

Major Waves and Critical Juncture in Sino-Indian Geopolitical Rivalry in Nepal

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE DETAILS
Nepal is a democratic country dominated by communist and threatened by anarchist, lying between two nuclear powers, two different civilizations, two different political systems has been fronting the geopolitical rivalry between India and China from the ancient time. The study focuses on analyzing the major waves and critical junctures in global and regional contexts which molded the relationships between Nepal, India and China. The study is descriptive, analytical and qualitative in design. It categorizes the major waves and critical junctures on ancient age (before 5th century), Medieval age (5th -15th century and post medieval period of Nepali history), Industrial age (1760-1840), First and Second World War (1900-1950), Bipolar World (Cold War 1950-1989), Unipolar World (1989-2008), and Multipolar world (2008-2025). It identifies connectivity, security, culture and energy as significant variable of Sino-Indian geopolitical rivalry in Nepal. The study also proves that the variables of geopolitics are dynamic in nature. KEYWORDS: Geopolitics, connectivity, security, geo-economics, energy	Published On: 17 November 2025 Available on: https://ijmir.com

INTRODUCTION

India as a traditional regional power of Indian sub-continent never wants to loss its hegemony in its sphere of influence. China as an emerging global power is spreading its influence regionally and globally. Similarly, India and China have their vested conflicting interests over the small nations of south Asia. Nepal as a small nation lying between two nuclear powers, two different civilizations, two different political system has been facing the geopolitical rivalry between India and China from the ancient time. Nepal is a democratic nation dominated by communist and threatened by anarchist. India and China both have their own security and connectivity interest over Nepal which has magnified the geopolitical rivalry between them in Nepal. Nepal as a transmission corridor of Buddhism between India and Tibet (China) keeps geo-cultural importance to both nations. The economically emerging industrializing India and China need clean energy for their industrial growth and sustainability, therefore both nations are eyeing on the huge water resources of Nepal which added new scope of their rivalry. Saul Bernard Cohen (2003) defines geopolitics as an interaction between geography and political process. The interaction between geopolitical elements are dynamics in nature which influence each other; therefore, it is necessary to study the priorities of geopolitical elements and critical juncture on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal.

The global and regional context shapes the domestic politics and the relationships between the nations. The study focuses on analyzing the major waves and critical junctures in global and regional contexts which molded the relationships between Nepal, India and China. It categorizes the major waves on ancient age (before 5th century), Medieval age (5th -15th century and post medieval period of Nepali history), Industrial age (1760-1840), First and Second World War (1900-1950), Bipolar World (Cold War 1950-1989), Unipolar World (1989-2008), and Multipolar world (2008-2025). The study focuses on identifying the major causes and elements on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal. It analyzes the major waves on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal and focuses on identifying the critical juncture that shifted the priorities of the geopolitical factors on the rivalry between India and China.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is descriptive, analytical and qualitative in design. The research is completely based on secondary data which is collected through various journal and news articles, books and websites. It aims at identifying major waves and critical juncture

of geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal from ancient time to the present days through the analysis of various literatures. The geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal is studied objectively through the method of empirical data collection. It aims at identifying the elements of geopolitical rivalry and their priorities of geopolitical elements on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review aims at identifying the significant elements of geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal. It also emphasizes on analyzing the shift on the priorities of geopolitical elements from ancient time to the modern days. The literature review is centered at identifying the trend on the importance of geopolitical elements because of the global and regional political and security dynamism. Most of the scholars have prioritized security as an important geopolitical element on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal whereas few scholars also highlighted connectivity and culture. The arguments of the scholars on prioritizing the geopolitical elements on the geopolitical competition between India and China are analyzed. Many scholars are worried regarding the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal, also views it as great challenge for Nepal whereas few scholars consider the geopolitical rivalry as an opportunity to Nepal. The literature review focuses on identifying the geopolitical rivalry as an opportunity or challenge to Nepal analyzing the trends on the shift of the geopolitical elements from ancient time to the present modern days.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Evans & Newnham define geopolitics in international relations as a method of studying foreign policy through geographical variables. The geographical variables include natural resources, climate, demography, area studies and topography. The study of geopolitics helps to understand, explain and predict political behaviors (Evans & Newnham, 1999). Saul Bernard Cohen defined geopolitics in his book 'Geopolitics of the world system' as interaction between geography and political process which are dynamic in nature and influence each other (Cohen, 2003). Colin Flint defines geopolitics "as the struggle over the control of geographical entities with an international and global dimension, and the use of such geographical entities for political advantage" (Flint, 2016). From the definitions of Evans & Newnham, Saul Bernard Cohen and Colin Flint it is clear that geopolitical elements are dynamic in nature and interacts each other according to the global and regional political dynamism.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

V N Khanna on his book 'Foreign policy of India' explains that India is seriously concerned on building good relations with her neighbors. Prime Minister Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri both emphasized the importance of friendly relations with neighbors. However, PM Indira Gandhi tried to maintain the relationship with neighbors in the spirit of Shimla Agreement which was not succeed. Atal Bihari Bajpayee as a Foreign Minister of India in 1977 stated that India wants tension free relations in South Asia and respect the sovereignty and integrity of neighbors while defending the India's border. PM Morarji Desai mentions the small south Asian neighbors as 'younger brothers' with good gesture and stated that India as 'elder brother' should be liberal towards small neighbors. The foreign policy adopted by PM I K Gujral later coded as 'Gujral doctrine' also highlights the importance of cordial relationship of India with her immediate small neighbors. PM Nehru addressing Lok Sabha on 6 Dec 1950 express the security concerns of India over Nepal. The treaty of Peace and Friendship 1950 is considered as a bedrock on the relationship between Nepal and India, and India defined her relationship with Nepal as a special relationship. Mr. Khanna also explains the role of India as a discrete mediator and negotiator on the political changes of Nepal, and India's economic assistance to Nepal. The anti-Indian activities as well as terrorism spread in Nepal and China's growing influences in Nepal need to readjust the foreign and security policy of India (Khanna, 2007).

Ganguly, Pardesi & Thompson (2024) state that the Sino Indian rivalry is the continuation of historical claim over the territory of Himalayas and consider the rivalry as an asymmetry because the Chinese economy is five folds to Indian economy. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has magnified the relations between China and Pakistan which has diminished the strategic position of India in south Asia. The Sino Indian rivalry for regional hegemony is likely to drag USA through strategic partnership with India which is more likely to increase Sino-American rivalry (Ganguly, Pardesi & Thompson, 2024).

According to Girdhari Dahal (2018) Nepal is strongly obliged to 'One China Policy' and signatory of Belt and Road Initiative of China. China has been supporting on the economic and infrastructure development of Nepal, also supported Nepal's 'Zone of Peace' proposal forwarded by late king Birendra. The diplomatic relations between Nepal and India are passed through various ups and downs. The bedrock of Nepal-India relation is the 'Treaty of peace and friendship-1950' needs to be revised. There are border disputes between Nepal and India. India just showed its grave concern on the promulgation of Nepal's constitution 2015 while China wholeheartedly welcomed it. Both India and China have been providing economic, educational and technical assistance for the development of Nepal. Nepal can take advantages from the rivalry of its neighbors. Nepal has great challenge to balance India and China and keep equidistance with her neighbors (Dahal, 2018).

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Haque & Hasan (2025) state the historical hegemony of India in south Asia is challenged by China through the economic engagement in south Asian countries. The Sino Indian rivalry is observed from the history to fulfill their strategic, political, economic and cultural interests which poses significant challenges in the geopolitical and geoeconomics realm of small countries of south Asia.

According to Dilip Nepal (2021) India and China have keen security concern in Nepal and worried about the probability of using politically fragile Nepal against their national interest. Despite the various issues between India and China, ideological and cultural differences, the annual trade between India and China is considerable. Nepal can be benefitted by the economic growth and technological development of her giant neighbors India and China by maintaining cordial relationship and develop as 'transit state' (Nepal, 2021).

Youbaraj Sangroula mentions that the shared culture and religion since the ancient time have become bedrock for the relationship between Nepal and India. However, the record shows that Nepal maintained formal official relationship with powerful southern neighbor since Ashoka's reign in Magadha (approximately 268-232 BCE), and with Tibet (Tubo Kingdom) in 630s and Chinese Tang dynasty in 640s. The Kerung and Kuti passes provided access for trans Himalaya trade between Nepal and Tibet, also established trade link between India and China, which turned into a branch of silk route and extended to Iran and Europe via Pataliputra, Kashmir and Kabul. Nepal's trade was connected to Magadha through 1300 miles long Grand Trunk Road of ancient India (Sangroula, 2021).

Sudheer Sharma (2024) states Nepal acted as an important entrepot state between India and China in medieval age, highlights the importance of Nepal from the connectivity perspective, and projects the cultural ties between India, Nepal and China. Similarly, Sharma also mentions the armed revolution of Khampa against China taking shelter in Nepalese territory, the support of USA and India to Khampa, and its implications on regional and global politics. The author analyzes the geopolitical rivalry between India and China, the involvement of USA, and its impact in regional security dynamics (Sharma, 2024).

RESEARCH GAP

The reviewed literature found that there is no common understanding on the definitions and elements of geopolitics among the scholars. The study adopts the geopolitical variable presented by Evans and Newnham for analyzing the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal. The study focuses on four major variables connectivity, security, culture and energy as the key elements of geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal. The study of the rivalry between India and China in Nepal from ancient time to the present days with defined geographical variables is found very limited. The major waves and critical junctures based on global political dynamism on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal are found undefined.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

It categorizes the major waves on ancient age (before 5th century), Medieval age (5th -15th century and post medieval period of Nepali history), Industrial age (1760-1840), First and Second World War (1900-1950), Bipolar World (Cold War 1950-1989), Unipolar World (1989-2008), and Multipolar world (2008-2025). Similarly, it adopts connectivity, security, culture and energy as the main variables of geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal.

ANCIENT AGE

Nepal shares historical and cultural relationships with her both neighbors India and China and surviving as an old nation of south Asia since ancient time. It is believed that Chinese monk Manjushree helped to establish human settlement in Kathmandu valley by draining out water from the Chobhar passage (Adhikari & Sheng, 2022). Quoting a noted Indian historian Pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji, Youbaraj Sangroula mentions that the origin of Nepal can be traced back before twelve years of the end of Dwapar yuga, which is approximately 1700 BC. The shared culture and religion since the ancient time have become bedrock for the relationship between Nepal and India. However, the record shows that Nepal maintained formal official relationship with powerful southern neighbor since Ashoka's reign in Magadha (approximately 268-232 BCE), and with Tibet (Tubo Kingdom) in 630s and Chinese Tang dynasty in 640s. The Kerung and Kuti passes provided access for trans Himalaya trade between Nepal and Tibet, also established trade link between India and China, which turned into a branch of silk route and extended to Iran and Europe via Pataliputra, Kashmir and Kabul. Nepal's trade was connected to Magadha through 1300 miles long Grand Trunk Road of ancient India (Sangroula, 2021). Nepal, as a branch of silk route and connected to Grand Trunk Road of ancient India, proves herself a viable trading hub between India and China in ancient time. Nepal gained economic prosperity through the trade route and trade activities linking between two old civilizations and world market India and China. The economically and politically robust Nepal with higher diplomatic capacities played important role in balancing her neighbors as an important economic bridge in ancient time (Sangroula, 2021). Nepal served as an important transit nation for the travelers and traders of India and China. The geostrategic position of Nepal gained more importance to India and China from geoeconomics perspective since ancient time.

MEDIEVAL AGE (5TH CENTURY TO 15TH CENTURY)

Nepal also continued taking the benefits of transit nations between India and China in medieval ages. Buddhism flourished in Indian sub-continent which also started to spread to far east during the medieval ages. The Indian and Chinese Buddhist monks started to travel each other's nations to acquaint and spread Buddhism. Bodhidharma, a great Indian Buddhist monk and founder of Chan Buddhism travelled China in 6th century. Xuanzang, the first Chinese traveler Buddhist monk visited India via Kathmandu in search of wisdom and Buddhist scriptures from 629–645 A.D. (McIntosh, 2016). Similarly, Nepali Buddhist monk Buddhahadra also travelled to China in 5th century (Sharma, 2024, p. 7). Nepal enjoyed as a Buddhism transmission corridor from south Asia to China and East Asia in medieval ages. The 7th century is considered as an important century in the trilateral diplomatic relationship between Nepal, Tibet and China. King Anshuverma's daughter princess Bhrikuti married to Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo who was also married to Wencheng, the princess of Tang Dynasty. The royal marital relationship had also strengthened the trilateral relationship culturally (Adhikari & Sheng, 2022). Similarly, the reinstatement of King Narendradev in Nepal with the support of Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo proves political interference in the internal affairs of Nepal. In 649 A.D. a high-level diplomatic missionary of Tang Dynasty was attacked by Indians in Bihar. General Wang Xuance, the leader of the mission pleaded military support from Nepali King Narendradev as well as Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo. Chinese General Wang Xuance attacked and defeated Kannauj ruler Arunasva in support of Nepali and Tibetan troops (Sharma, 2024, p. 55).

Shankaracharya also visited Nepal to preserve Sanatan Dharma and reduce the influence of Buddhism in Nepal in late 8th century. The cultural and religious visit of Buddhist monks to Nepal, India and China continued during medieval ages. Indian Bengali Buddhist monk Atisha Dipankar and Tibetan monk Miloreppa visited Nepal in 11th century. The travel of Araniko to China in 13th century flourished Nepali architecture, also strengthened the diplomatic and cultural relationship between Nepal and China. However, a very few military attacks to Nepal were also observed from south during medieval ages. In the early 14th century Sen after their defeat by Delhi Sultanate entered to Nepal, established a separate state and attacked Nepal (Kafle, 2023). The trilateral transmission of cultural, religious and architectural artifacts between Nepal, India and China has added Nepal's geo-cultural importance in south Asia. On the other, Nepal also sustained as transit hub on the trade between India, Tibet and China. Nepal, as a land bridge between two civilizations and profitable markets also intensified its geo-economic importance in trans Himalaya geopolitics during medieval ages.

The historians have considered the period of Malla rule from 1381 A.D. to 1768 A.D. as post medieval period of Nepal (Kafle, 2023) in which Nepal dominated trans Himalayan trade, and Kathmandu valley continued to act as transit hub for trade and cultural corridor of Buddhism transmission between south Asia and China. The Malla Dynasty explored the economic opportunities through trans Himalayan trade which also contributed to flourish arts and architectures in Kathmandu valley. The Nepal-India relation during Malla period was particularly centered on the trade, cultural and people to people contact (Timalsina, 2019).

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AGE (1760-1840)

The world witnessed technological advancements and transformation into machine-based manufacturing process in late 18th century which has changed the economic and social aspect of mankind. The mass production capabilities enhanced through the technological advancement demanded excessive raw materials for the industrialized nations which intensified colonization and territorial expansionism around the world (History, 2025). The wave of colonization rooted on industrial revolution also gradually started colonizing India by British in 1757 and completed in 1857, after that British ruled India till 1947. The industrial revolution and British colonization adversely impacted Indian economy because of destruction of local industries, mass unemployment, wealth draining and economic exploitation (UPPCS, 2025). The colonized India could not enjoy their traditional economic leverages under British Raj which also impacted regional and trans Himalayan trade. On the other, China also left behind for its economic development during industrial revolution because of separate social structure and lack of technologies. China fought two Opium wars (First Opium war 1839-1842, Second Opium war 1856-1860) with British and the defeat led to unequal treaties which provided colonial power commercial and legal privileges as well as territorial concessions in China (Pletcher, 2025). The industrial revolution also directly impacted Chinese economy because of unequal trade with Britain and inability to prevent local industries from the cheaper mass-produced commodities (Cerqueira & Albuquerque, 2020). The industrial revolution adversely impacted India and China in their social, economic and political sectors, and the power shifted towards west which elevated Westerners as a dominant power in global politics.

The presence of imperial British and the colonization of small states had directly threatened the sovereignty and survival of small south Asian nations. Great King Prithivi Narayan Shah initiated unification campaign around 1742 A.D. to unify Nepal, and his successors also continued the campaign until Nepal directly confronted with British and China. In 1767 Captain Kinloch's expedition to Kathmandu valley to support King Jaya Prakash Malla against King Prithivi Narayan Shah was severely defeated in Sindhuli Gadhi (Basnyat, 2019). Nepal also fought war with Tibet in 1789, and with Tibet and China again in 1792 to solve the economic issues as well as to gain monopoly on trans Himalayan trade. The defeat of Nepali troops by Chinese troops forced Nepal to sign Betrawati treaty which curtailed Nepal's political and economic dominance over Tibet and Nepal agreed to send a

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quinquennial mission to China. However, Nepal did not lose the total control of trans Himalayan trade between south Asia and China (Upreti, 1996).

The border dispute and the British aim to gain access on trans Himalayan trade led Anglo-Nepal war in 1814 A.D. on which Nepal lost about one-third of her territory and ceased Nepal's unification campaign forever. Nepal's monopoly on trans Himalayan trade also ended because of developing Kalimpong as a trade hub between Tibet and British East India Company. The defeat of Nepal in Anglo-Nepal war allowed British Resident in Kathmandu which later started interference on internal affairs of Nepal to larger extent (Upreti, 1996). The colonial power Britain continued draining wealth from India which economically weakened India and divided it into India and Pakistan in 1947 just before the independence. Similarly, China fought First Opium war (1839-1842), Second Opium war (1856-1860), Sino-French War (1884-1885), Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901), and Japanese occupation of Manchuria (1931) forced China to accept unequal treaties with foreign powers which is remembered as a century of humiliation by Chinese leaders and people in the present days (Portella, 2025).

The British industrial revolution promoted colonization which changed the social, economic and political aspects of the world. British colonized India which resulted into wealth drain and destruction of local industries. On the other, China also suffered from the foreign powers through unequal treaties. Both India and China were heavily suffered during industrial revolution and humiliated for century by the colonial powers. The industrial revolution established Western nations as an influencing power in the world controlling the big nations of Asia including India and China. The rise of British in Indian sub-continent also affected the traditional trans Himalayan trade conducted via Nepal. Nepal fought wars with Tibet, China and British East India Company during industrial revolution which has stalled the unification campaign of Nepal hindering the monopoly on trans Himalayan trade. Nepal also experienced sever political interference in internal politics by British East India Company. However, Nepal continued as a transmission corridor of Buddhism between south Asia and China during industrial revolution.

FIRST AND SECOND WORLD WAR (1900-1950)

India as a British colony joined Allied power and fought war under British. Though China was neutral initially in the beginning of the World War I, joined Allied power later. Both India and China fought for Allied powers and supported British and French Empire. Nepal also fought for British in First World War. Similarly, all three nations India, China and Nepal fought Second World War again from Allied block. The victory of Allied block changed the political, social and economic dynamics of the world. The power shifted from Europe to USA and Russia which initiated cold war between them. International organizations formed to regulate global finance, United Nations Organization was established primarily to prevent conflicts, and decolonization process initiated around the world. China acquired the permanent membership in the security council in United Nations (Feng, 2022) whereas India achieved independence from British in conjunction of partition of Pakistan.

The global wave of decolonization and Indian independence also propagated democratic movement against autocratic Rana regime in Nepal. The autocratic Ranas ruled for a century, always addressed British economic and security interest, helped militarily to British to suppress Sepoy mutiny in 1857, maintained cultural and official relationship with northern neighbor China, and remained in isolation from the rest of the world (Brown, 2017). Nepal continued to enjoy trade leverages in Tibet which she gained through Thapathali Treaty in 1856 A.D. (Upreti, 1996). Nepal adopted isolationist policy, leaned towards British during Rana regime, and maintained official and cultural relationship with China by sending quinquennial mission. The British East India Company remained as a dominant power in south Asia, highly influenced Nepal's foreign policy and domestic politics whereas China remains dormant on Nepal issue because China was passing through the century of humiliation. In this geopolitical context, Kathmandu continued to be a cultural and trade hub between India and Tibet even it failed to maintain monopoly on trans Himalayan trade. The diplomatic and economic power of Nepal also declined which forced Nepal to lean towards her southern neighbor and lost the diplomatic balance between her neighbors.

BIPOLAR WORLD (COLD WAR 1950-1989)

The second world war shifted balance of power from Europe towards bipolar world to USA and Soviet Union which led to a new ideological and geopolitical rivalry characterizing nuclear threat without direct military confrontations between the two super powers (History, 2025). Ideologically, the world was polarized into communist block led by Soviet Union and capitalist block led by USA. Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) also initiated to prevent further polarization and discuss global issues particularly related to the developing nations where India and China played crucial role as a founding members of the movement (Stubbs, 2023). The Tibet annexation (1950-51), Korean War (1950-1953), India-China War (1962), India-Pakistan War (1947, 1965 & 1971), Formation of Bangladesh after the division of Pakistan (1971), Annexation of Sikkim by India (1975), US-Vietnam war (1965-1973), Russo-Afghan War (1979-1989) are the major wars which shaped global and regional politics during cold war.

Nepal signed a treaty of Peace and Friendship with India in 1950 and with China in 1960 after the establishment of diplomatic relationship between Nepal and China in 1955. Nepal adopted democratic political system after overthrowing autocratic Rana regime in 1950, left the isolationist policy, and started diplomatic maneuver in international forum for the international recognition. India emerged as an unavoidable power in south Asia and become a key partner of economic, security and infrastructure

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development of Nepal spreading influences in key sectors of Nepal (Kandel, 2024). The annexation of Tibet by China in 1950 had ceased all trade leverages of Nepali merchants in Lasha which also hampered trans Himalayan trade (Sharma, 2024, p. 44). The annexation of Tibet and the asylum of Dalai Lama in India, presence of thousands of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, and the free Tibet movement including armed struggle of Khampa conducted against China in support of Westerners has changed geopolitics of Himalayan region primarily centering the security issues.

The open border between India and Nepal is always perceived as a threat by Indian security experts and considered Himalayas as northern security border of India. India and China were viewed rivaling on the road infrastructure projects during cold war (Mulmi et al., 2023). India and China are avoiding trans Himalayan trade via Nepal, trading through sea routes, and using Nathula pass for land route (Chettri, 2018). The cultural and physical connectiveness of Nepal between India and China is compromised due to changed security context in Himalayan region which adversely impacted Nepal's economic, cultural and diplomatic capabilities. Primarily, the geopolitical rivalry between India and China was centered on their security concern during cold war in Nepal while both nations were providing economic and technical assistance to maintain their influences and hegemonies.

UNIPOLAR WORLD (1989-2008)

The fall of Berlin Wall (1989), reunification of Germany (1990) and dissolution of USSR (1991) characterized the end of cold war between USA and USSR which led towards unipolar world dominated by USA in global politics (Walker, 2023). Ashford and Cooper (2022) states that USA enjoyed global domination during unipolar world (1989 to 2008). India and China raised as an emerging power and remained significant actors in unipolar world. India intensified its historical hegemony through its support to anti regime actors of Nepal in the First People's Movement-1989 and Second People's Movement-2006 (Bhattra, 2018). On the other, China increased its economic, technical, military support to Nepal which intensified its influences in Nepal that irks India. The improved security situation in Tibet diminished the security threat to China from Nepal to some extent. However, it cannot be ignored until the exile government of Dalai lama (Central Tibetan Administration) exists in Dharamshala and Tibetan refugees sheltered in Nepal. The rivalry between India and China in Nepal was primarily focused on intensifying hegemonies through economic and technical assistance and investment on hydropower sector considering their security concerns in unipolar world led by USA.

MULTIPOLAR WORLD (2008-2025)

Ashford and Cooper (2022) mention the present balance of power as a complex multipolar world started after 2008 with major actors USA, China, Russia, India, Japan, European union, Brazil and South Africa. On 3rd August 2025 Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar in an interview mentions that the dominance which USA maintained during 1990s or 2000, it doesn't have in the present (GeoPulse, 2025). The IMF World Economic Outlook April - 2025 shows that China ranked second sharing 16.9% world GDP, India shares 3.68% whereas USA ranked first with 26.8% share. China has achieved momentum in economic development which is in trade and tariff war with USA whereas India is an emerging economy. China become as an unavoidable power and India emerged as a significant actor in the present multipolar world. India and China are emerging not only as an economic power but also as military and technological power with great diplomatic outreach which are in space race as well. China as world's factory improved the industrial capacities whereas India's growth is contributed by IT service sector (Hinata, 2009). India and China require energy and resources for the industrial growth and its sustainment. Nepal with great potentiality in hydropower electricity and water resources with more than 6000 rivers has become a viable sector for geopolitical rivalry between India and China (Paudel, 2023). India changed its power purchase policy and will not purchase any hydroelectricity with Chinese investment and involvement. On the other, China is interested to invest in hydroelectricity of Nepal considering the economy of Tibet and lucrative profit from the hydroelectricity (Paudel, 2023).

DISCUSSION

The study highlights the major waves and critical juncture on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal from ancient time to the present days. It adopts the definitions of geopolitics of Saul Bernard Cohen, Evans & Newnham and Colin Flint, and identifies the major geographical variables on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China. Connectivity, security, culture and energy are identified as the four major geopolitical elements. The study categorizes seven major waves of the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal based on the global political and security dynamisms. These seven major waves and critical juncture are ancient age (before 5th century), Medieval age (5th -15th century and post medieval period of Nepali history), Industrial age (1760-1840), First and Second World War (1900-1950), Bipolar World (Cold War 1950-1989), Unipolar World (1989-2008), and Multipolar world (2008-2025).

The study supports the concept of geo-economic engagements of Youbaraj Sangroula in the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in ancient time. It also supports the claim of Sudheer Sharma regarding Nepal as an entrepot nation and transmission corridor of Buddhism between India and China in the medieval ages. It proves that culture and connectivity were the dominant geopolitical variables on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal during ancient and medieval ages. On the

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argument whether the geopolitical rivalry as an opportunity or challenge among the scholars it supports the idea of Youbaraj Sangruala that the economically and politically robust Nepal with higher diplomatic capacities is able to balance her neighbors and keeps the rivalry among two giants on her favor as an opportunity. On the other, the economically weak and politically instable Nepal with no diplomatic weightage increases challenges on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China. At the present, the geopolitical rivalry between India and China should be considered as a great challenge rather than opportunity because of political instability, weak economy and threatened national unity of Nepal.

The resources required for the mass production due to industrial revolution and the wave of colonization in Asia and Africa ruined the local industries of India and China. The study supports the idea of Cerqueira & Albuquerque regarding the loss of local market by China due to mass production during British industrial revolution. The study identifies that the wars on the Himalayan frontier in 18th and 19th century were particularly focused on controlling trans Himalayan trade routes between south Asia and East Asia (particularly Tibet and China). Though the immediate cause of Anglo-Nepal war (1814-1816) was border dispute, the major cause was economically driven to the monopolization of trans Himalayan trade routes. Connectivity also continued as a dominant geopolitical variable on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal during British industrial revolution era.

Another major wave on the global political dynamism is world wars (1900-1950) where India, Nepal and China fought the war from allied blocs. Security dominated the other geopolitical elements on the world wars era whereas connectivity lost its priority on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China. Similarly, another geopolitical variable; culture also less prioritized during world wars. The security element is continued to be prioritized on the bipolar cold war era and Unipolar world dominated by USA.

The study also supports the claim of Ashford and Cooper as the present balance of power is a complex multipolar world started after 2008 with major actors USA, China, Russia, India, Japan, European union, Brazil and South Africa. Energy emerged as dominating geopolitical element on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in the present multipolar world. Analyzing the seven major waves and critical junctures, the study identifies connectivity, culture, security and energy as the four significant geopolitical elements on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal.

CONCLUSION

The study identifies that connectivity, culture, security and energy as the significant elements on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal. It categorizes the major waves on ancient age (before 5th century), Medieval age (5th -15th century and post medieval period of Nepali history), Industrial age (1760-1840), First and Second World War (1900-1950), Bipolar World (Cold War 1950-1989), Unipolar World (1989-2008), and Multipolar world (2008-2025). Primarily, the geopolitical rivalry between India and China was centered on their security concern during cold war in Nepal while both nations were providing economic and technical assistance to maintain their influences and hegemonies. Connectivity remained as a dominant geopolitical element from ancient age to industrial revolution age. Similarly, security dominated other elements of geopolitics during world wars, cold war bipolar world and unipolar world. The rivalry between India and China in Nepal was primarily focused on intensifying hegemonies through economic and technical assistance and investment on hydropower sector considering their security concerns in unipolar world led by USA. Energy observed as a dominant geopolitical element on the complex multipolar world on the geopolitical rivalry between India and China in Nepal.

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