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Pakistan-Nepal Relations: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective on Bilateral Relations



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Introduction

Pakistan and Nepal, two strategic South Asian countries, have established bilateral relations since 1963. They have been part of geographical convergence groups like SAARC, which allows them to address diverse issues affecting commerce, tourism, and the



environment. Pakistan supported Nepal's efforts to remain sovereign during regional disruptions in the 1990s, and both countries have since strengthened their cooperation in mutual trading and stimulated domestic companies to expand exports to the counterpart market. The relationship between Pakistan and Nepal is expected to evolve in the coming days, taking into consideration history, culture, and respect. The grooming of such a relationship is important for creating a favorable future environment amidst fast-growing globalization. Both countries have always sought to consolidate their positions in international systems, with Pakistan seeking to consolidate its position. Currently, both countries have political desires to enhance their relationship in the political diplomatic framework by expanding bilateral relations in trade liberalization, tourism, and people-to-people contact. They formed the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to focus on economic cooperation, cultural interaction, and regional security



enhancement. The relations between Pakistan and Nepal are not thematic, strategic, or socio-political but rather potential and prospective. Each country has demonstrated willingness to enhance their relations through trade, tourism, and culture agreements. Pakistan has assisted Nepal in finding solutions to developmental challenges such as education and health, while Nepal is culturally diverse and offers several tourist attractions for Pakistan to visit. The expansion of regional cooperation is considered the fundamental approach to development for Pakistan and Nepal, as both countries have the inherent potential to expand cooperation and play a critical role in power realignment worldwide.

Strengthening Military Ties between Pakistan and Nepal

Being different in socio-political realities, the two nations still have characteristics of close partnership and cooperation as two countries with similar historical experience, similar interests, and similar problems. This changing dynamic has significant strategic implications for the regional security architecture of South Asia. Bilaterally, Pakistan and Nepal have always enjoyed good diplomatic relations since the recognition of foreign relations in 1960. Nevertheless, the military aspect of this relationship has been particularly rapid in the last few years, primarily because of the changing perception of both security and strategic cooperation in the region. Nepal's faces security issues can be addressed by Pakistan, which has experience in counter-terrorism operations and military force training. This search for new allies has led to a more liberal attitude toward Pakistan and readiness to enter into closer military relations with them regarding several areas of



military training, joint exercises, or exchanging intelligence data. The argument is that this cooperation improves Nepal's ability to address security challenges and decreases its dependence on one country.

Parallel to security cooperation, there is a possibility of defense trade between the two countries indicating an optimistic future. The defense manufacturing industry in Pakistan, which can manufacture all sorts of military hardware and software, seems eager to enter into business relations with Nepal. It could help in the achievement of other needed equipment for the military or technology to upgrade the Nepal defense force. Besides, it can increase the defense revenue of Pakistan and help the defense industry by creating new markets and increasing its recognition as a regional supplier of defense products. The importance of military relations also finds its place in the aspect that it influences the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Nepal. In the broader regional context, military cooperation in South Asia in turn, could provide a counterpoint to balancing the effect of the region's great powers.

Strengthening Ties: The Diplomatic Relationship between Pakistan and Nepal

The diplomatic relations between the countries of the world cannot be overemphasized this is especially true for two countries with a historic connection with Pakistan which was once part of a united empire known as the sub-continent of India and Nepal. Though the two can be considered geographically distant, there exist opportunities for the two nations to have a relationship that will see both rise in the political and economic systems within the region. Pakistan and Nepal have had good diplomatic relations ever since they

officially started to engage with one another in 1960. Nevertheless, the fact is that the bilateral connection has often been masked by the greater geopolitical factors in South Asia. In recent years though there has been a realization and attempts that such an uptake benefits both countries,



especially in areas such as trade and tourism, and security in the region.

The importance of regional security is another potential area that can enhance the Pak-Nepal relationship. Among the threats of mutual interest are terrorism and other transnational crimes. All these threats can be waged with general cooperation, as well as experience and information sharing and coordination of efforts in security-related issues. Besides, there is much that Pakistan and Nepal have to share through organizations like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation or SAARC to respond to issues that are prevailing within the South Asian region. Therefore, Pakistan and Nepal are officially diplomatic counterparts, but there is a great opportunity for deeper cooperation between the two countries. It means that by relying on such potential spheres as economic cooperation, tourism, and security issues both countries can turn the relations into the most effective and beneficial cooperation. Given the dynamics of the world today, it is relevant that relations between Pakistan and Nepal will not only accrue



benefits to the two countries but to the whole of the South Asian region. It is high time to change and to develop a new future for two nations free from conflicts and tensions.

Cultural Relations between Pakistan and Nepal: A Tapestry of Shared Heritage

The two different geographical regions, the people and the country of Pakistan and Nepal have been having close cultural interaction since time immemorial. Despite having dissimilar histories and political profiles, the cultural and historical relationships of these nations give a glimpse of the South Asian civilization. This relationship revolves to some extent around Buddhism, which has been a major broker of cultural exchange and interpenetration. In the 5th century BC, the Indian subcontinent was the origin of one of the major world religions. The persona known today as Buddha was born in Lumbini which is in present-day North Central Nepal. Lumbini is accepted as the most holy site by Buddhists and thousands of Buddhist followers visit the place to tap into their spiritual source. The existence of this religious site makes inherent relations between Nepal and Buddhist culture exist in a few regions of Pakistan. In Pakistan itself, evidence of Buddhism is best represented by the ruins of the Gandhara civilization that existed from the 6th century BCE to 11th century CE originally in modern-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with some areas of northern Pakistan.

This area is rightly credited for the spread of Buddhist art and religions to South Asia for spirituality and other essential purposes. Because of this entwinement of cultural rapport, the complex sculptures and the stupas retrieved in locations such as Taxila and Swat clarify the exchange of ideas and continue. Some of the most talk-worthy exchanges of



arts happened between Nepal and Pakistan in the Gandhara period. The skill shown in these Buddhist works implies that there was regional exchange as well as emulation of the other's crafts to tap into the cumulative aesthetic. Many of these cultural images we incorporate were about the history that promoted working and innovation in artwork while narrating political struggles and distinctiveness seen today. It should be noted that both nations need to draw more attention to furthering the cultural aspect of bilateral relations through tourism, academic exchange, and cultural exchange programs. Opening up the opportunity for Buddhist tourism, people on both sides will benefit from getting to know about the culture of each country. Furthermore, the program has the added advantage of the Buddhist spiritual connection to tolerance and nonviolence as premises for opening dialogue. Some of the activities that may encompass goodwill for the two nations are participation in cultural events, art exhibitions, and organizing conferences that bring in academicians to discuss Buddhism. People living in both countries can continue enjoying cross-cultural discussions that make them feel like they are in a unified nation. Through people-to-people engagement, all forms of collaboration in the areas of arts, education, and social development become very possible. Thus, Pakistan and Nepal's cultural relations based on Buddhism provide a sound platform for cooperation and appreciation. Therefore, grounding itself in this historical affair and being in the same culture, both nations can strive to build unity and further strengthen the relations.

The Gandhara Civilization to which modern Pakistan belongs has a special relevance to the social and historical relations between Pakistan and Nepal. Existing through the 1st



and 5th centuries CE, Gandhara was an epicenter of Buddhist art, culture, and commerce and played a major role in the diffusion of Buddhism in South Asia including Nepal. The relics of Gandhara mainly the beautiful Buddhist carved statues, monasteries, and stupas form the cultural link between the two countries. Nepal has been following the path of Buddhism since time immemorial. As such, Nepal always has held a cultural value towards Gandhara for thinking and portraying Buddhist religion due to which various relations like diplomatic and cultural relations between Pakistan and Nepal can be initiated. The Gandhara message is disseminated not only in museums and archeological sites but in spirituality and fellowship that has defined Pak-Nepal relations. In the recent past, both countries have sought to find multilateral areas of cooperation where culturally Nepal has shown interest in the conservation and presentation of the Buddhist sites of Gandhara. Hence, the Gandhara Civilization is bound to remain a strong and healthy factor for friendliness between Pakistan and Nepal through the encouragement of tourism, academic projects, and culture-related programs.

The Government of Pakistan has been sending 25 scholarship seats annually for Nepalese students under the Pakistan Technical Assistance Programme (PTAP) to study in the major fields of medicine, Engineering, and Pharmacy. Pakistan also offers long and short-term training to the government officials of Nepal it is currently around 225 Nepali nationals, most of them students living in the different cities of Pakistan majority are 80 Nepali doctors pursuing MS/MD/MDS in Pakistan. The two countries established a Cultural Agreement in May 1970 with the following purposes; the enhancement of



cultural exchanges between the Two Countries, the establishment of Inter-University relations, and Cooperation between the Radio and Television. In Kathmandu, the Pakistan-Nepal Friendship and Cultural Association is functioning. There is also the Nepal Friendship Group in Islamabad.

The Himalayas, a mountain range stretching across five countries, connects Pakistan and Nepal, despite the vast distance between them. The Himalayas, including K2, the second tallest mountain in the world, are central to the geographical and ethno geographical relationship between the two South Asian nations. Both countries share a common geographical space and culture, with the high mountains in northern Pakistan and Nepal forming the landscape of religious Nepal. The mountains also hold cultural and religious meanings, with people from both countries valuing the highlands and their livelihoods heavily reliant on them.

The towering peaks of the Himalayas create future opportunities for tourism, adventure sports, and the environment. However, issues such as landscape conservation, climate change, and sustainable tourism are currently affecting both countries. Reflective cooperation in these sectors could strengthen diplomatic and economic relations between Pakistan and Nepal, safeguarding their mountain territories and leveraging the global attention these terrains draw. Despite geographical distance, the Himalayas and their high-altitude peaks hold social and political ties and comparable expectations between the two nations.

Buddhist Connections between Pakistan and Nepal

It is crucial to understand that Pakistan and Nepal have had historical relations in economic aspects, cultural, and religious as well, and especially Buddhism plays a vital role. Nepal is well known for Lumbini being the birthplace of Siddhartha



Gautama who grew up to become Buddha has been historically connected to regions of modern-day Pakistan from the ancient civilization of Gandhara. Gandhara, which has made deep imprints in Buddhist art and the construction of monastic, covered the area of modern Pakistan, particularly in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab regions. The historical city of Taxila in Pakistan, now in ruins, plays an important role in being in the light of education and Buddhist knowledge. This historical interaction presents a perfect chance for the two nations to deepen their intercultural relations through bilateral tourism at times enhanced by exchange programs. The kind of revival activities that Thailand may engage in with Myanmar include exchange programs, archaeology, and joint programs that would aim at promoting culture among the populations of Thailand and Myanmar through educational tourism. Such popular events like International Buddhist festivals and conferences would bring to Kandy scholars, monks, and tourists and hence create a tangible positive feeling of unity. These principles can help Pakistan and Nepal



navigate this region of constantly shifting geopolitical volatility toward better reconciliation of economic and cultural interests.

Pakistan and Nepal Religious Relations

Pakistan and Nepal are two religious and spiritual countries that have many religious attractions that many tourists visit. Pakistan has literature links with Sikhs and Buddhists though their sites have religious importance across the globe. The major attractions, that make Gurdwara Panja Sahib and Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur the religious places, are the areas of shrines for the Sikh religion. But Tourists need to go to places like Takht-i-bahi, and Taxila Valley where Gandharan Buddhists sit and the art is preferred. Local travel has a significant population of tourists visiting Sufi shrines, shrines honoring Muslim saints and religious heroes, all over the country. Among them, the Data Darbar shrine in Lahore and the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan Sharif attract the most people for the bright fairs taking place in the year. Like the Indians, Nepal also has many famous pilgrimage centers which are visited by millions of Hindus and Buddhists each year. Sadhus, monks, and several devotees arrive to seek their blessings at Pashupatinath Temple, Swargadwari, and numerous others nearby Kathmandu. Elsewhere, Muktinath Temple, Janakpur is sacred to Hindus while Lumbini the birthplace of Lord Buddha, and Buddhist shrines like Boudhanath Stupa at Kathmandu attract Buddhist pilgrims from all over Asia and other parts of the world. Some other areas, such as the Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar region are also popular among tourists, who wish to perform the parikrama around the holy mountain. The crucible of



religious tourism is an essential segment of Pakistan and Nepalese tourism industries. From small spiritual houses and shrines to massive colorful religious fairs, sacred places in these countries offer pilgrims deep experiences of the religious connection with traveling. However, appropriate physical structures and amenities could further boost religious tourism in both nations even more.

Economic Relations between Pakistan and Nepal

In the ever-evolving landscape of South Asian politics and economics, the relationship between Pakistan and Nepal stands out as a potentially fruitful partnership, yet one often overshadowed by regional complexities. Both nations share a history marked by rich cultural exchanges, and there is a pressing need to strengthen their economic ties for mutual benefit. Pakistan and Nepal have much to gain from a robust economic relationship, particularly in trade and investment. Currently, bilateral trade is modest, with Nepal exporting goods such as textiles, agricultural products, and medicinal herbs to Pakistan, while Pakistan supplies Nepal with textiles, machinery, and various consumer goods. However, these exchanges do not reflect the full potential of what both countries can achieve together. The geographical proximity of both nations can facilitate trade. As members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Pakistan and Nepal can collaborate to reduce tariff barriers and encourage the free movement of goods. By establishing trade agreements, they could expand their market reach, benefiting local producers and consumers alike. For instance, if South Asia's trade policies were more harmonized, the agriculture sectors in both countries could flourish,



leading to food security and increased employment. Moreover, both nations can benefit from investment and cooperation in sectors like tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy. Nepal, known for its stunning landscapes and rich cultural heritage, can attract Pakistan tourists, while Pakistan's diverse environments can draw Nepal tourists. Joint marketing campaigns could enhance visibility for both countries, encouraging cross-border tourism. In agriculture, sharing knowledge about sustainable practices can enhance productivity, while in renewable energy, both countries can explore joint ventures in solar and hydropower projects to tackle their energy shortages. The economic relationship between Pakistan and Nepal holds immense potential for growth and mutual benefit. By leveraging their historical Buddhist connections, these nations can not only enhance their economic ties but also foster a deeper understanding and respect for each other's cultures. Moving forward, both governments must prioritize collaboration to unlock the full potential of their relationship, ensuring a prosperous future for their citizens.

Trade activity in the early 2000s was rather limited and was ranged in \$3-5 million per annum. During this stage, Pakistan's export basket to Nepal was largely constituted with textiles, chemicals, and pharmaceutical products, whereas Nepal was exporting agricultural commodities, handicraft and herbs. Pakistan remained exporting textiles, cement and food whereas Nepal exported handicrafts, spices, medicinal plants and herbs to Pakistan.



<u>Year</u>	<u>Imports from Pakistan</u>	<u>Exports from Nepal</u>	<u>Trade Balance</u>
2015	21,472	325,939	-304,467
2016	112,004	384,086	-272,082
2017	97,053	1,227,189	-1,130,136
2018	59,744	5,640,189	-5,580,445
2019	17,430	193,759	-176,329

High Level of Visits

Pakistan and Nepal relations started developing in the early 1960s when both nations were trying to build up foreign relations and international influence. One of the first was in 1962 when the then King of Nepal, King Mahendra paid a state visit to Pakistan. This visit indeed set the tone for future cooperation and this relationship grew from being a strict bilateral concern with South Asian issues such as poverty, stability, and socio-economic development over the decades.

More high-profile visits have however been made in the following years to strengthen the ties. After the recognition of Pakistan in 1972, former Pakistan's Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto paid a visit to Nepal and the visit paved the way to the accession of following bilateral agreements to enhance trade relations between the two countries. These agreements especially in agriculture as well as infrastructure development depicted the key areas the countries held in common, in enhancing their economic sectors. There was more exchange of diplomas in the nineties than in the preceding decades some of these



exchanges are as follows; Nepal saw its first-ever foreign state visit by Pakistan's President Farooq Leghari in December 1996 the time when SAARC was gradually emerging as the key diplomatic forum. This period also put forward Nepal's strategic value and intention of establishing friendly relations with its South Asian neighbors including Pakistan. During a state visit by King Birendra of Nepal in 1997, cooperation in cultural exchange tourism and educational tourism was proposed between Pakistan and Nepal.

General Pervez Musharraf's visit to Nepal shaped the relationship significantly in December 2002. At the time world was dealing with conflict situations, especially between Pakistan and India. However, the regional problems were not on Musharraf's agenda when he visited Kathmandu with the sense of exploring the new dimensions of bilateral relations conversation with the Nepal leaders mainly focused on trade and trade relations, economic cooperation, and regional security. An important feature of the visit was the statement of Musharraf about the need to intensify the interaction, first and foremost, in the sphere of culture, between the two countries as two Islamic states. This move was 'interpreted as Pakistan's desire to initiate a desire to bring itself closer to Nepal.

Asif Ali Zardari the President of Pakistan, undertakes many foreign tours among them being; Nepal. This visit was in compliance with the agendas aimed at improving bilateral cooperation as well as diplomatic relations between the two states. The trip emphasized formation of partnerships in trade, security and development. The visit was also



appreciated as a sign of goodwill that Pakistan wants to remain on good terms with its neighboring counterparts.

Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif visited Nepal to participate in the 18th SAARC Summit held in Kathmandu on 26th and 27th November 2014. Earlier, then Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Mahendra Bahadur Pandey visited Pakistan on 23-24 October 2014 to invite the Pakistan Prime Minister to the Summit on behalf of the Prime Minister of Nepal. Pakistan Prime Minister Mr. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi visited Nepal on an official visit on March 5-6 in the year 2018. To review the relations, the bilateral Political Consultation Mechanism at the Foreign Secretary level was finalized for Nepal and Pakistan. Four meetings of consultation mechanism were held on 25 February 2020 in Islamabad.

The meeting discussed the perspectives of bilateral cooperation, restoring and continuing to develop the relations of the two countries in trade and economics, including tourism, education, sports, cultural and people exchanges. The JEC at the level of the Finance Ministers was established in 1983 with the major aim of enhancing joint economic cooperative relations between Nepal and Pakistan. At the JEC in its different sitting, it has been agreed to direct efforts at unlocking potentials in trade, investment, and industrial cooperation joint ventures. The JEC had its sixth session on 19 and 20 August 2013 in Islamabad. It discussed trade and commerce, Banking & Finance, Agriculture & Live Stock, Energy, Health, Education, Culture Tourism Telecom, I & C.T, Civil Aviation, etc.

Commemoration of Nepal's Constitution Day and National Day at Islamabad

On September 20th, 2024, Islamabad An astounding gathering took held at the Serena Hotel in Islamabad to commemorate Nepal's Constitution Day and National Day, which were celebrated with genuine enthusiasm. The ceremony was conducted by His



Excellency Mr. Tapas Adhikari, Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan, and was attended by a distinguished group of visitors from the diplomatic, political, and economic areas.

The ceremony was honored by the presence of His Excellency Mr. Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, Minister of Energy and Power Division, as the Chief Guest and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps H.E. Mr. Atadjan Movlamov, Madam, Ambassador Embassy of the Republic of Turkmenistan. Other esteemed dignitaries in attendance included Mr. Md Aminul Islam Khan Deputy High Commissioner High Commission of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Ms. Geetika Srivastava, Chargé d'Affaires of the High Commission of India H.E. Mr. Admiral (R) Ravindra Chandrasiri Wijegunaratne, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, Mr. Ismail Mufeed Second Secretary of the High Commission of the Republic of Maldives and Mr. Isphanyar M. Bhandara, CEO of Murree Brewery, GEN. Nabeel JS Head Quarters and GEN. Ameer Muhammad Khan



General from GHQ. The event was enriched by the participation of notable Pakistani dignitaries, and members of the Diplomatic Community, including Ambassadors, Defense Attaches Deputy Heads of Missions, and Mr. Zaildar Ahsan Shah, exemplifying the enduring friendship between Nepal and Pakistan.

The ceremony commenced with the national anthems of both Pakistan and Nepal, a moment that truly captured the mutual respect and admiration shared by both nations. H.E. Mr. Tapas Adhikari, the Ambassador of Nepal, then delivered a profound and thought-provoking address, highlighting the importance of Constitution Day. Reflecting on this momentous occasion, he remarked, that on this day in 2015, a diverse and inclusive Constituent Assembly came together to craft a constitution that embodies the aspirations, dreams, and unity of the people of Nepal. This constitution stands as a testament to our shared journey, resilience, and unwavering commitment to forging a brighter, more inclusive future.

Ambassador Mr. Adhikari continued by highlighting the remarkable growth and development Nepal has experienced under its constitution, noting the successful establishment of the second elected parliament and the progress achieved by provincial and local governments. He underscored the deep-rooted bond between Nepal and Pakistan, which has flourished since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1960, characterized by mutual goodwill and cooperation. The Ambassador graciously acknowledged Pakistan's invaluable support in providing educational opportunities for



students of Nepal, particularly in the fields of medicine and engineering through various technical assistance programs.

In his address, the Chief Guest, His Excellency Mr. Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, lauded the enduring and brotherly ties between Nepal and Pakistan, expressing optimism for further enhancement of collaboration across various sectors. He stressed the significance of continued bilateral cooperation, regional development, and the shared pursuit of solutions to global challenges such as sustainable development, climate change, and environmental conservation. He further added that Pakistan and Nepal share a strong and enduring relationship, positioning themselves as important partners for the future. The ties between the two nations are robust, and we are committed to elevating this partnership to even greater heights in the years to come.

Zaildar Ahsan Shah stated that the relationship between Pakistan and Nepal is remarkably strong, and His Excellency, the Ambassador, is a true friend of Pakistan, playing a pivotal role in enhancing ties between the two nations. He expressed confidence that under this esteemed leadership, the bond between Pakistan and Nepal will reach even greater heights. He further added that the National Day celebration witnessed the participation of distinguished guests, and extended heartfelt congratulations to the people of Nepal on their Constitution Day.

The celebration also shone a spotlight on Nepal's global reputation as a premier destination for mountain and adventure tourism, which attracts numerous tourists, including many from Pakistan. Ambassador Mr. Tapas Adhikari extended a warm



invitation to all attendees to experience Nepal's diverse cultural heritage, traditions, and exceptional hospitality.

The event reached its high point with a symbolic cake-cutting ceremony, representing the unity and friendship between the two nations. A lavish dinner followed, providing an ideal opportunity for guests to engage, network, and further solidify the bonds of friendship.

This distinguished celebration was not only a reflection of the longstanding and profound relationship between Nepal and Pakistan but also a testament to their shared vision of fostering peace, prosperity, and mutual understanding for years to come.

Conclusion

This article explains that there exist numerous and intricate historical relations between the two countries and the people of both countries that can form the basis of their cooperation in diplomacy and economy. By nurturing the bilateral dialogue and cooperation it will be easier for both nations to mitigate and solve these problems together. Further, growth at a much faster pace is taking place in the political profile of South Asia which means changes in the map of power formation which is emerging in the region. Pakistan and Nepal, due to their respective locations and geo-strategic Himalayan locations, have the potential to benefit from joint investment ventures. For example, in trade tourism, or infrastructural projects, the idea of cooperation opens the way to special cooperation that will benefit both nations. The high level visits between



Pakistan and Nepal have served as important diplomatic and cultural bond between the two countries and were certainly aimed at a spirit of nurturing peaceful and mutual cooperative relations for securing development in the South Asian region. The historical and cultural link particularly through Gandhara Civilization strengthens the relations and provides both countries opportunity in different sectors including tourism, cultural conservation and jointly regional diplomacy. In addition, cultural exchanges also can work more effectively in creating favorable opinions and trust between two nations. Both countries can call upon people for people-to-people contacts, educational linkages, and culturally friendly exchange since understanding one's cultural and historical entity will indeed enhance the values of the two friendly nations. Globalization and interdependence define the future of Pakistan and Nepal's relations allowing them to foster a particular model of cooperation that would be mutually favorable and beneficial for the region as a whole. While advancing, there must be the commitment of both Pakistan and Nepal policymakers to engage in dialogue, towards a desired relationship where both countries hold their hands together and confront the complexities of the world. In this way, it would not only mutually strengthen their bilateral cooperation, but also promote the improvement of the South Asian environment and its development.