



Institute of Regional Studies

Policy Paper

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Nepal's Security Dilemma

An Overview of India's Foreign Policy vis-à-vis Nepal with Special Reference to Recent Border Dispute

Executive Summary

The paper presents an historical analysis of India's foreign policy vis-à-vis Nepal since 1950. Keeping in mind Nepal's asymmetrical interdependence with India, the paper discusses foreign policy options for the Kathmandu to reinforce its claims in the recent dispute over Kalapani region and neutralize New Delhi's 'Big Brotherism'. Recent controversy apparently triggered with the release of Indian political map showing Kalapani region as its part. According to Sagauli Treaty of 1816, Nepal claimed that the aforementioned area of around 337 km belongs to it and subsequently Nepal's parliament approved a new map showing Kalapani, Limpiadhura and Lipulekh as its territory. With the constitutional amendment, this issue has become a permanent foreign policy irritant between the two states. The paper observed that New Delhi's burgeoning interest in the Kalapani region is skeptical. Indian forces have been controlling this strategically important area since 1962. Amid cartographic maneuvering, recent inauguration of Kailash-Mansarovar road by Indian Defence Minister has added fuel into the fire as the road passes through Kathmandu's claimed part. Nevertheless, the changing geo-political environment of the region especially after a Sino-Indian forces clash at Ladakh, it would be naïve to say New Delhi will occupy Nepal's territory by force. However, New Delhi will continue exercise its influence to safe guard its own security interests.

The main contention and conclusion of this paper is that Indian cartographic maneuvering in the Himalayan region is a part and parcel of India's mainstream hegemonic policy. It is true that Nepal's economy is largely dependent on Indian supplies of essential goods, however, with the assistance of regional and international regimes Nepal can escape asymmetrical interdependence with India. Islamabad's diplomatic support in this regard can make a difference, the paper argued. Pakistan put great emphasis on the friendship between the two countries. In 1975, Islamabad strongly supported Nepal's proposal to declare it a 'Zone of Peace'. Apart, recent map by India also offended Pakistan by incorporating Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh into its Union Territories, which Islamabad has strongly protested. In line with thinking, Kathmandu's concerns would be welcomed by Pakistan and its diplomatic support amid New Delhi's cartographic maneuvering in Kalapani region would help promote Nepal's cause. On its part, the paper argued that it is high time Islamabad needs to revamp its relations with all South Asian states with special attention towards highlighting their security compulsions with the New Delhi.