

Nepal's Foreign Policy

Overview

A landlocked country, Nepal is sandwiched between two giant neighbors—China and India. To the north, the Himalayas constituted a natural and mostly impassible frontier, and beyond that was the border with China. Nepal is landlocked by India on three sides and China's Tibet Autonomous Region to the north. West Bengal's narrow *Siliguri Corridor* or Chicken's Neck separate Nepal and Bangladesh. To the east are India and Bhutan. Nepal depends on India for goods transport facilities and access to the sea, even for most goods imported from China.

During the British Raj (1858-1947), Nepal sought geostrategic isolation. This traditional isolationism partially was the product of the relative freedom the country enjoyed from external intervention and domination. From the mid-nineteenth century, when Britain emerged as the unchallenged power in India and the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in China was in decline, Nepal made accommodations with Britain on the best possible terms. Without surrendering autonomy on internal matters, Nepal received guarantees of protection from Britain against external aggression and interference. London also considered a steady flow of Gurkha recruits from Nepal as vital to support Britain's security in India and its other colonial territories.

In the 1950s, Nepal began a gradual opening up and a commitment to a policy of neutrality and nonalignment. At the 1973 summit of the Nonaligned Movement in Algiers, Late King Birendra proposed that "Nepal, situated between two of the most populous countries of the world, wishes her frontiers to be declared a zone of peace." In 1975, during the coronation address of Late King Birendra, he formally asked other countries to endorse his proposal. Since then, the concept of Nepal as a zone of peace has become a main theme of Kathmandu's foreign policy.

As of mid-1991, Nepal had been endorsed as a zone of peace by more than 110 nations. Many of these countries also recommended a regional approach to peace as the goal. Without the endorsement of India and the former Soviet Union, however, the prospect of broader international acceptance was dim.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Nepal had established diplomatic relations with approximately 100 countries. Nepal was an active member of the United Nations (UN) and participated in a number of its specialized agencies. Nepal also was a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and had successfully negotiated several bilateral and multilateral economic, cultural, and technical assistance programs. Because of its geographical proximity to and historical links with China and India, Nepal's foreign policy was focused mainly on maintaining close and friendly relations with these two countries and on safeguarding its national security and independence. Nepal's relations with the United States, Europe, and the Soviet Union showed new signs of vitality in 1991.

The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal has traditionally maintained a non-aligned policy and enjoys friendly relations with neighboring countries. As a small, landlocked country wedged between two larger and far stronger powers, Nepal maintains good relations with both the People's Republic of China and India.

Constitutionally, foreign policy is to be guided by "the principles of the United Nations Charter, nonalignment, Panchsheel [five principles of peaceful coexistence], international law and the value of world peace." In practice, foreign policy has not been directed toward projecting influence internationally but toward preserving autonomy and addressing domestic economic and security issues.

Nepal's most substantive international relations are perhaps with international economic institutions, such as the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, a multilateral economic development association. Nepal also has strong bilateral relations with major providers of economic and military aid, such as France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia,

Switzerland, the United States, and particularly the United Kingdom, with whom military ties date to the nineteenth century. The country's external relations are primarily managed by its *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*.

Objective

The fundamental objective of the foreign policy is to enhance the dignity of Nepal in the international arena by maintaining the sovereignty, integrity and independence of the country. Furthermore, its objectives are enumerated as follows:

- To conduct Nepal's foreign relations in consonance with the policies and guidelines of Government of Nepal,
- To project and protect Nepal's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national interest abroad,
- To promote bilateral, regional and multilateral relations for the socio-economic development of the country,
- To promote friendly relations with all the countries of the world and particularly with its immediate neighbors, on the basis of sovereign equality, mutual respect, trust, goodwill and understanding,
- To play an active role in the United Nations and other international organizations in order to promote international peace and security, and development,
- To play a positive and meaningful role in the Nonaligned Movement in the context of a changed world.
- To play an active role in the promotion of regional cooperation in South Asia under the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation,
- To act as the country's a first point of contact for the outside world and also serve as Nepal's window to the world.
- To play an increasingly active role in the conduct of Nepal's economic diplomacy, thereby promoting our trade, investment, economic cooperation, tourism, and help tap and develop our immense water resources potential.

Guiding Principles

The foreign policy of Nepal is guided by the abiding faith in the United Nations and policy of nonalignment. The basic principles guiding the foreign policy of the country include:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty;
2. Non-interference in each other's internal affairs
3. Respect for mutual equality
4. Non-aggression and the peaceful settlement of disputes
5. Cooperation for mutual benefit

The foreign policy of Nepal is also guided by the international law and other universally recognized norms governing international relations. The value of world peace also constitutes a significant element guiding the foreign policy of the country.

Constitutional Provisions on Foreign Policy

The Part-4 (Directive Principles, Policies and Obligations of the State) of the Constitution of Nepal, 2015 outlines the cardinal principles, parameters, and general directions of Nepal's foreign policy. These are:

Directive Principles

1. 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 the freedom, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence and national interest of Nepal. {Clause 50.4}

State Policy:

The State shall pursue the following policies relating to international relations:

1. To conduct an independent foreign policy based on the Charter of the United Nations, non-alignment, principles of *Panchsheel*, international law and the norms of world peace, taking into consideration of the overall interest of the nation, while remaining active in safeguarding the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and national interest of Nepal,
2. To review treaties concluded in the past, and make treaties, agreements based on equality and mutual interest. {Clause 51 (m 1 and 2)}