



Mains Practice Question

Q. “Recent geopolitical developments in India’s neighbourhood, requires a reset in India-Nepal relations.” Critically Analyse the statement in context of India-Nepal- China triangulation. (250 words).

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References: [India-Nepal Border Dispute](#), [China-Nepal-India Triangulation](#), [India-Nepal Relations](#)

Approach

- **Introduction:** Briefly mention the recent diplomatic tussle between India and Nepal.
- **Body:** Explain the ongoing Indo-Nepal border disagreement in detail (you could draw a suitable map illustrating it) and describe the role of China in Indo-Nepal relations.
- **Way Forward:** Suggest some diplomatic solutions that India should adopt to restore cordial relations in its neighbourhood.

Introduction

Nepal has recently released a new political map that claimed Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh of Uttarakhand as part of Nepal’s territory. Though Kalapani has been a disputed territory between India and Nepal, this cartography assertion by Nepal appears to threaten the special relationship between India and Nepal.

Further, China’s engagement with Nepal, in order to counterbalance the Indian influence in Nepal, has also led to erosion of trust between India and Nepal.

Body

- **Background of Territorial Dispute:** The 1816 Treaty of Sugauli concluded between British India and the Kingdom of Nepal, states the Kali River in the Kalapani region demarcates the border between India and Nepal.
 - However, in recent times, Nepal has contested that the tributary joining the Mahakali river at Kalapani is not the Kali river. Nepal now contends that the Kali river lies further west to the Lipulekh pass.
 - This results in a boundary dispute between India and Nepal.
 - There is a similar dispute over Susta region due to change of course by the Gandak river which demarcates the Indo-Nepal border in Champaran(Bihar).
- **Series of Diplomatic Tussles:** Nepal’s assertion on Kalapani is part of a series of events which reflects a rough patch in India-Nepal ties. Other parts being-
 - India’s reservation on Nepal’s new constitution in 2015.
 - Virtual blockade of oil supplies from India to Nepal for six months.
- **China’s Growing Influence:** In recent times, China has made inroads into Nepal in infrastructure, education and health sectors. Also, Nepal wants to take advantage of China’s BRI project.
 - India is worried that China’s chequebook diplomacy would turn Nepal into a client state, which would undermine India’s security interests.
 - However, Nepal has asserted that its relationship with China is purely economic and will not be hurting the Indian strategic interests in any way.

Way Forward

- India and Nepal through cooperation could bring growth and prosperity from its people and region. Thus, both countries should make diplomatic efforts to resolve the present crisis.
- Further, India should stop looking at Nepal purely through a security prism, and at bilateral relations only as transactional and part of a zero-sum game with China.
 - India should revise its stance on the India-Nepal-China economic corridor.
 - The corridor provides a likelihood of greater tourism and people to people contact which is important for bridging the trust deficit that exists today between India and China.
- Nepal should ensure India that any of its development activities will not jeopardise India's strategic interests.

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