

## Oli-led Government-2: Why India's Policy On Nepal Failed? Siddhi B Ranjitkar

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wanted to bend Nepal, and if not break it up but could not, why? The answer follows.

Indian leaders had been used to think that they could bend Nepalese leaders if not break them up. If we were to flip the pages of the history we would find it was true to some extent. From the Sugauli Treaty, to Jung Bahadur, then Mahendra, and Kritinidhi Bista, and finally Gyanendra, Nepalese rulers yielded to the Indian benders.

Bhutanese king prostrated at the feet of the Indian leaders. So, he got his kingdom saved from being a republic. He drove more than 200,000 Bhutanese out of their homeland and kept out of the country forever with the blessing of the Indian leaders. However, the Bhutanese king enjoyed being the puppet of the Indian puppeteers. In fact, he became a king caged in his kingdom. Indian Prime Minister Modi must have dreamed of making the Nepalese leaders similar to the Bhutanese king.

The Sugauli treaty between Nepal and the then British India done in 1815 was bending the Nepalese rulers. Nepal ceded Darjeeling and Sikkim the eastern part of Nepal, and Garwal the western part of Nepal, and certain southern part to the British rulers. However, the British could win the entire world but not Nepal. Even though Nepal shrunk to a smaller size it remained independent. Whatever the Indians might be proud of India but India was the British-made not the Indian-one. The British also created two nations: one India and another Pakistan that again split up into Bangladesh to the east and Pakistan to the west.

The then Nepalese Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana went to help the British rulers in India to put off the Indian uprising in 1857. The following was the write-up taken from the Wikipedia.com. "The Indian Rebellion of 1857 threatened to topple the power of the British East India Company. The uprisings began with widespread mutinies in the company's army and spread quickly. Jung Bahadur sent several columns ahead and then marched with 9,000 troops into northern India in December 1857. Heading an army of 15,000 troops, he fought several hard battles and aided the British. He returned to Nepal triumphantly in March 1858 and continued to aid the British in rooting out "rebels" who had sought refuge in the Tarai."

Jung Bahadur got back the southern portion of Nepal lost to the British from the British monarch as the reward for assisting the British in suppressing the Indian rebellion. Since then, Jung Bahadur became the pet of the British imperial rulers in India.

The then Nepalese Prime Minister Mohan Shumsher signed off a shameful treaty with India in 1951 with the expectation of saving his three-star crown wearing as a hereditary prime minister. He could not save it but the unequal treaty called the Nepal-India Friendship Treaty of 1951 remained so far. At that time, India was already an independent nation but its rulers did not want to lose Nepal from their grip. Indian rulers were happy to trick the naïve Nepalese despotic ruler to sign off such an ill treaty.

Some political analysts believed that the then King Mahendra could take over from the elected government of BP Koirala in December 1960 at the behest of the then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru because popularly elected Prime Minister BP Koirala had been a sore with the Indian administration. Otherwise Nehru could have blocked the entry points along the Nepal-India border at that time demanding the return of the elected government as Modi had been doing today.

Then, the Nehru administration sent the Indian army to Lipulekh: the Nepalese territory bordering with both China and India to counter the Chinese army attacking India in 1962. When the Nepalese intelligence officials reported it to the then ruler Mahendra, he kept quiet. China retreated and the war ended but the Indian army stayed on in Lipulekh. So, China and India signed off an agreement to run the trade business through the Lipulekh in 2015 China believing Lipulekh was a part of India not of Nepal. China must have thought that King Mahendra had sold it to India. This recent event brought the Lipulekh issue to surface again. Nepalese came to know that India had been occupying the Nepalese territory.

Currently, patriotic Nepalese had been claiming Lipulekh for Nepal but the recently retired Home Minister Bamdev Gautam had clearly told the patriotic Nepalese not come to him with any appeal that went against the Indian interest. The recently dropout Foreign Minister Mahendra Bahadur Pandey pretended to make diplomatic moves to remove the Indian occupation of Lipulekh but nothing had happened so far.

In 1970s also the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi forced the then Nepalese Prime Minister Kritinidhi Bista (Bista is about 90, is still alive) to tell her what talks he had held with the Chinese counterpart. The Indian prime minister claimed that the Nepalese prime minister needed to brief the Indian prime minister on the foreign visits following the Nepal-India Friendship Treaty of 1951.

In 1977 Indira Gandhi told BP Koirala and Ganeshman Singh either go back to Nepal or face imprisonment if they were to campaign for the opposition parties in India. BP came back to Nepal telling the Nepalese he was for reconciliation with the then political system. He also said that his neck was conjoined with Mahendra. Obviously, Mahendra cut off the BP's neck.

Gyanendra had several times hinted at he had to quit the palace not having the assistance once the Indians had promised him. His words meant that the Indians had betrayed him. Gyanendra had counted on Indians to remain in the palace. That had been fate of Sushil Koirala and his ministers that had counted on the Indians to remain in their offices. Thereafter, Gyanendra had several times went to India and met with the high officials there but without any tangible results.

Recently while in office, former Minister for Communication and Information Minendra Rijal ordered the Nepalese media not to write anything against the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi while Nepalese had been suffering from the shutdown of the entry points along the Nepal-India border. Minister Rijal had threatened to take actions against the Nepalese TVs that had stopped airing the Indian TV serials in protest against the Indian embargo on Nepal. Minister Rijal said that none of the border entries was closed, and no embargo was placed on supplies to Nepal. How loyal former Minister Rijal had been to the Indian lords letting Nepalese suffer from the short supply of fuels and other supplies.

Former Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat said that it was madness to think of bringing petroleum products from China when India refused to supply them. He might be right from his financial viewpoint but he ignored that bringing petroleum products would not only viable but would be the cheaper than begging from the crooked Indian supplier. Ram Sharan Mahat was very loyal to the Indians. That could have been the reason he could receive the portfolio of the finance ministry whenever the NC came to power. He could amass huge resources even at the cost of the quake victims in 2015.

Now, let us turn to the former Prime Minister Sushil Koirala that had been a laughingstock after the failed attempt on winning the office of prime minister second time. First he did not quit the office even though he was supposed to. Then, suddenly he tendered his resignation to the president only to be the candidate for the office of prime minister. Probably, he was

sure to win the election to a new prime minister. He could have been a real hero actually he would be a villain if he were able to buy the number of parliamentary votes required for him to win the office of prime minister once more.

If the Nepalese media were to believe Sushil Koirala received a huge sum of money from India to buy the votes in the parliament. He bought the votes of the Madheshi parliamentarians except for the parliamentarians belonging to Mr. Gacchedar's party. However, the Madheshi parliamentarians had regretted for participating in the voting in the parliament.

Later, Sushil Koirala boasted that he had tricked the Madheshi parliamentarians to accept the new constitution. Thus, Koirala claimed that he actually brought the Madheshi to the parliament voting for him to accept the new constitution. If the Koirala' claim for tricking the Madheshi parliamentarians to accept the new constitution were to be true then he had tricked the Indian Prime minister Modi to lose his case in Nepal.

One of the Madheshi leaders Rajendra Mahato was not far behind tricking Sushil Koirala to split away from the coalition of the three major political parties such as NC, CPN-UML, and UCPN-Maoist. Mahato claimed that the Madheshi leaders voting for Koirala had successfully broken up the coalition of the three major political parties. Some political analysts said that splitting the coalition of the three parties was the goal of Modi, too. If it were so, then the Madheshi leaders became only the tools of Modi nothing more.

No rulers would need to bend or bow to any foreign power if they were to stand on the support of the patriotic people. I am repeating it, as it is the only truth. Whenever they lost the support from the people nobody could save the rulers not even the powerful neighbor. For example, Sushil Koirala could not survive as a prime minister even though reportedly he had received hundreds of millions of rupees for buying votes. This time money did not work well but patriotism did.

After taking the oath of the office of prime minister in May 2014, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi first visited the kingdom of Bhutan. Then, he visited Nepal. Modi became so friendly to Nepal; Nepalese thought that he was really a true friend of Nepal. He would surely do something good for Nepal. He addressed the Nepalese parliament and told the parliamentarians to craft an inclusive constitution, and he even went on telling a constitution promulgated on the two-thirds majority votes would not be long lasting. He repeated his counsel for the Nepalese leaders the second time he visited Nepal for the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit in November 2014.

After that Prime Minister Modi did not do anything to make sure that his counsel was taken. He could have used his expert diplomats to put pressure on the Nepalese leaders crafting a new constitution. He even ignored the advices of the Indian ambassador to Nepal for taking timely diplomatic actions for crafting an inclusive constitution in Nepal. Modi might have been so sure that his advice would be well taken without questioning; so, why he needed to take any troubles.

Two days before the promulgation of a new constitution, Modi apparently wake up to what had been happening in Nepal. His counsel had gone astray. Furious Modi dispatched one of his smartest diplomats to Nepal clearly for turning the tide of crafting a new constitution to the advantage of the disadvantaged people. It was a too late and too ad hoc action. That did not work.

First, Nepalese leaders asked the Indian diplomat coming with the message of Modi why he came so late, what they could do when everything was agreed upon, and passed by the

Constituent Assembly. The diplomat had no valid reasons and answers. Frustrated diplomat had to return without any results. Sending a top diplomat to Nepal just two days before promulgating a new constitution, Indian Prime Minister Modi must have thought that he could bend the Nepalese leaders if they were not to take his advices.

After finding he could not bend the Nepalese leaders, Modi must have thought that he could break them up. So, he ordered his administration to delay any supplies going to Nepal from India. It was a kind of chokehold Modi held on. Modi himself set off for America to participate in the UN General convention. When he came back to India he saw the business as usual in Nepal except for Nepalese had been dying for petroleum products. His shutdown of the border entry points could not break the back of the Nepalese leaders. He even did not take the telephone calls placed by the Nepalese Prime Minister Sushil Koirala begging for opening the border entry points and sending the supplies to Nepal.

Modi wanted to know what had happened to his advices given to the Nepalese leaders disregarding the billions of rupees worth of business lost on the both sides of the border every day, factories closed, hospitals had no supplies in Nepal, Nepalese could not move from one place to another; and still Nepalese leaders except for Sushil Koirala and some of his ministers, and surely the Madheshi leaders too, had not prostrated at his feet as did the Bhutanese king. Rather Modi found that he was portrayed as the international terrorist holding Nepal for the ransom of amending the new constitution.

Modi had forgotten how Nepalese had thrown shoes at the former Indian diplomat called Rakesh Sood that had behaved undiplomatically in Nepal. Mr. Sood treated Nepalese as the citizen of the country where he could do whatever he wanted. The result was he found the showers of shoes rained at him when he visited the eastern hill district in Nepal. Nepalese simply could not tolerate his highly uncivilized behavior toward the Nepalese.

Modi's Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj and Ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae were not in any position to listen to the grievances of not only Nepalese businesspeople but also the Indian businesspeople working on the Indian side of the border caused by the shutdown of the border entry points. Thousands of supplies trucks lined up on the Indian side of border waiting for entering into Nepal. Modi was not moved. He had very hard mind when terrorizing the people but his mind melt down when he remembered how his mother went to do the laundry and dishes at the neighbors' homes for supporting him.

No matter how hard his mind was, Modi had shown his immature foreign policy on Nepal. He had pushed Nepalese very hard to rise up against the Indian establishment. Modi had set his mind that India was a large country, he was the chief executive of such a large country, so whatever he said must be correct, and Nepalese leaders needed to listen to him. Unfortunately for Modi, it did not happened, as he wanted. But he was so successful to cause so much of troubles to the Nepalese.

Probably, Modi would learn from his failed policy on Nepal if he were really a statement of the international stature otherwise he would be just like another chief minister of India. Chief ministers of India did not need to think about the international relations. Given the failure in his international relations, Modi needed to take a few lesson on the international laws and relations so that he could afford a few mistakes in the future. Modi could go either to Harvard or Oxford if he did not like to take the lessons from the Indian international experts. Nepal might pay the tuition fee for his study if he would like to so that Nepalese would not need to suffer from his adolescent foreign policy. Modi would at least think twice before imposing any embargo on Nepal after taking good lessons on the international law and litigation.

Modi was a devout Hindu I supposed. Once he even was a Hindu warrior called Shiva Sena. Now, he even did not respect a code of Hindu ethics. Not following the Hindu code of ethics, he had caused troubles to the millions of Nepalese and Indian Hindus, too, and he became a sinner if Modi were a true Hindu. Millions of Indian businesspeople running various sorts of business at the border areas had lost their businesses for the time, Modi held Nepal for the ransom of amending a new constitution.

His obligation to the neighbor had been controversial, too. Modi might have thought that he might have met his obligation to the neighbor causing tremendous troubles to the rest of Nepalese and some Indians from his tight control over the supplies trucks on his side of the border. As a good neighbor, Modi needed to help the Nepalese people to enjoy an untroubled life. Blinded by his ego, Modi had even forgotten his celebrity status behaving as a lowly revenge-seeking person. He was burning the house of the neighbor not caring about his own house might burst into flame. Modi was not a friend of Nepal indeed.

Modi's actions did not only help the Madheshi movement but also even put it on the back burner. Madheshi leaders had realized their mistake of accepting the Modi's assistance in their movement. They even went to the parliament to vote for the Koirala that had been their target to hit. They had been either deliberately or unknowingly tricked to accept the constitution that they had dared to burn, and to mark its day as the black day.

Following the generous assistance of Modi, Madheshi leaders had put themselves in an awkward position. Voting for Koirala had been suicidal for them. Why they voted for Koirala when they knew that Koirala was a loser. They must have voted for Koirala for money otherwise it was hard to find a good reason for their actions.

In conclusion, what Modi had earned from the border shutdown was nothing but hatred from all the people including Indians. Modi had been going downhill after reaching the highest peak in his political career. He himself boasted that he as a son of the tea vendor had been the prime minister of the largest democracy but he did not want to help the millions of Nepalese and Indians with the similar background of him.

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