

# Geo-Political Condition of Nepal

## Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the insurgency through Nepal's existing geo-political conditions and its all expected/possible impact in the region. This paper touch to express the questions related to the changing geo-political condition of Nepal and its impacts on geo-strategic position in South Asia as well as the whole world. It is clear that, this has to have global linkage of insurgency with Nepal's geo-political factors? If there is, then, what are possible implications of those linkages to Nepal's geo-political situation in reference to India? The magnitude of violence and other related repercussions has been growing; the national and international concerns over the situation have also been increasing significantly. As the scope of geo-politics often correspondent closely to geographical scale however, very little knowledge has been processed so far narrating the geo-political aspects of the ongoing conflicts in the country as well as in the region means the southern part of the country. The paper deals and tries to answers these questions in reference to geo-political condition of Nepal.

**Keywords:** Geo-politics, Geostrategic, Insurgency, Regional, Geographical, Politics, International Politics, Foreign Policy, Internal Situation, Ethnic Group, Maoists, Ideology

## Introduction

The Maoist and Communist activities in Nepal are anti-Indian and ultimately anti-Nepali as well; but unfortunate part of this is that Nepal never tries to understand this situation now days since Rajeev Gandhi's government was there in India. The factors related to geography and other related features play multi-dimensional role in survival, independence, security and identity of a country. It also has greater importance in determining Geo-political condition and related study. In this regard, it needs proper attention by the government of Nepal and Nepali people. However, the changing global scenario and other systematic non-systematic changes via globalization, increasing dependency by both sides, international laws on many issues, international organizations, and relations between and among the countries have significantly turned in many ways. Changing global situation especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union and rise of the United States as a uni-power and the event of September 11, not only influence the geo-political definition and scopes for an individual country like Nepal, but it has tremendous implications in the global and regional politics, inter-states, inter-national relations and ultimately geo-politics.

The growing Maoist, Naxals activities in Nepal has impact to Nepal's neighbors especially in some of the states in India has seriously raised India's eyebrows. The increasing military assistance to Nepal without the Indian knowledge or consent has diluted the issue of arms import to Nepal from outside in general and from third countries in particular. It is a known fact that Nepal's geographical location automatically makes a situation to be in the custody by cultural, behavioral, economic, defense and ultimately by geo-political in India. In this regard Nepal must aware about his location and other concern aspects. Despite the increasing spillover impact its neighboring countries however, it can be said that there will be less likely to build up a regional level response to devise the common strategy to counter the Maoists insurgency. Since the two times failure of domestically initiated dialogue processes in the past, there has been general realization among the national stakeholders about the necessity of the international mediation regarding the insurgency based geo-political setup. This paper comes to find out the geo-political condition of Nepal in many ways in the benefit and establishment of Nepal.

## Objective of the Study

As geographically placed in the middle of the two giants countries, Nepal's foreign policy throughout the history, decides on this ground of these two countries. It is the reality as well as the internal politics of the



**Kaustubh N Misra**

Associate Professor,  
Deptt. of Geography,  
Buddha Post Graduate College,  
(DDU Gorakhpur University)  
Kushinagar, Gorakhpur

Nepal; because Bharat never pressurize Nepal for anything and never misbehave likewise, but so far the concern of China, it is just opposite. The paper deals the geo-political specialties of Nepal and its changing characters with the changing regional geo-political situation as well as inner-Nepali's circumstances. The geographical factors like- location, size, resources, cultures and religions, economic strengths are the major determinates to defining the geo-political condition of Nepal and these are the factors formulating the geo-strategy for the survival and development of a country. In this regard the aim of the study is to understand the present geo-political condition of India and Nepal in reference to the regional set-up and the repercussions of the Nepalese geo-political set-up inside the country and outside the country, means in the region.

#### **Review of the Literature**

Geo-politics is a study of relationship between geographical factors and the politics of states and nations and their interactions with the neighboring countries and communities. German geographer Oyvind Osterud<sup>1</sup> described in 1988 that 'Geo-politics indicates links and causal relationships between political power and geographic space. The geographical tradition had some consistent concerns, like the geo-political correlates of power in world politics, the identification of international core areas relationships between navel and terrestrial capabilities'. The Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén<sup>2</sup>, who used the terminology geo-politics first time in 1899 (Encarta dictionary, 2004), described that the geographical location, size, natural resources, population and other physical features and environmental influence of a country are determinates the political, military, level of economic development and cultural characteristics of a nation and country. Parajuli & Das<sup>3</sup> expressed in 2014 that 'The decay of the value of distance has today diminished the relevance of geography and the nation's ability to gain power status by geographic means has markedly declined, even it has not disappeared completely'. But, this philosophy not looks in reality in this case. Currently, the geopolitical studies include the country's territorial size, location, natural resources, level of economic development, composition of the population and its size, its organizational and intellectual abilities, communication and circulation and their impact on nations' role in international politics as well as country's foreign policy matters.

The strategic location of Nepal occupies limited freedom. Vaidya<sup>4</sup> stated in 1992 that 'The freedom of choice and type of external relations in the world like- Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland is limited, because of economic dependence, resulting largely from their land locked Geographical location vis-à-vis South Africa and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Similarly, the geographical location of Nepal occupies its economic dependence mainly with India and its landlocked position limit for the freedom to maneuver in its foreign policy. Only after the 1950s democratic movement, it has been basically adopting a non-aligned foreign policy. The slow pace of its economic development locates it in the periphery of world

capitalist system. Though technological innovation changes in the global system, but the gap between the powerful and weak, wealthy and poor and big and small has still been widening. As Viotti and Kauppi<sup>5</sup> emphasized in 2012 that 'The Third World states are maintained in their subordinate position within the world capitalist economy'.

Hari Khadka<sup>6</sup> said in 1997 that 'The size of a country is mainly defined in terms of power. The power of a country derives from the size of its territory, the size of the population, national income, natural resources, military strength etc. As Singh & others<sup>7</sup> asked in 1994, The existing standards of size and power, Nepal is small, weak and one of the least developed country in this region. However, various commentators argue that in terms of size, Nepal is not as small as it appears. Shrivastav & Rao<sup>8</sup>: 1992 said that 'Only because of its surrounding specially its two geographically largest and most populous neighboring countries of the world. Nepal's neighbors to the south and the north are the most populous countries in the world and their images have shaped this reflection of 'small Nepal' both at home and abroad'. With an area of 147181 square kilometers, Nepal is bigger than some of its neighbors. According to the 1996 World Bank Atlas, only 41 countries out of 209 have a population larger than Nepal. As Jonathan<sup>9</sup> expressed in 1979, the geography of the country has affected not only the perception of its size but also the substance of its public policies and performance.

So far as the concern of military strength, it is a fact that Nepal's military capability is still larger than with a vast number of other countries in the world. Khadka<sup>10</sup>: 1997 emphasized that, It is a perception that has been created to a country whose geographical size is larger than many of its immediate neighbors and its population is also bigger than of hundreds of other countries in the world. Dikshit<sup>11</sup> Nepal's perception of insecurity is a psychological phenomenon resulting from its physical environment which in turn is a consequence of its size. Since such a perception has also shaped its orientations and relations with the outside world, it has been preoccupied almost single mindedly as to how best to seek protection from any potential risk to its sovereignty. In this regard as Perceval<sup>12</sup> argues- It's a defensive mentality that has been developed and somehow created because of its immediate neighbor India is twenty-three, and China sixty-eight bigger in size. Such a perception needs to be changed in today's world where not only the theory of balance of power determines the interstates relations but also equality, mutual respect. As that a country of 23 million people, Nepal must out from this mentality.

The Indian economic interests in Nepal are also quite profound. It is not only because of Nepal's economic dependency on India, but also by its own character. All the Nepalese rivers flow to India from Nepal and India has been able to utilize them to irrigate massive portion of farming lands in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Nepal has always been a safe market for Indian manufactured goods. The volume of two countries annual trade is also significant. There are considerable amount of Indian investment in Nepal.

As Chauhan<sup>13</sup> pointed out in 1992 that- If Nepal's economic interests in India are vital, then for both India and Nepal are also substantial. Due to the economic blockade imposed by India in 1989/90, the volume of trade between two countries was declined significantly, however, after the reciprocal arrangement; it has been steadily increasing between the two countries. However, it was amended in 1999 with the pressure from Indian side and which narrowed the scopes of two countries' trade; but the total responsibility goes to Nepal.

As described by Nicholas Spykeman<sup>14</sup> in 1938 that- Geography is the most fundamental conditioning factor in the foreign policy states because it is the most permanent behavior. Anything dictates Nepal's foreign policy than is its Geographical position described by various Nepalese and Indian writers. Stiller & Ludwig F.<sup>15</sup> Noted in 1993 that- Geography dictates Nepal-India relations. According to the Department of Survey, HMG, Nepal occupies a 1590 – kilometer-long border with India and 1414-kilometer border with China. Nepal occupies pivotal position in the Himalayas – between the Central and South Asian regions as a part of Euro-Asian landmass, to use Mackinder's<sup>16</sup> terminology. To the north of this monarchical kingdom is Tibet, the autonomous Region of communized China; to the east, west, and south are the Indian states– Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh of republican India. Nepal's position forms its geo-strategic setting critically important for India's security and stability of its heartland. So far as the Indian security concerns, the expressions made by the Indian leaders time to time have become quite controversial, as feel by the Nepal. Adrien<sup>17</sup> calculated in 1950 that, Nepalese found Indian authorities' statements a kind of paternalistic and even interpreted it as Indian attempt to undermine the Nepal's sovereign and independent status. Such statement does not help to create healthy environment in two countries relations. Such expressions only contribute in creating suspicions in a country like Nepal which is weak and small compared to its immediate neighbors. But the present Indian government trying to change the said mentality, it depends on Nepal that what behavior she will takes.

#### **Discussion**

Since the Nepal's geographical location, size, population, cultures and religions, its economic strength, vital resources etc. are the major determining factors in defining the geo-politics of the country as well as these are the factors in formulating the geo-strategy for survival, defense and development of Nepal. Such a psychology as well as the projection of a country needs to be overcome and firstly the political leaderships must rise above such mentality and portray the image of the country as a player in the regional relations as well as in the international relations. The city state like- Singapore with a population of 3.4 million could be cited as an example on how to portray as a player in the regional as well as in international level being a small in geographical and as smaller size of population, it is example standing behind Nepal.

Again, with the tremendous progress in technology, transport and communication system as well as growing international, regional organizations and various international regimes have certainly provided greater scopes not only to the big and developed countries to overcome their roles but also economically weak, underdeveloped and landlocked country like Nepal to expand their roles without any hesitation. As of the case of Nepal, it has been taking comparatively active and assertive foreign policy. One of the strong reasons of its activeness lies in its early taking membership of different regional and international forum, due to its strategic geo-political importance. Nepal has already elected two times in the United Nation's Security Council and become an active member of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the country like India gives Nepal equal importance so far as the concern of different forums. Nepal has also been able to attained membership of World Trade Organization and other forum like BIMSTC. The establishment of SAARC Head Quarter in Kathmandu was also the result of its active and successful foreign relations with the member states of the SAARC, particularly India. India gives this importance to Nepal.

The Royal massacre in June 2001 has also contributed in damaging its international reputations. Both of these events have tremendously drawn the international communities' attentions and raised concerns on Nepal regarding domestic conflicts and violence. Owing the deteriorating security situation in the country, the Indians and the international communities have expressed their concerns over the escalation of violence and abuses of human rights and civilian rights in Nepal. Similarly, the growing domestic conflicts have raised differential process of new alignment and realignment with international forces. The increasing violence and the killings of innocent civilians, disappearances, threats, loss of private and public properties and human lives has further affected the stability of the state's economy and polity and ultimately geo-politics. Such a situation strained Nepal's roles in the international forums. The post September 11, 2001 scene pre-emptive strikes are validated and the issue of security and terrorist threats have been increasingly dominating the regional and global discourse in reference to the geo-political condition of Nepal.

Although, there is a tendency in international politics especially among the large countries to either paternalist or bring smaller countries into their area of influence, but India never uses this mentality; in spite of this many countries in the world after the end of World War II have been challenging such tendency and becoming more assertive. With the changes of regional/international relations and the process of globalization and regionalization, such paternalist attitude has also been declining and so, the Cold War gone down and regularly finishing. There is a tendency running to counter such attitudes through playing assertive roles and building positive images in the existing international and regional forums and help in reformulations of regional and international laws. As Nepal has also been contributing their role to its

troops in the United Nations peace keeping missions in different parts of the world and elected two times as the member of the Security Council of the UN, it said that Nepal has no negative aspect via its smaller images and reputations.

Nepal's geographical location is very important for India by many ways. Due to Nepal's strategic importance for Indian defense from China to the north, the British had done everything to transform Nepal into a friendly buffer state between China and British possessions in India; but it is a important thing to note that British never does this in the benefit of India, it was done for the benefit of India and China both, so India has no curtesy with British so far. After the end of colonial British rule in India, the government of India had also taken note of Nepal's strategic importance and quickly signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship covering all aspects of India-Nepal relations in 1950. Similarly, both India and Nepal concluded an agreement on arms procurement in 1965 and in 1978. India agreed and always be ready to sign a trade and transit treaty with Nepal every time and anytime. Thus, there are some genuine and legal concerns on India's security viewpoint, due to Nepal's location. While Nepal pursues its foreign policy, it is utmost necessary for Nepal to consider that security sensitivity for India in same intensity. It is a fact that Nepal's relations with India and its approach to the Port in Calcutta, which is about 1000 kilometer and also southern border connection due to the plain lands and open border is easier than with Tibet's vast mountainous lands. But again it must be signifies that Nepal cannot maintain equal relationships with its two neighbors. It is important to note here that Nepal has to be sensitive in not allowing its land to be used by any anti-Indian forces and provide better confidence to the Indian side and should not allow any activities that undermine the Indian security sensitivity; it is more beneficial for Nepal.

Nepal needs to be sensitive about the Tibetan situation via China and possible misuse of Nepali land by any forces related to China. Though, after the ground establishment of Nepal-China diplomatic relationship in 1956, the two has been regarded as friendly. But Nepal must always aware that China is not reliable like India. China's concern on Nepal is that any trouble especially related to the security and instability in Nepal would strengthen anti-China elements in its borders. The Khampa standing and propagating in 1960's was the most important and sensitive issue for the Chinese those days. Since last five decades, the Khampa activities has been somehow continually existed, however, it has not been completely stopped. Chinese are very much concerned that Nepal not to be a springboard for the anti-Chinese forces like Khampas. Therefore, the geographical location of Nepal is also important to China which has been emerging as a global power. As an emerging global power, China's interest not only to secure its borders but also to seek stable, cordial and friendly relations with its immediate neighbors; but it is China's popularizing agenda, the

hidden agenda is differ from this point and this is the ditching point of Nepal from the side of China.

The cultural, civilization and ethnic connections are also important to discuss the geo-political aspects of Nepal. The land of present-day Nepal in the geographical Central Himalayan region represents of two cultures- Indic and Bodice. The contact zone of these two runs north-west to south west at a tangent to the mountain axis, whereby the Caucasoid (Khas) predominate in the karnali basin and the Mongoloids (Kiranti) eastwards to Karnali. Nepal is a meeting point for two specific countries as well as civilizations like- India and China and for two regions south Asia and Central Asia. Nepal is a host country of both religions Hindu and Buddhism and these religions are the most dominating religions in India and China respectively. Being a birthplace of Siddartha Gautam, Nepal can attract and easily attracts large number of Buddhist pilgrims from China as well as different part of the world; on the other hand there are several Hindu shrines, where large number of Hindu pilgrims visits Nepal and used to visit.

Nepal's natural resources have tremendous potentialities for industrialization, economic development and prosperity of the country. Natural resources are not only important for Nepal's scenic beauties; but also constitute assets and strength which has strong impact on Nepal's geo-political factors. The total projected hydro-potentiality of Nepal is 83000 MW, which is the second largest potentiality after Brazil in the world. As water and energy becoming scarce resources at the global level, Nepal is such potentiality certainly gravitates the attentions from the other economically powerful countries and dynamics of the region. The mountainous natural scenic beauties that Nepal occupies are very much important for developing a major tourist destination and preserving the tremendous biodiversities as well. The worlds' rare species it posses have international interest in Nepal. Nepal's energy could also contribute to India as well as other South Asian countries. It has not been able to utilize the tremendous hydro-power potential.

Utilization of Nepal's resources especially the water resource has always been a very controversial issue. The two cases of Koshi and Gandak deal with India in 1954 and 1959 and more recently, also in Tanakpur. All has set-off a bad precedent arousing serious national concerns. In the midst of high controversy, the Government of Nepal and India have signed a treaty with amended version which included status of the river as well as other projects known as the Integrated Development of Mahakali River including Sarada Barrage, Tanakpur Barrage and Pancheswar Project. As Nepal's future development lies on due proper utilization of its natural resources specially the water, it is utmost important for it to develop comprehensive frameworks on its utilization. It is also vital in developing a national consensus among the major political and social forces about its maximum utilization by considering other social and geo-ecological impacts. Nepal can make herself important through this potentials.

Considering the vitality of the natural resources in the national development as well as of the past controversies, a clause has been inserted in the new Constitution of Nepal that any agreement with other countries which is related to the natural resources including the water exploitation that is considered important and having long term effect has to be approved by the two-third of majority of the member of the Parliament. Such a process not only helps in building national consensus but also contributes to developing a comprehensive program for the proper and exponent utilization of the resources targeting to improve the people's PQOL and also strengthens Nepalese roles in the regional/international politics. Therefore, the geopolitical aspects of Nepal natural resources need to be intensive consideration in this changing and dynamic world and on this basis a comprehensive framework and system need to be developed for its proper and systematic utilization. The utilization of natural resources demands collective efforts and it does have strategic interests not only for Nepal but for its neighboring countries like India as well. In this regard the geo-political condition and importance of Nepal establishing over here.

#### Conclusion

Geo-economic factor has become vital for a nation to its roles in the regional/international developmental/growth processes. Since the early 1990s, ideological ingredients have become less important in comparison to the economic policies. Meanwhile, geo-economic activities have become a prominent phenomenon around the world and across the country. Geographical phenomenon now is seriously taken into account, when a nation or region makes its trade policies and carries out foreign economic exchanges. So, it is possible for the world community to re-divide the world's areas according to geo-politics and geo-economics in the future, which ultimately means the geographic division, must serve economic development of that particular region and Nepal as well. The economic links between Nepal and India is very strong and must be very important in the interest of both the countries; because Nepal compels and bound to depend on India for essential commodities such as fuel, salt, coal and also for manufacturing and day to day products/commodities.

Nepal's trade with India is the largest and it is total 60% at this time. It is steadily increasing and trade deficit is also growing up. Similarly, Nepal China trade has also been growing particularly via Tibet. And the trend of increment is on the rise due to the increasing connections between the mainland China and Tibet. The construction of railways and road up to Lhasa by the year 2006 and opening up of more and more passes between the two countries will certainly contribute to the two countries economic and trade activities. This is unfortunate for India and Nepal promoted it without knowing its repercussions; because the China is not the believable country like India.

In this regard five things are important to notice for the side of Nepal-

1. Nepal always faithful to China, it is harmful for Nepal.
2. India is more reliable than China, but Nepal always misbehaves with India.
3. Nepal depends most of the cases on India, but ideologically inclined to China.
4. China always tries to reach India with dirty eyes through Nepal and Nepal never tries to understand this nuisances.
5. Since the last two decades Nepal never work to understand that if China touching India crossing through Nepal, meaning thereby finishing the identity of Nepal.

#### References

1. *Oyvind Osterud: Agrarian Structure and Peasant Politics in Scandinavia: A Comparative Study of Rural Response to Economic Change, University Press, Oslo, 1978.*
2. *Johan Rudolf Kjellén: The Great Powers, Leipzig Press, Sweden. 1905.*
3. *Deepak Raj Parajuli, Tapan Das: 'Performance of Community Schools in Nepal: A Macro Level Analysis; International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research. 9 July 2014.*
4. *Vaidya, Tulsi Ram: Nepal: A Study of Socio-Economic and Political Changes, New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1992.*
5. *Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi: International Relation Theory, Fifth Edition, Denever University Press, Denever, 2012.*
6. *Hari Khadga: Local Democracy in South Asia: Micro processes of Democratization in Nepal, Kathamandu, 1997.*
7. *Singh J., Singh K. N. & Patel R. B.: Bharat ewm Sameepwari Desh, Gyanodaya Prakashan, Gorakhpur, India, 1994.*
8. *Srivastav V. K. & Rao V. P.: Bharat Ewm Sameepwari Desh, Basundhara Prakashan, Gorakhpur, India, 1992*
9. *Lindell Jonathan: Nepal and the Gospel of God, New Delhi: United Mission to Nepal, 1979.*
10. *Hari Khadga: Local Democracy in South Asia: Micro processes of Democratization in Nepal, Kathamandu, 1997.*
11. *Dikshit S. K.: Rajnitik Bhoogol, Gyanodaya Prakashan, Gorakhpur, 1993.*
12. *Perceval: Nepal, Vol. 2, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, 1976.*
13. *Chauhan P. R.: Rajnitik Bhoogol, Vashundhara Prakashan, Gorakhpur, 1992.*
14. *Nicholas J. Spykman & Hellen R. Nicholl: Geography of the Peace, Yale University, Institute of International Studies, Brace and Co., New York, 1944.*
15. *Stiller, Ludwig F.: Nepal: Growth of a Nation, Kathmandu: Human Resources Development Research Center, 1993.*
16. *Mackinder Halford J: The Geographical Pivot of History, London, 1904.*
17. *Sever, Adrien: Nepal under the Ranas, New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1993.*