

CPPR Webinar Series

Analysing India-Nepal relations in light of the 2022 Nepalese General Elections

Event Report

Date and Time: 5 PM IST - 19th January 2023

Platform: ZOOM

Speaker: Dr Pramod Jaiswal, Mr Satish Joshi, Dr Srinivasan Ramani

Moderator: Sharon Susan Koshy

Proceedings Report

- **About the Event:** This webinar seeks to address India-Nepal relations in light of the 2022 general elections while addressing the future relationship of bilateral ties. As close neighbours, India and Nepal have fostered a unique friendship and collaborative relationship marked by open borders and deep-rooted people-to-people kinship alongside extensive cultural linkages. Bilateral relationships forged via trade and investment, culture, defence and energy cooperation have resulted in reciprocal national prosperity and regional advancement for decades. However, Nepal is sandwiched between the growing powers of India and China, where regional vulnerabilities and pro-Beijing regimes have resulted in an increase in territorial disputes and a decline in bilateral cooperation and collaboration. However, the new Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" government, has emphasised upon Nepal looking to maintain equi-proximity relationships with both India and China. Thus, this has invoked a question of what the future course of India-Nepal relations will look like. Hence, with rising concerns in India-Nepal relations and China's growing regional influence, the upcoming webinar will investigate the future trajectory of the Indo-Nepal relationship through Prachanda's government, the importance of bilateral connectivity, energy trade, defence cooperation and the need to strengthen collaboration and cooperation.

- **The Key Speakers:** Dr Pramod Jaiswal, Mr Satish Joshi, Dr Srinivasan Ramani

Summary of Discussions

1. Within Prachanda's regime, Kathmandu and Delhi are pushing for a cordial and collaborative relationship concerning territorial conflict and disputes. Thus, both nations must convene, resolve and mutually investigate conflict surrounding disputed territories, to prevent the disintegration of historically strengthened bilateral relationships.
2. India and Nepal must look to enhance bilateral relations within the three tenets of mutual growth. Firstly, there must be a focus on the energy sector, where the new government seeks to bolster energy trade ties with India, primarily regarding clean energy and climate change concerns. Secondly, defence cooperation must continue to act as the bedrock of robust bilateral relations, due to India's substantial defence presence, especially in equipment and training in Nepal. Thirdly, revitalising mutual and global connectivity is of paramount importance, particularly within the need to strengthen the socioeconomic rubric of Nepal. India and Nepal must seek to emphasise and prioritise these aspirations to ameliorate mutual relations, especially due to China's deepening presence within Nepal.
3. India and Nepal must look to carry the existing bilateral relationship to greater heights. This must be particularly emphasised within strong and significant trade and economic relations, technological initiatives, tourism, regional and mutual development and more, which seeks to transcend time and culture.

Key Takeaways

1. Bilateral collaboration and cooperation between India and Nepal are vital to tackle regional and geopolitical conflict, where mechanisms must be brought together to ease territorial disputes and seek engagement at the bilateral level. Thus, mutual relations must transition into prioritising growth and connectedness, instead of highlighting the politicisation of bilateral relationships especially those with decades of shared history.
2. India and Nepal must prioritise the need for enhancing connectivity in Nepal on a regional and international scale. Hence, India and Nepal must seek to

concretise present and future mutual development projects, with declining prominence upon the competitive game angle within the geopolitical fabric.

3. Dynamic bilateral energy and trade relations are pivotal to enhancing the India-Nepal relationship. Thus, There is a need to focus on clean energy, renewable resources such as hydropower, resource sharing and management alongside initiatives targeting climate change. Hence, shared history, unrivalled geopolitical closeness and mutual energy interests must continue to strengthen the bilateral relationship.