

The Kalapani River Dispute: A Strategic and Diplomatic Conundrum for India and Nepal

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ABSTRACT

The Kalapani River dispute between India and Nepal represents a critical geopolitical issue rooted in historical ambiguities and competing territorial claims. Originating from the 1815 Sugauli Treaty, the disagreement revolves around the precise source of the Kalapani River, which serves as a segment of the India-Nepal border. While Nepal asserts sovereignty over the region based on its interpretation of the treaty, India emphasizes strategic imperatives, viewing Kalapani as vital for border security and countering potential Chinese incursions. The dispute encompasses 335 square kilometers in the western Himalayas, including the Kalapani region, Lipulekh Pass, and Limpiyadhura—a crucial tri-junction involving India, Nepal, and China. Beyond bilateral tensions, the issue has broader implications for regional stability, particularly given Nepal's balancing act between India and China in South Asia's evolving security architecture. This article examines the historical context, strategic importance, and regional dimensions of the Kalapani dispute, emphasizing the necessity of diplomatic dialogue and cooperative mechanisms to resolve this protracted conflict. Resolving the Kalapani issue is imperative for fostering mutual trust, ensuring border security, and enhancing bilateral ties between India and Nepal while contributing to regional stability.

Keywords: Kalapani dispute, Sugauli Treaty, India-Nepal relations, Territorial sovereignty, Lipulekh Pass, Border security, Regional stability, South Asia

INTRODUCTION

The Kali River, known for its dark waters, originates from sacred springs at Kalapani before flowing southward, where it becomes the Sharda River and ultimately merges with the Ganga. Like many rivers originating in Nepal, it courses from the north to the south (Rae, 2021, p. 104). The Kalapani River dispute represents a critical territorial contention between India and Nepal, rooted in historical ambiguities, geographical interpretations, and strategic imperatives. The disputed region lies in the western Himalayas, covering approximately 335 square kilometers, and includes Kalapani, the Lipulekh Pass, and Limpiyadhura—a tri-junction point between India, Nepal, and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China (Rae, 2021, p. 104). At the heart of the dispute lies a disagreement over the origin

of the Kalapani River, a tributary of the Mahakali River, which serves as a segment of the India-Nepal border as delineated by the 1815 Sugauli Treaty.

The Sugauli Treaty, signed after the Anglo-Nepalese War¹, defined the Kali River as Nepal's western boundary (Trivedi, 2008, p. 201). However, the treaty's lack of clarity regarding the river's precise origin has led to conflicting territorial claims. India asserts that the river originates at a higher point, placing Kalapani within its territory. Conversely, Nepal argues that the river's source lies further downstream, thus incorporating Kalapani within its borders (Nayak, 2020). These divergent interpretations have fuelled prolonged diplomatic tensions and stirred nationalist sentiments in both countries.

Strategically, Kalapani holds immense importance for India. The region serves as a critical observation point along the India-China border, especially in light of the

1962 Sino-Indian War, which underscored the need for robust border security. Indian military personnel stationed in Kalapani act as a deterrent against potential Chinese incursions and facilitate surveillance of the Lipulekh Pass. This Himalayan pass, integral to trade and movement between India and Tibet, enhances the strategic significance of Kalapani, offering a logistical advantage in the rugged terrain.

From Nepal’s perspective, the Kalapani dispute is a matter of sovereignty and historical entitlement based on its interpretation of the Sugauli Treaty. The assertion of territorial claims over Kalapani is closely tied to national pride and identity. For India, the dispute is primarily driven by strategic imperatives and the need to secure its northern borders. This dichotomy underscores the complex interplay of historical grievances, geopolitical considerations, and national security concerns that define the Kalapani issue.

The Kalapani dispute is further shaped by broader regional dynamics involving China. As Nepal navigates its relationships with India and China, its strategic positioning becomes crucial in the evolving security architecture of South Asia. Resolving the Kalapani dispute is vital for fostering regional stability and enhancing diplomatic ties between India and Nepal. A resolution would require sustained dialogue and mutual accommodation to address the historical and strategic dimensions of the issue effectively.

This article examines the strategic implications of the Kalapani River dispute for India and Nepal, emphasizing its impact on bilateral relations, regional security, and the evolving geopolitical landscape of South Asia.

River Disputes in India-Nepal Relations: The Cases of Susta and Mechi:

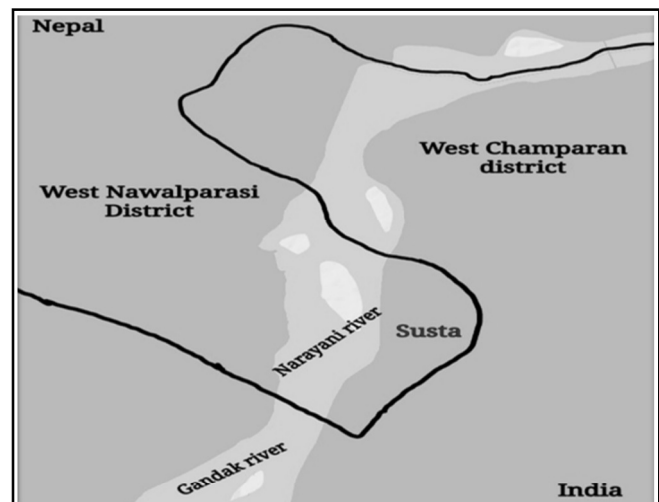
India and Nepal share numerous rivers that flow across their borders, creating several points of contention. These disputes often arise from differing interpretations of historical treaties, shifting river courses, and varied national interests in water resources.

Susta River Dispute:

Susta, a village disputed between Nepal and India, is currently under Indian control. The residents of Susta assert their Nepalese citizenship. According to the 1816 Treaty of Sugauli, the Gandaki River was designated as the international border, with the right bank belonging to

Nepal and the left bank to India. At the time of the treaty, Susta was situated within Nepal. However, over the years, the Gandaki River altered its course, shifting Susta to the left bank, which is now controlled by India. The Nepalese government has voiced concerns, asserting that Susta is part of Nepal and calling on the Indian government to return the territory (Verma, 2022, p. 6).

The dispute surrounding Susta is attributed by the people of Nepal to the Gandak River’s shifting flow, also known as the Narayani in Nepal. According to Aurangzeb Khan, vice-principal of the Shri Janta Dalit Primary School—the only school in Susta with a painted wall that reads Nawalparasi, Nepal-Gandak serves as the international border between Nepal and India (Bihar). ‘Earlier, Susta was on the right bank of the Gandak, which falls in Nepal’, he continued. Over time, however, the river’s channel was altered, and Susta now falls on the Indian-controlled Gandak River’s left bank. Should the nationality of locals be altered by a river’s changing course? (Jamwal, 2017, March 19). The Narayani River altered its path in every major flood that occurred in the past, displacing the Nepalese land east of the river, posing a threat of flooding during the monsoon seasons of 1845, 1954, 1972, 1980, and 1989 (Baral, 2018, p. 31).



Source: (Raju Babu, n.d.)

Fig. 1 : Shows the Disputed area of Susta

River disputes between India and Nepal often arise due to the constant movement of the volatile Himalayan Rivers, which serve as the international boundary between both nations in various regions. These rivers frequently alter their paths, leading to the emergence of new territories and the submergence of existing land.

While the river-based border is intended to be fixed, the changing course of these rivers results in conflicting territorial claims. Essentially, as the rivers re-define territories by eroding old lands and forming new ones, these newly formed areas become occupied by individuals beyond the recognized border, causing what was once Nepalese or Indian Territory to be occupied by the other. This cycle generates confusion and tensions among inhabitants residing in these constantly evolving border regions (Das, 2009, August 31). There are sixty rivers and rivulets separating the two nations' borders. The riverine border stretches for a total of 340 kilometers, of which 200 kilometers are along the river Mahakali, 80 kilometers or so along the river Mechi, 20 kilometers along the river Gandak, and 57 other rivers and rivulets (Ranjan, 2021, p. 108)

Mechi River Dispute:

The Mechi River, demarcates the eastern border of India-Nepal (Thapliyal, 2024, p. 219; Trivedi, 2008, p. 201). The dispute over the Mechi River revolves around the precise alignment of the river as it forms the boundary between India and Nepal. Issues often arise from floods and the river's tendency to change course, leading to territorial ambiguity. It also represents just one of several ongoing River disagreements between India and Nepal. Positioned on the eastern bank of the Mechi River in the Bhadrapur Municipality of Jhapa District, the masonry boundary pillar², commonly known as the junge pillar or permanent pillar-1, serves as a key reference point. Approximately half a kilometer northeast of this pillar lays the original border pillar no. 120. Following these original borderlines southwards from pillar no. 120 leads to junge pillar no. 1, marking the tri-junction of Nepal and the Indian states of Bengal and Bihar (Timalsina, 2018, p. 549).

In March 1996, a joint survey team from both India and Nepal conducted a survey that resulted in a westward deviation of the borderline from near pillar no. 120. This alteration gave the border a 'c' shape, with the line being delineated at a distance south of the junge pillar. Nepal asserts that India's presence has encroached upon the Mechi border (Timalsina, 2018, p. 549).

Broader pattern:

By examining these disputes, we can see that the Kalapani issue is part of a broader pattern of territorial disagreements driven by natural changes in river courses,

historical treaty interpretations, and evolving national priorities. This context underscores that the Kalapani River dispute is not an isolated incident but part of a larger spectrum of India-Nepal water disputes.

The Kalapani River Dispute: From History to Present:

The origins of the Kalapani River (also called the Kali or Mahakali River) dispute date back to the Treaty of Sugauli, signed in 1816 between the British East India Company and Nepal after the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-1816). This treaty, which resulted in a British victory, set the Mahakali River as the western boundary and the Mechi River as the eastern boundary for Nepal, while also including the ridges in the Darjeeling hills and Sikkim (Muni, 2015, p. 400; Baral, 2018, p. 205). In the peace settlement, Nepal had to cede territories of Kumaon, Garhwal, Simla hills, and parts of Terai between Rapti and Kosi, which it had seized during military campaigns (Thapliyal, 2024, p. 219; Trivedi, 2008, p. 201; Nayak, 2020). The treaty resulted in the Gorkhas ceding territories up to the Sutlej River to the British East India Company, thus establishing the Kali River as the boundary, with Nepal to the east and India to the west. However, the treaty did not clearly define the river's source or include maps, leading to ongoing disputes (Sanwal, 1956, p. 211; Upreti, 2009, p. 123; Rae, 2021, p. 107).

In the 1860s, the British moved their military base to Kalapani near the river's source, a setup that lasted until 1947. Following India's independence, the Indian government, concerned about security due to the communist victory in China and China's activities in Tibet, established 18 military check posts along the Nepal-Tibet border in the early 1950s, as noted by Budhi Narayan Shreshta in 2003. However, Kalapani and Lipulekh were not included in the list of check posts, despite being significant historical routes for trade and pilgrimage to Tibet. If these areas had been part of Nepal, they would likely have been chosen for military postings (Dutta, 2020, May 19; Rae, 2021, pp. 118-119).

The Sino-Indian War of 1962³, triggered by India's Forward Policy⁴, resulted in India's defeat but led to Indian forces maintaining a presence at Kalapani, which was regarded as a strategic area for defense due to its high altitude of 20,276 feet (Malone, 2009, p. 134; Pun, 2020, January 27). This area was recognized by China as part of India's territory during the war (Nayak, 2020, p. 4). After the defeat, India not only continued its presence in

Kalapani but also bolstered its security there, recognizing the region's strategic importance in controlling access to the Tibetan plateau (Dhungel *et al.*, 2020, p. 27). The military defeat in the east highlighted vulnerabilities in Indian defenses, with Lipulekh being particularly exposed compared to the more fortified Se La pass⁵ (Kumar, 2020, p. 48).

Nepal's lack of protest regarding India's occupation of Kalapani has prompted speculation. According to Sudheer Sharma's article in *Mulyankan*, the issue was raised by Finance Minister Rishikesh Saha with King Mahendra, who reportedly chose not to escalate tensions with India, already displeased with him after the 1960 coup. Despite this, Mahendra sought closer ties with China through the Kathmandu-Kodari Road agreement and requested the removal of Indian border check posts in 1969 (Rae, 2021, p. 119).

Following the restoration of Nepal's multi-party parliamentary democracy⁶ with a constitutional monarchy⁷ in the 1990s (Chandra, 2020, p. 207; Nayak, 2020), the Kalapani boundary dispute gained increased attention (Adhikari, 2018, p. 63). Nepal first raised the issue in 1997 during Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral's visit to Nepal, when the reopening of the Lipulekh pass as a route to Mansarovar prompted the country to highlight the Kalapani dispute (Dutta, 2020, May 19; Uprety and Salman, 2011, p. 656; Rae, 2021, p. 114). The matter was subsequently included in a formal joint statement after Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's visit to India in March 2002 (Timalsina, 2018, p. 552; Rae, 2021, p. 114).

The most recent escalation of the dispute occurred on November 2, 2019, when India published an updated political map (Kumar, 2021, p. 97), which redefined Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh as new union territories. The Kalapani region was also depicted within India's borders, as part of the Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand (Nayak, 2020, p. 2; Verma, 2022). While this region had been included in India's maps for decades, the official release of the new map reignited tensions. In response, Nepal issued objections, asserting that the Kalapani area lies within the Darchula district of Nepal's Sudurpashchim province. On November 2019, under the leadership of Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Nepal's Ministry of External Affairs released a media statement expressing its dissatisfaction and concern over the map's depiction:

The Nepal government is committed to protecting

the country's external borders and it is determined on its principled position that such border disputes with the neighbouring countries should be resolved through diplomatic channels after assessing the historical documents, facts, and evidence (Gyawali as cited in Nayak, 2020, p. 2).

The release of India's new political map was soon followed by the inauguration of a road to its border with China in 2020 (Kumar, 2021). On May 8, India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh virtually launched an 80 km-long road through the Himalayas, connecting to the border at the Lipulekh pass. In response, the Nepali government quickly raised objections, claiming that the road passed through territory it asserts as its own and accusing India of changing the status quo without prior diplomatic discussions (Xavier, 2020, June 11).

National Security of India and Kalapani:

Kalapani holds significant importance for India's national security, especially concerning its northern borders (Shukla, 2006). Situated in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, this strategically vital area borders both Nepal and China, making it a key point in the region's geopolitical framework (Nayak, 2020). The territory has been a subject of dispute between India and Nepal, with tensions escalating following the release of new political maps by both countries in November 2019 by India (Aryal and Pulami, 2024) and in 2020 when Nepal amended its constitution to incorporate the new political map, including Kalapani and Lipulekh (Mohan, 2020, June 13). The control of Kalapani significantly impacts the regional strategic balance, given its proximity to the Sino-Indian border and the tri-junction area (Muni, 2020, May 22).



Source: (Koirala, N. 2020, June 4)

Fig. 2 : Map Showing the Geographical Location of Kalapani and Lipulekh Pass in the India-Nepal Border Region

From a security standpoint, Kalapani is vital for India's defense strategy, offering a vantage point to monitor Chinese military activities along Nepal's border with Tibet (Bhattarai, 2020, p.5), SS Pangti, retired bureaucrat and an expert on India-Nepal border affairs said that;

It is crucial for India to maintain control at Kalapani in a bid to keep an eye on the activities across the border (Pangti quoted in Trevedi, 2017, August 9)

The Indian military presence in Kalapani acts as a buffer against potential People's Liberation Army (PLA)⁸ incursions. Moreover, the region provides access to the Lipulekh Pass, a crucial trade and pilgrimage route with significant military importance (Muni, 2020, May 22). Infrastructure connecting India to Lipulekh via Kalapani through road connection enhances troop mobility and logistical support, essential for a robust defense in the Himalayas (Kumar, 2021; Xavier, 2020, June 11).

The geopolitical rivalry between India and China accentuates the strategic significance of the Kalapani region. The historical border disputes and the 1962 Sino-Indian War have fostered deep-seated mistrust between the two nations. Since the 1962 war, Indian troops have maintained a presence in Kalapani. This conflict underscored the crucial role of Himalayan passes leading to the Tibetan plateau. China's infrastructural developments and military activities in Tibet and along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)⁹ are viewed with suspicion by India (Rajagopalan and Mohan, 2020). Control over Kalapani serves as a countermeasure, bolstering India's defense capabilities and maintaining strategic equilibrium.

The Kalapani dispute also impacts India-Nepal relations. Nepal's claim over Kalapani is rooted in the Sugauli Treaty signed with the British in March 1816 (Muni, 2020, May 22). Article V of the treaty states that;

The Rajah of Nepal renounces for himself, his heirs, and successors, all claim to or connection with the countries lying to the west of the River Kali and engages never to have any concern with those countries or the inhabitants there of (Rae, 2021, p. 107; Baral, 2018, p. 207).

Therefore, the land east of the Kali River has historically remained under Nepalese control. While India acknowledges this position, its claim stems from ambiguities in the treaty regarding the Kali River's identification and source. India asserts that the river originates from Lipu Lekh, subsequently merging with

other streams to form the Mahakali. Conversely, Nepal argues that the Kali River originates from Limpiyadhura, with the stream from Lipulekh being called Lipulekh. This discrepancy leads to the dispute, with the contested area between these two streams known as Kalapani (Muni, 2020, May 22).

Kalapani is a linchpin in India's national security strategy, serving as a strategic military outpost and symbol of territorial integrity. Its significance is amplified by its geopolitical context, necessitating a balanced approach addressing both security imperatives and diplomatic sensitivities. As India navigates its complex relationships with China and Nepal, Kalapani's strategic importance will remain central to its national security strategy.

China and South Asia:

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)¹⁰ has significantly augmented investments in South Asia, thereby expanding its influence in countries such as Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and other neighbouring regions. In Nepal, Chinese investments have been directed towards infrastructure projects, including roads, railways, and the energy sector. Notably, the development of the Trans-Himalayan railways presents Nepal with opportunities to reduce its dependency on India progressively (Murton, 2024; Murton and Lord, 2020; Bhattarai, 2022, p. 102). In 2017, Nepal entered into the Beijing-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with the shared objective of achieving middle-income status by 2030 (Thakur, 2023, p. 425). More recently, Nepal's acceptance of Chinese investments for the development of Lumbini and Pokhara airports underscores the nation's prioritization of China as a key investment partner (Singh and Shah, 2016, pp. 58-59).

China's growing influence in the Maldives can be attributed to multiple factors, including its expanding BRI projects, the strategic partnership between China and Pakistan, the U.S. military presence in Diego Garcia, and the increasing significance of the Indo-Pacific region. In 2015, under President Abdulla Yameen, legislation was enacted allowing foreign entities, including individuals and both state and non-state actors, to acquire land permanently in exchange for investments exceeding \$1 billion (Thakur, 2023, p. 427). Subsequently, China and the Maldives signed a free trade agreement on December 7, 2017, marking the Maldives' first bilateral FTA with any country. This was swiftly followed by the Maldives' formal entry into the BRI (Kugelman, 2021, July 16;

Ministry of Commerce, People's Republic of China, 2017, December 8). However, on March 6, 2018, the Maldives declined to participate in a large naval exercise hosted by India in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, citing an internal state of emergency. Concurrently, China initiated a \$200 million project to construct a bridge connecting Male, the capital, to Hulhule, where the international airport is located. Additionally, a Chinese company secured a 50-year lease on one of the islands. Collectively, China now controls approximately 17 islands in the Maldives, a situation that has raised significant concerns for both President Solih and India (Thakur, 2023, pp. 427-428).

In Pakistan, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was established in March 2013 when China assumed administrative control of Gwadar port, which had previously been managed by the Singapore Port Authority (Ali, 2017, p. 204), with a value exceeding \$60 billion (The Hindu, 2023, September 26). The CPEC includes the development of Gwadar Port (leased for forty years), highways, and energy infrastructure, thereby providing China with strategic access to the Arabian Sea (Katoch, 2019; Sachdeva, 2021). The CPEC is an integral component of China's overarching Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Ali, 2017, p. 205).

Sri Lanka has witnessed substantial Chinese investments, particularly in the Hambantota Port (leased for ninety-nine years) and the Colombo Port City project, both of which enhance China's maritime presence in the Indian Ocean (Roy-Chaudhury, 2019; Sachdeva, 2021). Additionally, Bangladesh's Chittagong port and Myanmar's Kyaukpyu port have benefitted from Chinese-funded projects, including power plants, bridges, and housing developments (Sachdeva, 2021, p. 152). These investments are frequently accompanied by strategic and security concerns, as the infrastructure developed can serve both civilian and military logistics, which has raised alarms in India regarding China's growing regional influence. Furthermore, the increasing debt dependency of these countries on China has prompted fears about China's potential economic leverage and the risk of the loss of sovereignty, as exemplified by the long-term lease of Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port to China.

China's expanding military capabilities and infrastructure development in Tibet present a significant strategic challenge to India. The modernization of the Tibetan plateau includes the enhancement of military bases, airfields, and missile deployment sites, thereby

facilitating the rapid mobilization of troops and equipment (Rajagopalan and Mohan, 2020). Reports indicate that China has stationed nuclear-capable intermediate-range missiles in the region and deployed approximately 300,000 troops across the Tibetan plateau (Nayak, 2014, p. 44). The construction of extensive road and rail networks, such as the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, a 1,080 km-long line currently the shortest of the four lines leading to Tibet, ensures efficient logistical support and swift movement of Chinese forces (Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, 2001). This infrastructure not only bolsters China's defensive posture but also enables offensive operations along contested border areas. For India, these developments necessitate a reassessment of its military preparedness and strategic positioning in the region, as China's enhanced presence in Tibet directly influences security dynamics along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and India's northern borders (Rajagopalan and Mohan, 2020).

Conclusion:

The Kalapani River dispute epitomizes the intricate blend of historical grievances, strategic imperatives, and national security concerns shaping India-Nepal relations. Rooted in the ambiguities of the Sugauli Treaty of 1815, this territorial contention underscores the enduring complexities of demarcating boundaries based on historical documents and geographical interpretations. The strategic importance of Kalapani for India, particularly in terms of military surveillance and border security, is juxtaposed against Nepal's nationalist fervor and historical claims. This dispute is part of a broader pattern of India-Nepal territorial disagreements, such as those over Susta and Mechi, which further complicates bilateral relations.

The recent escalation in the Kalapani dispute began in 2019 when India released a new political map following its reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir, which included Kalapani within its borders. This action prompted strong protests from Nepal, which published its own revised map in 2020, including Kalapani, Lipulekh, and Limpiyadhura within its territory. The exchange of maps intensified nationalistic sentiments in both countries, leading to diplomatic tensions and public demonstrations. Despite these tensions, both nations have expressed a commitment to resolving the issue through dialogue, although concrete negotiations have been slow to materialize.

China's growing influence in South Asia adds another layer of complexity to the Kalapani issue, highlighting the regional geopolitical dynamics at play. The presence of Chinese interests in the vicinity underscores the strategic calculations of both India and Nepal. The resolution of the Kalapani dispute is crucial not only for bilateral relations but also for regional stability. It necessitates continued dialogue, mutual understanding, and diplomatic negotiations, recognizing the legitimate concerns of both nations.

Ultimately, addressing the Kalapani dispute requires a comprehensive approach that considers historical contexts, strategic necessities, and geopolitical realities. A resolution would foster better India-Nepal relations, contribute to regional security, and enhance cooperation in South Asia. This complex interplay of factors underscores the importance of diplomatic efforts and constructive engagement in resolving territorial disputes, paving the way for a more stable and cooperative regional order.

Notes:

1. The Anglo-Nepalese War (1814–1816), also known as the Gurkha War, was a significant conflict between the Kingdom of Nepal and the British East India Company. The war was primarily driven by territorial disputes and mutual attempts to assert control over key regions in the Himalayas. The Treaty of Sugauli, signed in 1816, ended the war and resulted in significant territorial losses for Nepal, including parts of the Tarai region and areas like Kumaon and Garhwal. The treaty also established the Mechi River as the eastern boundary and the Mahakali River as the western boundary of Nepal. This war marked a turning point in the geopolitics of the region, as it established Nepal's position as a buffer state between British India and Qing China while formalizing its territorial boundaries.
2. The masonry boundary pillars between India and Nepal are physical markers that demarcate the international border shared by the two nations. These pillars are a product of agreements stemming from the Treaty of Sugauli (1816) and subsequent boundary surveys. The border, which extends for approximately 1,751 kilometers, is largely open but has been marked by boundary pillars at various intervals for clarity and to prevent disputes. These pillars are of significant historical and practical importance, serving as tangible representations of the agreed-upon boundaries. However, disputes over their placement and maintenance have occasionally arisen, particularly in areas like Kalapani, Susta, and the Mechi River region, reflecting the evolving dynamics of India-Nepal bilateral relations.
3. The Sino-Indian War of 1962 was a brief but intense conflict between India and China, primarily over territorial disputes along the Himalayan border. The war stemmed from differing perceptions of the boundary, particularly in the Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh (then NEFA) regions. China's decisive victory highlighted India's strategic vulnerabilities, leading to significant shifts in India's defense and foreign policy.
4. India's Forward Policy, implemented in the late 1950s and early 1960s, aimed to establish a series of small outposts along the disputed border areas with China to assert territorial claims. This strategy, viewed by China as provocative, contributed to the escalation of tensions and eventually the Sino-Indian War of 1962.
5. Se La Pass is a high-altitude mountain pass in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh, India, near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. It played a significant role during the Sino-Indian War of 1962, serving as a critical defense point for Indian forces against Chinese advances.
6. A multi-party parliamentary democracy is a system of governance where multiple political parties compete in elections to form a government. It is characterized by representation through elected officials, the rule of law, and institutional checks and balances. India and Nepal are examples of nations practicing this system.
7. A constitutional monarchy is a system of governance where the monarch's powers are limited by a constitution, and governance is carried out by elected representatives. Nepal transitioned from a constitutional monarchy to a federal democratic republic in 2008 after years of political upheaval.
8. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is the unified military organization of the People's

Republic of China (PRC), encompassing its ground forces, navy, air force, and strategic support units. Established in 1927, the PLA is a central pillar of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and plays a significant role in China's defense and geopolitical strategies.

9. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) refers to the de facto boundary between India and China in the disputed Himalayan region. Unlike a formally demarcated border, the LAC represents differing territorial claims and has been a recurring source of tension, including incidents such as the 1962 war and the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes.
10. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is China's ambitious global infrastructure development strategy, launched in 2013 to enhance connectivity and trade across Asia, Africa, and Europe. While lauded for its potential to boost economic growth, it has faced criticism for fostering debt dependency and expanding China's strategic influence.

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