suggests that the government must implement concrete, result-oriented programs to maximize international cooperation. Both the government and opposition should work together without conflict for Nepal's development. Persistent issues like uncertainty, underdevelopment, and corruption could invite external interference, exploiting Nepal's geopolitical vulnerabilities. To safeguard its national interests, Nepal must manage its international relations strategically; otherwise, it risks losing its sovereignty and independence due to external interference.

Evolution of Foreign Policy in Nepal

Nepal is among the oldest countries in Asia. King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gurkha principality started the process of annexation and cession in the latter half of the 18th century, which resulted in the current geographical boundaries of Nepal. Since Prithvi Narayan Shah united the country in 1769, it has maintained a unified state with essentially the same characteristics. Nepal holds a special place on the map of Central Asia in terms of geopolitics, and two of the most powerful nations are its neighbors. Its northern boundary is the People's Republic of China, while the southern boundary is the Republic of Indian Union. Due to its inaccessibility, this landlocked nation was known as the "forbidden country" until the 1950s, when road and air transport connections allowed it to be open to the outside world.

Nepal's foreign policy has historically been shaped by its geographical position and the foundational principles set by Prithvi Narayan Shah, notably the "yam between two stones" doctrine, emphasizing a balanced approach between its two powerful neighbors, India and China. This principle has continued to influence Nepal's foreign relations even after transitioning from a monarchy to a republic. Despite political changes, Nepal's foreign policy has remained largely traditional, lacking significant institutional development. The country's participation in the Bandung Conference (1955) and the adoption of the 'Panchasheela' principles strengthened its diplomatic ties, particularly with China. Nepal also aligned with the Non-Aligned Movement, advocating for sovereignty and balanced international relations.

Nepal's foreign policy, which was traditionally shaped during the Panchayat era, changed significantly after the country transitioned from a monarchy to a federal republic. Although some aspects of the king's foreign policy in changing context remained inadequate to represent the public interest in foreign affairs. Since a nation's foreign policy impacts its global position, it is essential to assess Nepal's role in international organizations and regional matters. Global events like the collapse of the Soviet Union, U.S. assertiveness, India-China rivalry, the India-Pakistan arms race, and Nepal's shift to federalism have influenced its foreign policy (Ghimire, 2023). Considering these changes, Nepal now needs to move beyond a foreign policy focused solely on primary national interests and adapt to the evolving geopolitical landscape. However, foreign policy formulation has remained centralized within the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with limited public engagement. The shift to democracy after the 1990s introduced opportunities for broader participation, yet implementation challenges persist. The political transition following the People's Movement (2062/63) and the shift to federalism presented an opportunity to reform foreign policy, but traditional frameworks remained dominant.

Given Nepal's status as a landlocked and economically vulnerable nation, it faces challenges in fully adhering to international norms. While nationalism remains a crucial aspect of its foreign policy, Nepal must adapt its approach to balance tradition with evolving global realities to ensure sovereignty, stability, and economic progress. South Asian countries like India and Pakistan follow a foreign policy based on intermediate (variable) interests, aiming to expand their influence internationally. In contrast, weaker nations like Nepal base their foreign policy on vital interests, focusing on national survival and regional integrity. This diversified opinion creates challenges for regional cooperation, making it difficult to achieve common objectives (Verma, 1981). King Mahendra also played a key role in shaping Nepal's foreign policy, securing UN membership while committing to non-alignment. Since joining the UN, Nepal has actively contributed to international peace and security. However, Nepal's position between two powerful neighbors, India and China, makes it difficult to maintain a balanced foreign policy as both nations seek greater global influence (Verma, 1981). In Nepal, where the government has changed frequently, adopting robust and stable foreign relations has proven extremely difficult.

The ongoing arms competition between India and Pakistan poses a threat to regional stability in South Asia. Henceforth, Nepal, advocating peace, proposed the concept of a peace zone under King Birendra, who emphasized its importance at the 1976 Colombo Conference (Verma, 1981). However, Nepal's domestic policies failed to implement this vision, and King Birendra's assassination further disrupted Nepal's political stability, leading to the decline of the monarchy. Since then, national interests have been overshadowed and political leadership has neglected foreign policy priorities.

Nepal's foreign policy, despite emphasizing good relations with its neighbors, faces challenges in maintaining stability, particularly concerning trade agreements, border issues and shifting regional dynamics. Political changes have sparked discussions about redefining Nepal-India and Nepal-China relations, as Nepal navigates its diplomatic position amid sensitivities between its two powerful neighbors.

China advocates for mutual freedom in regional relations, while India remains cautious about Nepal's growing ties with China. Nepal's landlocked status further complicates its ability to establish strong relations with third countries, necessitating strategic diplomatic and political engagement to ensure economic, social, and political stability.

Historically, Nepal has adhered to a non-aligned foreign policy, reaffirmed by King Birendra during the Panchayat era. However, global power shifts, particularly the rise of post-1990 geopolitical centers, have influenced Nepal's foreign policy direction. While the principle of fraternity and non-alignment remains central, there is a growing need to reassess Nepal's foreign policy framework in response to changing global and domestic political landscapes.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 enshrines foreign policy based on national interest, emphasizing non-alignment as a foundation for national security and development. However, while this policy ensures sovereignty and peaceful coexistence, it limits Nepal's ability to exert greater influence in the international arena compared to more strategically engaged foreign policies. The 2015 Nepalese constitution has established a new framework for foreign policy, recognizing that a state's foreign policy should be updated to reflect the aspirations of its citizens as expressed by various movements, strengthening national interests and taking into account the evolving global landscape (Upadhyaya, 2024).

Constitution of Nepal and Its Provisions Relating to Foreign Policy

Nepal has stepped into the new context of federal governance against the age-old unitary system of governance. The new course of federal structure remains in operation after the promulgation of federal democratic constitution by the Constituent Assembly in 2015. The Constitution defines Nepal as independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive, democratic, socialism-oriented, federal democratic republican state (Constitution of Nepal, Article 4(1)).

Protecting and advancing the national interest has become the primary goal of any nation's foreign policy. It is

also interpreted as a state's extension of its internal policy. The principles that underpin Nepal's foreign policy include respect for one another's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-interference in one another's domestic affairs, equality, non-aggression, peaceful dispute resolution, and cooperation for mutual benefit, unwavering trust in the UN Charter, and the importance of world peace.

The Constitution of Nepal has also set the guiding principles of Nepal's foreign policy. The State shall direct its international relations towards enhancing the dignity of the nation in the world community by maintaining international relations on the basis of sovereign equality, while safeguarding freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence and national interest of Nepal (Constitution of Nepal, Article 54 [4]).

Similar to this, the Constitution's State policy enshrines the guiding principles of foreign policy, which are as follows: to conduct an independent foreign policy based on the United Nations Charter, non-alignment, the Panchasheel principle, international law, and the norms of world peace, while keeping active in defending Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, and national interest; to review previous treaties; and to make treaties and agreements based on equality and mutual interest.

Federal Republican Governance and Development Diplomacy

Development diplomacy is a complex and dynamic field that plays a vital role in international relations. Initiatives pertaining to sustainable growth, capacity building and development cooperation are all included under the general heading of "development diplomacy." Countries utilize it as a strategic instrument to accomplish their political, diplomatic, and economic goals. Development diplomacy, which promotes goodwill and advances the global sustainable development goals (SDGs), is frequently regarded as a part of soft power. It includes aid via non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multilateral development aid (assistance given through international organizations), and bilateral development aid (direct assistance from one nation to another). The development diplomacy of Nepal is mostly guided by the constitutional provisions as well as customary practices. Nepal has already sent the path of socialism-oriented political system and it needs to generate national capital through diplomatic channels to lead to the path of prosperity. It has various dimensions in the change context.

Countries project their resources, human capital, environment, culture and so forth to attract foreign investment, assistance and cooperation for the development of the nation. Reciprocal relations on the basis of equality and equity are core values of development diplomacy (Upadhyaya, 2024). As a federal nation with many prospects for development under the framework of sustainable development, Nepal should prioritize the development of its people and their well-being in order to strengthen its links with other countries. To achieve the country's and its citizens' development goals, collaboration between the ruling and non-ruling political parties in the fields of foreign policy and development is also beneficial.

Geopolitics: Opportunities and Challenges

Because of its location in a geopolitical hotspot, Nepal's foreign policy is examined through a geopolitical prism, which influences its internal politics and draws it into power conflicts. (Liang, 2022). With an underdeveloped economy and heavy reliance on foreign aid, Nepal's development prospects depend on its international relations. Consequently, Nepal maintains minimal interest in taking sides amid global power competition. Nepal's geo-strategic location offers opportunities for Nepal-China cooperation through trans-Himalayan connectivity, facilitating inter-regional trade (Aryal, 2022). Likewise, Nepal should be aware of protecting its national interest despite its border openness to India. Realizing this potential requires strong road networks, careful fund management, and diplomatic acumen. Political stability, good governance, and human capital development are essential for maximizing benefits. Nepal must balance China-India relations, maintaining cordial ties while upholding non-alignment. Prioritizing national interest, Nepal should prevent any activities threatening its security or that of its neighbors.

Nepalese Foreign Policy in South Asian Context

Nepal has a stated policy of maintaining good and cooperative relations with its immediate neighbor – China and India – and other friendly countries. “Friendship with all, enmity with none” is the motto of Nepal’s foreign policy. Consisting of 10 Southeast Asian nations, ASEAN is a fast-developing region. Irrespective of their different political systems and backgrounds, the ASEAN member states have focused on developing the region’s socio-economic development as a whole. The region is marked not only by different political and military orientations but also by economic disparities. The region contains countries at different levels of socio-economic development. However, the cohesion among the ASEAN member states and their efforts at bringing all members along and, to borrow a United Nations (UN) phrase, “leaving no country behind” is a worth-appreciating approach.

The nations of South Asia possess abundant natural and human resources. The strong nations undoubtedly employ the strategies to further their own interests. Furthermore, a nation's strategic location attracts the attention of powerful nations. Nations like the United States, China, and Russia have their own interests, especially when it comes to business and security. In the current corporate environment, the international powers have demonstrated their concern for security, and vice versa (Upadhyaya, 2023).

In South Asia, Afghanistan suffers due to power struggles between strong nations, Sri Lanka faces an economic crisis, and Pakistan deals with ongoing instability and security issues. Nepal is still transitioning to its democratic goals. South Asian countries are closely connected through security, trade, culture, and climate risks. They share common challenges like human rights violations, poverty, and natural disasters like floods. Frequent visits by top officials from powerful nations highlight the region’s geopolitical importance. These visits are not just for diplomacy but also to push strategic projects onto host countries.

The strategic objectives of the large powers or developed nations cannot be completely accepted or ignored by the developing and disadvantaged countries. Additionally, one nation should monitor the strategic actions of another. The weaker countries are unwittingly and intentionally trapped in a geopolitical game. However, powerful nations' interests aren't necessarily bad. Human rights, social justice, technology transfer, poverty alleviation, humanitarian aid, and literacy campaigns are among the agenda items that benefit the host countries. South Asian nations adopt a measured approach to seize the opportunities brought about by geopolitical interests. If these nations focus on their national issues as a group, they will be in a stronger position.

Nepal and SAARC

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established in 1985 with the aim of accelerating the process of economic and social development in its member states through increased intra-regional cooperation. However, it is dormant now after India withdrew its participation in the summit of 2016. It is high time they revived the SAARC process through dialogue and mutual support. The functioning of SAARC is still relevant to achieve the goals spelt out in its Charter. Once the regional forums are revitalized, the countries face little geopolitical pressure. They can work together to reduce poverty through the investment in trade, energy, water resources and tourism. Poverty has been their common enemy. They can benefit from railway connectivity and landlocked nations like Nepal should strive to have an unhindered access to sea.

If the leadership can foster peace and stability in the region engulfed in terrorism, power politics, conflicts and instability, there will be less room for geopolitical maneuvering. Stability fosters peace and vice versa. For this reason, upholding the rule of law is equally crucial. People ought to have more power over their education, skills and ability to earn a living. People must promptly act as a catalyst for the nation's prosperity if they are resilient in various facets of their lives. Low income and underdevelopment, high unemployment, extreme poverty and mass migration are some of the current issues facing South Asian nations. So, the nation ought to devise a shared plan to get past these obstacles.

It has been noted that a SAARC-like organization is necessary for regional stability and peace in the current environment. However, regionalism in South Asia is more significant for small nations like Nepal, which can use the platform to discuss issues related to trade, connectivity, security and sovereignty, thereby using it as a tool for regional peace and harmony. Bhattarai (2021) aptly asserts that Nepal's current efforts to revive the SAARC process remain insufficient. As the Chair of SAARC, Nepal must take a more assertive approach by engaging with India and other member states to facilitate the hosting of the SAARC conference.

Priorities of Nepalese Foreign Policy in Changing Context

Nepal's foreign policy priorities in the evolving global context emphasize the need for continuous assessment and refinement to align with contemporary geopolitical realities. By rectifying past policy shortcomings, Nepal seeks to strengthen its sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence while fostering peaceful international relations based on mutual harmony and coexistence. The nation aims to establish diplomatic ties reflecting the aspirations of its citizens, ensuring Nepal's dignified presence on the global stage. Additionally, Nepal prioritizes economic inclusion, social progress, and sustainable development through equitable policies that enhance the living standards of its people. Institutionalizing federal democratic republican values is also a key objective to ensure freedom, equal economic opportunities and social justice.

Furthermore, Nepal aims to actively contribute to global peace, security, democracy and human rights while safeguarding itself from foreign interference. Strengthening relations with the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and regional alliances like SAARC remains essential for Nepal's global engagement. Given its strategic location, Nepal is committed to fostering cooperative relations with India, China, and other nations based on historical, cultural and economic ties. Reviewing and revising past treaties ensures that Nepal's international agreements align with its national interests. Additionally, Nepal seeks to address critical issues such as climate change, biodiversity protection, and the status of Bhutanese and Tibetan refugees within its borders, demonstrating a balanced approach to both domestic and international challenges.

Nepal's foreign policy is founded on national interest, according to the country's new constitution. According to Article 5, Nepal's national interest is founded on the non-alignment-based brotherhood policy. The foundation of national policy is the non-alignment policy. Whereas the foundation of non-aligned foreign policy is the policy as the main aim of foreign policy, security, and economic and social development. It merely embraces the live-and-let-live philosophy. This kind of foreign policy, unlike one based on intermediate interests, is unable to expand its influence on a global scale.

The government has publicly urged the developing nations to invest in Nepal by implementing a balanced foreign policy toward China and India. Mutually beneficial relationships and a neighborhood policy have been established. Foreign policy is referred to as domestic policy's extension. Foreign policy needs to reflect the long-achieved political stability. Political parties in Nepal and other all parties involved should be officially prepared to create a unified foreign policy. Determining the national interest is a prerequisite for this to occur. According to the provisions articulated under the new constitution.

Conclusion

Nepal's geostrategic imperatives refer to the critical strategic considerations necessary to safeguard its sovereignty, security, and national interests within the broader geopolitical landscape. Given its geographical positioning between two major powers, India and China, Nepal must adopt a balanced diplomatic approach to maintain strategic autonomy. This requires navigating regional and international alliances effectively to alleviate external pressures while fostering economic and security cooperation. Nepal, one of the oldest countries in Asia, has been

standing as a sovereign and independent State since its unification by Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1769. Geopolitically, it is situated between two global powers, China to the north and India to the south. Historically known as the "Buffer Zone" due to its inaccessibility, Nepal remained largely isolated until the 1950s when the development of road and air transport facilitated its connection to the outside world.

Nepal's geostrategic position presents opportunities for enhanced Nepal-China cooperation through trans-Himalayan connectivity, promoting inter-regional trade. However, Nepal must also safeguard its national interests, particularly given its open border with India. Achieving this balance requires robust infrastructure, prudent financial management and strategic diplomacy. Political stability, good governance and human capital development are crucial for maximizing these benefits. Maintaining cordial ties with both China and India while adhering to a non-aligned stance is essential to protecting national security and regional stability. Throughout the Panchayat era, Nepal's foreign policy formulation was highly centralized within the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with minimal public involvement. Nepal's engagement with regional institutions reflects its commitment to regional integration. As an active member of SAARC, Nepal has pursued bilateral alternatives for third-country transit routes which provided Nepal further exposure in regional arena. The transition to democracy in the 1990s created opportunities for wider participation; however, challenges in implementation continued. Following the People's Movement (2062/63 BS) and the adoption of federalism, there was potential for foreign policy reform, yet conventional approaches continued to prevail.

The foreign policy of Nepal has stood in trauma in each and every political transitional trajectory. Undoubtedly, despite the evolving global context, Nepal's foreign policy remains centered on preserving sovereignty, fostering peaceful international relations, and advancing economic and social development. Rooted in a non-alignment approach, it must to prioritize ties with regional neighbors like India and China, as well as global and regional organizations such as the UNO, ASEAN, and SAARC, while also encouraging foreign investment. Strengthening democracy, human rights, and environmental sustainability remains key while handling foreign policy. To ensure stability, Nepal seeks a unified foreign policy among political stakeholders, aligning treaties and engagements with national interests.

Ethical approval for the research: Not applicable

Consent for publication: Not applicable

Conflict of interest: The author does not have any conflict of interest with any institutions concerning this research

Ethical conduct of research: This paper is written adopting ethical values.

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Authors Bio-notes

Dr. Dilli Raj Gautam serves as an Assistant Professor of Political Science under Tribhuvan University and is presently affiliated with Dhawalagiri Multiple Campus, Baglung. He earned his doctoral degree with a dissertation entitled "*Constitutional provisions of fundamental rights: A comparative study of Nepal and India*." Dr. Gautam has an extensive scholarly portfolio, having authored numerous peer-reviewed articles and research reports within his field of expertise.