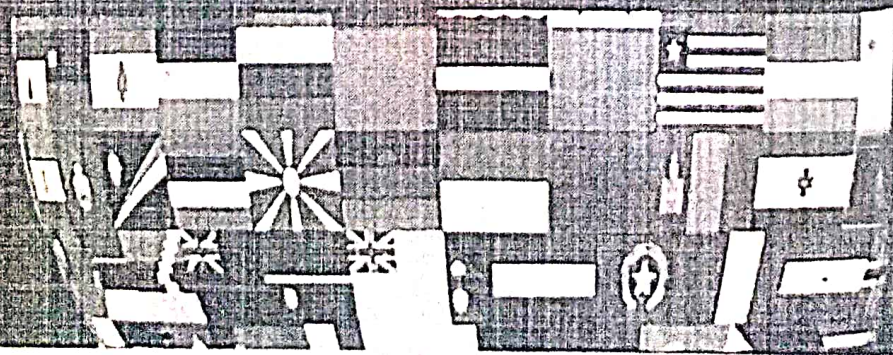


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China's Growing Influence in Nepal: Implications for India

Rajeev Kumar

India and Nepal have shared close civilizational and socio-cultural relationship from ages that led to a 'unique and special' relationship between them. Geographical proximity and religious affinity have further been instrumental in close people-to-people contact between the two countries. The 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship stands as the hallmark of this cordiality across India-Nepal borders. While India-Nepal relationship is age-old and continues to be cordial, with hiccups in between, the relationship between Nepal and China has been more of a pragmatic and agenda-based. In fact, very recently, even China-Nepal relationship has been termed as being of a 'special' kind and 'as high as the Himalayas' by many in the political circles of both the countries. Many political analysts in China have started to look at Nepal as an 'all-weather friend'.

Geography further reinforces the kind of relationship Nepal can share with India or China. However, until the 1950s, China was least interested in Nepal. But, with the takeover of Tibet in 1951, Nepal shared physical boundaries with China and, thus, became strategically important for China. Thus, over the last few years, South Asia has become an arena of competition between India and China; both are competing to increase their influence throughout the region, particularly in Nepal as it has a unique geo-strategical position significant to both China and India.

India and China in Nepal: Striving for 'Sphere of Influence'

Nepal is a landlocked country, bordering India in the east, south, and west, and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the north. It shares an open border of 1,751 km with India running through 20