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Development Compilation
Vol. 17. Number 01. May 2022**INDIA-BHUTAN RELATIONS: BASED ON
MULTI-DIMENSIONAL FACTORS****Md. Shofiqul Islam Nahid***

Abstract: India- Bhutan formalized the threshold of the special closed relations with a friendship agreement in 1949, allowing India to interfere in Bhutanese foreign affairs. Under this friendship treaty, Bhutan has received much more financial and strategic support from India. Based on the economic support, Bhutan is taking economic and technical assistance from India to implement its first to eleventh five-year plan. In exchange for these, India gets some strategic options from Bhutan, such as the indirect help of Bhutan in protecting the insurgence group near Bhutan, deterring the Chinese expansion in this area. But some points like the Indian annexation of the Sikkim, the Indian embargo on trade with Bhutan, and the Indian impediment to making the Bhutanese international profile are responsible for changing the trends of India–Bhutan relations. Thus, Indian Coercive diplomacy towards Bhutan is also making the relations very complex. Chinese annexation of Tibet and Chinese presence in South Asia are also accountable for this changing pattern of relations between India and Bhutan. This paper will examine how the issues mentioned above turn a new trend in India-Bhutan relations from a special closed relationship.

Keywords: Trustworthiness, Quad, Expansionist, Foreign Policy, Border, Multilateralism.

Introduction

British signed a treaty with the Bhutanese kingdom in 1910, which gave some facilities to the British rule governor in the Indian subcontinent; consequently, after the Indian independence, for the strategic reason, it signed a friendship agreement with Bhutan that named the Bhutan-India friendship agreement in 1949. Some clauses of this agreement give some vice versa facilities to each country. Under this friendship treaty, Bhutan has received much more economic and strategic support from India. From an economic perspective, Bhutan got financial and technical support from India to accomplish the first to eleventh five-year plans for its economic development (Mitra & Srikant, 2018). Strategically, India helped Bhutan

secure its borders from Chinese annexation by directly influencing and taking assistance from many international organizations. By signing this friendship treaty, India moreover got a few strategic options for its territorial security like Bhutan. Bhutan shares boundaries with India and China, respectively, 605 k.m. and 470 k.m. out of 1075-kilometers of its border; India has concerns about handling its internal insurgencies, adhering to Bhutan, and managing Chinese aggression on this border (Chandra, 2020). So India secured its border from Chinese aggression by inserting the clause in the treaty the opportunity to guide Bhutanese external relations so that China can not pressure Bhutan for a diplomatic solution to land boundary talks. Bhutan also took initiatives to prevent the free movement of the Indian insurgent groups on Bhutanese land (Choudhary, 2005). Repealing the ask of Bhutan in the border settlement agreement with China, annexing Sikkim of India in 1975, changing the nature of Indian foreign policy, bypassing the territorial security of Bhutan, and penalizing negotiating and trying to establish diplomatic relations with China were the steps to turn down the relations between two neighboring countries (Mitra & Srikant, 2018). All of these coercive initiatives taken by India indicate mistrust in mutual relations. India and Bhutan revised the 1949 friendship treaty in 2007, which included provisions for supporting each other during the crisis. But during the Doklam war between India and China, Bhutan took the strategic silent position because of the long-run trust deficit between them (Kaul, 2021). The strategy of the silent stand of Bhutan presaged dealing with China internally. Furthermore, it took seventy-five years to come to this situation. Now the relations between Bhutan and India have turned into a new trend for the coercive diplomatic approach of India in some matters.

Theoretical Framework**Coercive Diplomacy**

Coercive diplomacy may be a political diplomatic strategy that interferes with the opponent's will or impetus structure (Schelling, 1966). Another writing also focuses on coercive diplomacy that inserts persuasion, threats, accommodation, and incitement in the crisis bargaining approach, which gives some advantage to the political leaders to avoid war and compulsory military strategies (George, 1991).

Fragile activity may include political, financial, and military initiatives, but the genuine utilization of force has to be confined and only purveyed to signal and influence objectives. Jakobsen identified that the second component is conciliatory and accommodating, and it includes the use of absolute incentives for compliance with the Coercer's demands (Jakobsen, 2020). The economic sanction could be a tool of international disputes that have explained Jakobson. Mainly coercive diplomacy denotes the use of intimidation to get some advantages over others, and it

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can be economic and strategic coercion. Based on these perspectives, the dimensions of India-Bhutan relations have some issues to discuss, but notables are financial and strategic points.

Comparative historical relations Bhutan with India and China

The British governor in India emphasized the political border ignoring the demarcated boundary to define the British Indian rule (Herpa, 2013). Considering this concept, the British protect the North part of British India, including Nepal and Bhutan, from the aggression of the Russian and Chinese empires. Because of this, to remove any confusion about Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim situated on the Indian north border, Lord Curzon marked the political boundaries of British India and did not allow anyone to intimidate them (Manchester Guardian, 1912). Sir Charles Bell reinforced building a treaty between British India and Bhutan in 1910; according to him, the first advantage of the treaty was to secure 250 miles adhering to the borders of Bengal and Assam from the Chinese aggression and Chinese colonization of Bhutan (Agradoot, 1959).

Under the British-Bhutan treaty in 1910, Bhutan gave the British the opportunity to guide its external relations and defence. It got assured non-interference in internal matters of it from the British governor in the Indian subcontinent. Independent India pursued the path of the British to tackling its security in the northern region. Becoming the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru realized the geo-strategic importance of Bhutan to secure its mainland territory. This prognosis forced Indian leaders to sign a friendship treaty with Bhutan to ensure no one would interfere in their internal affairs (Foreign Policy of India, 1959). A clause of this treaty gave India an advantage, but Bhutan agreed to it to secure its territory from the Chinese annexation. Based on this provision, the Government of India would advise guiding its external relations (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 1959). The problem arose when China annexed Tibet in 1959. By taking Tibet on its map tried to settle the disputed points of the boundary with Bhutan and China wanted to deal with Bhutan about the disputed border issue in the absence of India. As Bhutan signed a friendship agreement with India, it did not allow Bhutan to deal with China in the absence of India. During the Sino-Indian boundary settlement talks in 1961, India avoided the eagerness of Bhutan to sit at the negotiation table about its northern disputed area with China (Times of India, 1961).

Later, India allowed Bhutan to settle land boundary disputes with China with the consultation of the Indian government. From 1984 to 2016, they sat for the 24th round land boundary talks, but did not reach a settlement point (The Indian Express, 2016). The Chinese state-run news agency quoted Li Yuanchao, the Vice President, "China and Bhutan have yet to establish diplomatic ties but have always respected each other and treated each other as equals" (Ibid, 2016). After the 24th round of land

boundary talks, Li expressed these words, which were a direct threat to India. However, they wanted to settle 269 square kilometers of the western area of Bhutan (Kharat & Bhutia, 2019). India has been assisting Bhutan in getting membership in international organizations since 1978. Thus, Bhutan began to form an international profile by getting the United Nations and World Bank membership in 1978. These two organizations gave Bhutan some economic and strategic support.

Though India helped to get membership in those organizations, India did not allow Bhutan to build diplomatic ties with any permanent United Nations Security Council member (Nahid, 2021). Mainly, it was an embargo not to establish diplomatic relations with China. But India allowed Bhutan to make economic relations with any other countries. Indian leaders thought that making diplomatic relations with other countries would diminish the Indian control over Bhutan (Prasad & Jenkins, 1963). Despite some critical points, it was a new path for Bhutan after signing the friendship treaty in 1949. To make a pure nation and avoid the fragmentation of Bhutanese land, Bhutan propelled Lhotshampas, a Nepalese ethnic group, from Bhutan in 1990 (Schultz, 2016). Some international organizations questioned Bhutan about the expulsion of Nepalese Lhotshampas from Bhutan. Bhutan didn't care about the concern of these organizations with the silent support of India. In exchange for Indian help in handling the Nepalese ethnic, Bhutan took challenging military operations against the Indian insurgents and effectively repulsed them from setting bases in Bhutanese territory in 2003 (Lamsang, 2015).

In 2007, Bhutan and India revised the previous friendship treaty and signed a new friendship treaty that contained some clauses of the last friendship treaty with some amendments. India's Bhutanese foreign policy guiding principle was removed in the new friendship agreement in 2007. Moreover, a new clause added, "The Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan and the Republic of India shall cooperate closely in the area of their national interests" (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2007). Because of this clause, Bhutan has no binding matters to establish diplomatic relations with other countries as a democratic country. Jigme Yoser Thinley, being elected as PM of Bhutan, focused on building diplomatic ties, successfully negotiating with 53 countries, and finally, building diplomatic relations with them (Kaul, 2021). Bhutanese and Chinese P.M met on the sideline of Rio plus twenty summits of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development to introduce diplomatic ties in 2012 (Josh, 2012). The gesture of Bhutanese P.M was positive in this matter, and he also tried to establish a demanding position of it all over the world, including in India and China. In response to these two reasons, India took coercive action against Bhutan by removing its subsidy for

kerosene and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) export to Bhutan in July 2013, when Bhutan was on the bank of its 2nd democratic election (Mitra & Srikant, 2018).

Not only Bhutan but also China claimed the Doklam region as part of their national territory. China treated this area as if it were a legally demarcated area. It started to make a road in the contiguous to the Doklam area in 2017, and it was a direct threat to the Indian and Bhutanese national security. Under the revised friendship treaty in 2007, India indicated its role in China-Bhutan land boundary talks for each other territorial security purposes. As a result, the world observed another Sino-Indian conflict for Chinese road making in Doklam. During this war-like situation, everyone thought on the basis of the Indian-Bhutan treaty, Bhutan would take the position of India. In contrast, it took an inactive strategic position not to support anyone.

Recent trends in Indian foreign policy

India gained independence from the British in 1947, and it was the starting point of the cold war between the two superpowers. As the Indian subcontinent was divided on the basis of religion, it had to follow the position of its counterpart Pakistan in the cold war. So it was a very crucial period for India to formulate its proper foreign policy. Since then, as a postcolonial state, it wanted to restrain the interference of other powers in its internal matters (Mohan, 2008). To observe the position of other South Asian and Asian countries, India realized as a newly independent nation like, India has to penchant for economic development. Because of this, it followed not only an enlightened self-interest policy but also a non-alignment policy for economic growth. Thus, India created a platform to act freely in the international sphere, and it lasted until the drive out of protectionism after the cold war period. After the Sino-Indian conflict in 1962, Jawaharlal Nehru initiated peaceful co-existence in Indian foreign policy (Paul, 2009). Thus, India created a positive image of it in the world community and gave the foreign policymaker maximum opportunity to maximize its national interest based on strategic autonomy (Monsonis, 2010). It paved the way for India to institutionalize the external relational offices and build multilateral relations at the global level for its economic and military development (Narlikar, 2013). And it started to mark up its economic and military power to pursue its interest with other major powers at the regional and international levels (Hall, 2016). Thus the cold war period was over, and new calculations came to world politics. So it was high time for India to reshape the nature of its foreign policy, and India did it very tactically by removing protectionism from its economic policy and began to communicate with two superpowers and great powers simultaneously. Indian external policy was drastically changed when BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) led alliance came to government power in 2015.

The international system is unipolar in regards to hard power, but it is multipolar in economic power (Nye, 2015). Powerful states take after military power development, but developing countries like India take after economic growth and hard power development. The main transition of the Indian policy under Narendra Modi emphasized on hard power for smoothing economic development. Modi revised the Look East policy to the Acting East Policy to ensure this pattern, and it expanded closed-door neighbors to Australia (Saikia, 2017).

In another part of the strategic relations, India brought military equipment from Russia, but maintained military and economic relations with the USA. Because of this deal, India and the USA have run some joint military operations in the South China Sea and the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Modi thinks cooperation with the USA will bring advantage to India in two ways. First, it will help to deter China from managing some South Asian Countries. Second, it also aids in preventing China from establishing the policy of 'String of Pearls' in the Indian to the Atlantic Ocean (Jawli, 2017). To institutionalize this cooperation, the USA, Japan, Australia, and India formed the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), which is suspected as Asian NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), to constrain China in the Indo-Pacific area. Since its independence, the Indian foreign policy emphasized the reliability of the relations among neighboring countries, prioritizing an integrated neighborhood that we observed in the strategic ties with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Afghanistan. Now, India has revised its role in the South as a regional power by ignoring its fundamental principles of diplomatic relations with its neighbors and has begun following Acting East Policy and cooperation with Western countries.

New trends in the foreign policy of Bhutan

The foreign policy-making process of Bhutan started with the support of India after signing a friendship agreement in 1949, though India had an opportunity to guide the foreign relations of Bhutan. India realized the importance of Bhutan for the security implication of its north-eastern provinces as there was the presence of China to instigate the Indian insurgence for freedom. For this reason, India is supporting Bhutan economically and technically to implement its all five-year plan and strategic assistance to secure its borders and the mainland (Mitra & Srikant, 2018). Bhutan started to get membership in many international organizations, such as the United Nations, World Bank, etc., in the 1970s. India Bhutan inserted a new clause in their revised treaty in 2007 about cooperating reciprocally on sensitive national issues and removed the clause to guide Bhutanese external relations. After changing the form of government in Bhutan in 2008, the new democratically elected P.M wanted to overhaul its foreign relations. So he started to make friends all

over the world and established formal diplomatic relations with 53 countries from 2008 to 2013 (Lamsang, 2013). Bypassing the Indian suggestion not to establish formal diplomatic relations with any UN security council member, Bhutan responded to the gesture of the Chinese President to make formal diplomatic relations on the sideline of the Rio Plus Twenty Summit in Brazil in 2012 (Mitra & Srikant, 2018).

Under the UN Charter Article 2(5), every sovereign country has the right to formulate its foreign policy, but Bhutan falls into the problem of Indian coercive action. This event forced India to withdraw the subsidy on kerosene, LPG, and necessary goods exported during the second-term election in Bhutan. This coercive diplomacy of India on the economic side brought agitation to the mind of Bhutan's general people and leaders. Since then, Bhutan has been trying to act smartly and balance its policy with its relations with India and China.

Accountable factors for starting new trends in relations

From the beginning of relations building, the two neighboring countries had many issues to discuss and solved many internal and international problems by negotiation. Simultaneously with the help of India, Bhutan has also become a member of many international organizations. Latter, some critical events created discontent in Bhutan, such as the Indian annexation of Sikkim, binding to build relations with China, the trade embargo, confrontation with China, etc. Sometimes India imposes an embargo on necessary export goods in Bhutan. These matters are indirectly pushing Bhutan to bend in the position of China to some extent. It was clear when Bhutan did not inform India after identifying China's establishment of a road in the Doklam area (The Economic Times, 2018). The following matters had made a new diversion in the relations between India and Bhutan.

Chinese annexation of Tibet

As India was the founding member of the United Nations, it should follow article 2(5) of the UN Charter about the political independence of every country. But it interfered with Bhutan's internal and external political matters directly till 2008. So Bhutanese P.M Jigme Dorji stated after the Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1959 that Bhutan was not legally obliged to take all suggestions of India in the conduct of its external relations and mentioned the freedom of Bhutan to negotiate with any country if it needed (The Times of India, 1961). This statement indicated the fear of Bhutan after the annexation of Tibet to the mainland of China. So Bhutan wanted to negotiate to secure its land from the revisionist power of Asia as they had some undemarcated areas in common borders. But India neither allowed Bhutan to deal with China nor did anything to diminish the fear (The Times of India, 1961). Another event was pathetic and disrespectful

to Bhutan when Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai visited India to deal with the border problem in 1960. The Prime Minister of an independent and sovereign country asked to take Bhutan in boundary talks with China as the contagious concerned area, but the Indian Prime Minister rejected his request (The Times of India, 1961). As a result, Bhutan was silent during the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962. Bhutan realized that China would be a significant threat to Bhutan if it supported India. And taking part on the side of China would bring distress in India –Bhutan relations. Fearing the Chinese annexation, Bhutan protested India's soldiers staying in Bhutan during the war (The Observer, 1962). However, it had a friendship treaty with India in 1949; it should support India. It did not do it, whereas Bhutan thought staying Indian soldiers in its land was a threat. Consequently, it did not depend on India's crucial moment for fear of annexation. Previously, it did not get any supportive measures from India when China added Tibet to its map.

The annexation of the Sikkim

The British returned independence to the Sikkim kingdom in 1918, and it was handover to the Indian Government after Indian independence in 1947 (The EurAsian Times, 2016). India and the kingdom signed an agreement. Based on the agreement, the kingdom's status was an Indian protectorate, and Delhi controlled its international affairs, defense, and communication for the kingdom until it got an independent kingdom (The EurAsian Times, 2016). In 1967 India and China were face-to-face about the disputed area of Nathula Pass and the consequences of the war. Nathula pass joined the kingdom of Sikkim, and the kingdom became a security hazard for the Indian Government (Mitter, 2020). As tension arose in India, by arranging a referendum, the kingdom became the 22nd Indian province on May 16, 1975. This annexation indicated diminishing the cultural individuality of a Himalayan kingdom (New York Times, 1974). Bhutan was also fearful of Sikkim's fate and thought such an event could occur in Bhutan sooner or later. The merger of Sikkim in the Indian map was a direct threat to small countries in South Asia. So Bhutan was fear of the Indian annexation as there were some disputed points between Bhutan and China, which were crucial for Indian territorial security. But, India ensured Bhutan about its multilateral reliable foreign policy towards its neighboring countries after the post-cold-war period.

Regarding the Doklam issue, China and Bhutan met 22 times to solve the problem. Still, they could not come to a harmonious position about this territorial dispute, and we witnessed a war between India and China over the disputed area of Doklam near the Bhutan border. India is very concerned about the Doklam area because it has security implications for securing Chicken Neck. In response to Chinese aggression in the Bhutan

area, India can take a position on what happened with Sikkim in 1975, which is the main concern of Bhutan.

The Consequences of Embargo in export to Bhutan in 2016

India and Bhutan first signed an Agreement on Trade, commerce, and transit to establish a free trade regime between the two countries in 1972 and revised for the fifth time in 2016. The agreement also provides for duty-free transit of Bhutanese export to third countries. The current Agreement on Trade, Commerce, and Transit between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of the Republic of India will be valid till 2026 (Royal Bhutanese Embassy, New Delhi, India, 2022). Under this agreement, trade relations between the two countries are ongoing. Therefore, Bhutan tried to build diplomatic relations with China and establish warm relations with other international organizations.

By observing the desire of Bhutan to make formal diplomatic relations with China and extending friends to create its international image, India withdrew the subsidy on kerosene and LPG export to Bhutan (Mitra & Srikant, 2018). Bhutanese economic and exchange reliance on India brought trouble to the public. India also imposed an embargo on the necessary goods exported to Bhutan. The coercive diplomacy of India forced Bhutan to find out other options for economic and strategic relations. Introducing independent foreign policy was the bone of contention between two trusted neighboring countries. Though Bhutan had no immediate alternative to India for importing its necessary things, it tried its utmost to go away from Indian non-barrier tariffs. Nepal also fell into such a kind of crisis, but Nepal technically maintained relations with China, and it could manage the Indian trade blockade in 2015 (Foreign Affairs, 2016). At this time, India intimidating Bhutan into following the way of Nepal will also bring hard imminence to it. The policy of Bhutan has gradually come to light through the recent trade trends with India and China. The table of Bhutanese imports from India and China indicates the actual scenario of the current trade trends.

Bhutanese import from India (amount in million Nu)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Import	55,285	53,973	60,107	56,659	51,379	71,236
Percentage	82.01%	80.6%	83.09%	82.0%	77.01%	77.95%

Source: Bhutan Trade Statistics from 2016 to 2020

Bhutanese import from China (amount in million Nu)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Import	1,476.21m	1,609.88m	1,613.66m	1,790.43m	2,133.83m	7,512.56m
Rank	3	4	3	2	3	2
Percentage	2.19%	2.40%	2.50%	2.90%	3.50%	8.32%

Source: Bhutan Trade Statistics from 2016 to 2020

The following table indicates the comparative trade of India and China in Bhutan. From 2016 to 2021, the percentage of total imports from China has increased by almost 6%, whereas the percentage of all imports from India has lessened by 4%. It focuses on the import embargo on Bhutan to bend its trade with others, including China. Thus, China has also ranked second from the fifth position in Bhutanese import ranking from 2016 to 2021.

Now India has looked forward to the East with other western countries to deter China and given less priority to its neighboring countries. In response to the Indian policy, China is trying to maintain trade relations with Indian historical neighboring friend countries, and trade relations with Bhutan are evidence of it. The last five-year trade between China and Bhutan indicates the consequences of the Indian aversion to the East Asian Countries by neglecting the long-time trusted friend. Bhutan also gathered the consequences of Indian coercive diplomacy from 1962 to 2017. At last, the alluring proposal from China is much more responsible for declining the dependency on India. Bhutanese increasing trade relations with China indicate the balancing act of Bhutan to avoid facing any other embargo like in 2015.

Impediment to make an International Profile

As a part of making Bhutanese international image, it wanted to be a non-permanent member of the UN. For this reason, ignoring the Indian suggestion, it met with China on the sideline of the Rio plus Twenty Summit in Brazil in 2012 and desired to maintain formal diplomatic relations with China very soon (Mitra & Srikant, 2018). They also talked about disputed border issues, trade, communication, and coordination regionally (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China, 2012). Bhutan is also trying to brand itself in the external world by introducing Gross National Happiness.

Bhutanese aspired to freely establish relations with states and non-state actors as a sovereign state, but India did not take it easy. So India played an embargo card to abstain Bhutan from establishing relations with others. On the one hand, it thought that relations with China would bring to distress its disputed national border contiguous to Bhutan. On the other hand, if Bhutan becomes a member of many international organizations, it cannot influence some common interested areas where China will benefit more. So India thwarts Bhutan in its independent foreign policy-making issue and internal political matters.

Doklam war and the position of Bhutan

In the Doklam area, the boundary line between Bhutan and China has not been demarked. Land boundary agreement talks between China-India imposed the status quo in the Doklam area. Anyway, China started to build roads ignoring that constant status in 2017. Strategically Doklam is a very crucial region for the territorial security of China, India, and Bhutan. Observing this situation, India always tries to manage Bhutan by abstaining from making formal diplomatic relations.

On the contrary, China tries to allure Bhutan to annex the chicken neck to support Indian separatist groups to liberate seven sisters. Still, three countries, contiguous with Doklam, claim the total land. Thus, making roads in Doklam carried another Sino- Indian conflict on the borders settlement issue. Bhutan was totally inactive during the Sino-Indian conflict in 2017. Even Bhutandid did not convey any information to India about making a road in Doklam.

In response to this, Wang Wenli, a top Chinese diplomat on the boundary issue, told the Indian media delegation that Bhutan has conveyed to China through diplomatic channels that the standoff area is not its territory (The Economic Times, 2018).

The Indian External Affairs Ministry also delivered a statement on June 30, "On June 16, Peoples Liberation Army construction party entered the Doklam area and attempted to construct a road. Our understanding is that a Royal Bhutan Army patrol attempted to dissuade them from this unilateral activity"(The Economic Times, 2018).

Observing the annexation of Tibet and Sikkim, Bhutan was totally inactive during the Doklam conflict between Sino-India, though Thimpu and Delhi have been maintaining a friendship treaty since 1949. Bhutan can take some soft initiatives to deter China in this war; on the contrary, Bhutan did not inform India about the making road of China in the Doklam area despite a matter of concern for India's territorial security. The position of Bhutan was apparent in the statement of an Indian diplomat about the Doklam area. However, the statement of the Chinese diplomat conveyed the precise position of Bhutan regarding the Doklam region.

Conclusion

India and Bhutan share a common border, culture, and security implications. India signed a friendship treaty with Bhutan in 1949 to secure disputed borders from revisionist China following the British tactics in 1910. India ensured Bhutanese economic and strategic facility for overall development by signing this treaty. It was renewed with some amendments in 2007, which gave an opportunity to Bhutan to form formal diplomatic relations with other countries (Indo-Bhutan Friendship Treaty, 2007). Under this treaty, Bhutan was able to make formal diplomatic relations with 53 countries overall. It could not make diplomatic relations with China despite Bhutanese eagerness.

Nevertheless, it maintains economic ties with China with the consultation of India. India was always fearful about the land boundary talks between Bhutan and China. So India secured its demarcated region from China's aggression by interfering with Bhutanese foreign policy.

After the annexation of Tibet, Bhutan was fearful of Chinese expansion as China claimed some parts of Bhutan as theirs. At this point, Bhutan did not get any direct help, but India continuously interfered in the land boundary talks between China and Bhutan, which is yet to be solved. As an independent country, Bhutan has to consult with India to discuss its border's western and

eastern parts with China. Annexation of Sikkim is another issue for Bhutanese appalling; as a landlocked country, it has a territorial dispute with China, and so has Sikkim. Bhutan blamed India for its coercive diplomacy with Bhutan, whereas India condemned the Bhutanese's silent stance during the Sino-Indian borders conflict (Mitra & Srikant, 2018).

The Indian embargo on the necessary goods of Bhutan in 2013 paved the way for China to increase trade relations with Bhutan, which is visible in the National Trade Statistics of Bhutan from 2016 to 2021. China has become the main source of imports for some South Asian countries, the largest for Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the second largest for Nepal, and the third-largest for the Maldives (Samaranayake, 2019). At once, India was the top source of imports for these countries. After all, they have changed their destination to keep pace with the world political scenario, and so has Bhutan. The Bhutanese stance was strategically silent in the 1962 Sino- Indian war to avoid its request in Sino-Indian land boundary talks, and so was in 2017 for an embargo on import goods. Another example of the Bhutanese partiality in the Doklam war in November 2020 is that the Indian satellite reported China's construction of a village inside the Bhutanese borders. Still, the Bhutanese Ambassador to India denied these reports. Actually, China made a village in this region (Kaul, 2021).

Nonetheless, the conflict between Indian and Chinese troops about Doklam in 2017 revealed a potential divergence in Bhutan's relations with India in a territory claimed by Bhutan and China. The cost-benefit analysis of Bhutan drives its stance in the Sino-Indian war.

After decades of estrangement, Beijing extends the hand of friendship to the tiny Himalayan kingdom ("China woos Bhutan," 2018). Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyu visited Thimphu and met with then Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay in July 2018 to attempt to improve bilateral relations with Bhutan after the Doklam conflict (Samaranayake, 2019). Notably, China has been calling for Bhutan's active participation in Chinese projects in recent years, even though Bhutan did not participate in China's BRI Forums in 2017 and 2019. As Bhutan is looking for investments over just aid, China will likely pounce on this opportunity quickly. President Xi Jinping recently offered Nepal investments of 3.5 billion over the next two years (Katoch, 2019).

Thus, Indian coercive diplomatic initiatives are mainly responsible for bringing China to make a chasm in the friendship relations between the two neighboring countries. Ultimately, this process forced Bhutan to shape the relational trends on significance-based.

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