

Bridging Borders: India's Silent Strategy with Nepal and Bangladesh

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Abstract: *India's external strategy steps taken towards its immediate neighbours, Nepal and Bangladesh, are progressing through an intricate and frequently unpretentious policy which leads to stability, border connectivity, and soft power diplomacy. The "silent strategy" accentuates India's inclination towards silent involvement above the caption strategy, focusing on common history, ethnic similarity, and financial dependence to forge persistent coalitions. In Nepal, India's evaluation of feedback to policy-making fickleness and increasing Chinese prompt mirrors a transformation with conspicuous diplomatic mediation in delicate, discreet harmony. Concurrently, India is pursuing the construction of industrial systems, energy sharing, and borderless connectivity ventures to balance its diplomatic grip. India's involvement in Bangladesh is ingrained with concerted attempts to safeguard the alliance, trade relief, and water dispensation discussions. The Land Boundary Agreement of 2015 and joint efforts against terrorism epitomise how quiet strategy can induce considerable issues. Furthermore, India highlights people-to-people ties, borderless passing avenues, and cultural dealings across the two neighbouring nations, considering its comprehensive diplomatic insight of "Neighbourhood First." India upholds zonal persuades by supervising intricate primordial linkages and geo-strategic urges, neglecting community clashes and leaning towards a silent, goal-oriented strategy. The quiet diplomacy elevates relations and circumvents the repercussions frequently concomitant with authoritative demeanour. As regional shifts constantly engage in, India's method concerning Nepal and Bangladesh delivers a relevant paradigm, a tolerant strategy deep-seated in common appreciation and permanent key concerns.*

Keywords: India-Nepal Relations, India-Bangladesh Relations, Silent Diplomacy, Neighbourhood First Policy, Regional Connectivity

1. Introduction

India's external strategy concerning its immediate neighbourhood had frequently been a fusion of self-assurance and impediment. In Nepal and Bangladesh, the outlook had altered, even as it had demonstrated in the role of "silent strategy", enumerated and non-offensive strategy involvement found in primeval bonds, ethnic similarity, and surrounded by common physical landscapes. (Mazumdar, A. 2012) Instead of chasing conspicuous exhibits with esteem, India surged for hinges upon soft power, aid organisations, and silent strategy in maintaining stability and cooperation. The diplomatic tolerance is intended to maintain a protracted period of generosity, at the same time navigating the delicate matter, excluding amplifying strains or fuelling the community's recoil in numerous nations. (Paranjpe & Thomas 2019)

When it comes to Nepal, India's diplomacy mediates harmony preservation among its well-entrenched ethnic norms and traditional attachments with derived from geo-strategic opposition, prominently with China's appearance in the region. Regardless of cyclical discord, whether it be borderline settlements, policy-making adjustments in Kathmandu, or discernment of Indian intervention, India has primarily escaped clamorous strategy. (BN Baral 2019) Rather than, it concentrated on upgrading connectivity, hydropower collaboration, and borderline people-to-people ties. The interpretation reveals that dealing with the potency of Indo-Nepal partnerships deceits not consist in imperious negotiation but in fostering joint confidence, though it evolves progressively and silently. (Amgain, S. (2016)

Thus, India's coordination with Bangladesh displays rational but subtle discretion, which has relinquished substantial proceeds. Since resolving land and maritime confines, commencing energy and commercial facilities, India

accorded spotlight on interest aggregation through severity. (Hossain & Islam 2021) The perpetual cordiality in mutual respect highlights the achievement of the silent strategy, which denotes a custom union between both nations in defiance of potentate diplomacies. The region wherein patrioteer chronicles and foreign competitors, such as China expanding its boundaries through regional forums, India's elusive, still tactful position with these two neighbouring states, like Nepal and Bangladesh, stands out, aiding in overcoming convoluted partnerships without jeopardising any concern for domestic or zonal peace. (SD Muni 1975)

2. Research Objectives

- 1) To examine the core and components of India's 'silent strategy' in its bilateral relations with Nepal and Bangladesh, focusing on diplomatic, economic, and cultural engagements that operate through non-confrontational and low-profile channels.
- 2) To study how India's subtle approach has influenced regional dynamics, particularly in mitigating bilateral tensions, enhancing connectivity, and fostering cooperation in areas like trade, energy, and border management with Nepal and Bangladesh.
- 3) To assess the strategic effectiveness of India's quiet diplomacy in countering external influences, especially China's expanding footprint in South Asia, while preserving India's long-term interests and leadership in the region.

3. Research Methodology

The research methodology for this paper adopts a qualitative approach, grounded in historical context and the analysis of official governmental documents. Primary and secondary data will be drawn from sources such as the National Archives of India, Ministry of External Affairs releases, bilateral

treaties, and MoUs, as well as policy documents from Nepal and Bangladesh. Additionally, contemporary insights will be gathered from reputable platforms such as *South Asia Monitor*, international think tank reports, and leading regional newspapers. These sources will help trace the evolution and nuances of India's 'silent strategy' by providing evidence of subtle diplomatic moves, developmental initiatives, and public sentiment. The study aims to critically interpret this data to understand how India's understated yet strategic engagement has shaped its bilateral ties with Nepal and Bangladesh, particularly in managing sensitivities, building trust, and countering external pressures like China's regional assertiveness.

4. Research Questions

- 1) How has India's silent strategy dealt with Nepal and Bangladesh in segments of bilateral ties, especially in border conflicts and economic assistance?
- 2) Analyse India's silent strategy's impact on water sharing with Nepal and Bangladesh, and in response to resource distribution.
- 3) How does India's silent strategy correlate with Nepal and Bangladesh in terms of cooperation and posture in South Asia?

Role of Silent Strategy:

Ever dynamic scenery for campaign rhetoric and management strategy, an assumption of "silent strategy" has evolved the alluring contrivances to handle the national and global environment. This policy indicates towards conscious turning to quiet, equivocation, or ignorance of policymakers, particularly governmental officials, being deliberate principles for convincing observations, dealing with crises, or securing diplomatic assets. (Saville-Troike, M. (1988).

Contrary to manifest discussion over approaches which build trust in articulate speech and the obvious case, silent strategies indulge in delicacy, moderation, and the ability to dereliction. In the current era, how facts are ample and excessive publicity could erode policymaking status; silence can lead to a cogent variety of communication, connotative interval which summons rendition, stimulates enigma, and sustains versatility. The prominence of silent strategy wouldn't stay entirely at which kept hidden, yet just how the silence learns by alternate spectators, whether its supporters or opponents. (Guillaume, X., & Schweiger, E. (2018) pp-96- 111)

Conceptually, the nations appeared subservient in opening the consequences of a silent strategy enclosed by the extensive scope of policymaking attitude and sermon. Agree with the chassis, silent strategy applied after approach to diplomatic absence of dialogue, which permits leaders to conduct erratic civil atmosphere lacking perpetrating for fixed fables. The method is dedicated to being applicable through a massive venture in global politics, wherein precocious affirmations can shut the doors to bargaining or intensify strains. (RCH Chia, R Holt 2009)

The author, like Greenberg, justifies the rational and metaphorical volume of silence, which seems to be an indication that could be monitored in the form of durability in

power apparatus, or some indication for thought. (J. Greenburg 2000 The right to remain "Silent")

Another author, such as Dimitrov, comments that being positioned as quietness inside the impression of "verbose plainness," few contact frequently comprises further analytical check. By combining these, assumptions contend that how silent strategy crumbles, although it is an operative and intentional act, which forms the policymaking facts through checking the unspoken and spoken categories. (Dimitrov, R. (2019)

The significance of the silent strategy is more validly apparent while probing its outcome on consultation acceptance and intentional ambivalence. Through the potency of silence deceives its adequacy to move the illustrative encumbrance of others, thus it elevates diplomatic advantage. For instance, a politician's quietness about a debatable matter can exacerbate conjecture, cause ambiguity for the opposition, or indicate serene potency for adherents. The competency conforms to the utilitarian outlook in realpolitik, that standards of foresight, uncertainty, and measured presupposition for hasty choice or eloquence. (Bevanda, A., & Bijakšić, S. 2(1), 15-15, (2020). In the context, a silent strategy works in the guise of a preventive covering from stumbles, delivered by politicians, the spatial and temporal to check out, estimates, and convert unless stereotyping such facts. Therefore, a silent strategy is beyond the truancy of voice or speech.

Silent Strategy adopted by India's Global Approach:

India's adoption of a silent approach in its global strategy after independence resulted from experience that derived from factual documents, strategic certainty, and traditional philosophies. Surfacing with newly self-reliant India in 1947, Post-independence India confronted the daunting task of proclaiming its regional identity on the international platform while handling its domestic fiscal recovery and solidarity concerns. The "silent" wouldn't mean that lack of intervention, but it had persistent proponents to revise the pre-auction and intentional decision to maintain the foreign partnerships unless they made openly known which could hinder their national priorities. (Narlikar, A. 28(5), pp- 983-996. (2007).

Afterwards of the 1962 Sino-Indian War, India clutched a cogitative model of tactical stillness, a move ingrained in its primordial and meditative mindset. The mortification of martial failure not just discovered frailties in India's security alacrity, although it rattled the country's conviction in Nehruvian optimism. Pursuing sanctuary in tenets brings nearer Mahatma Gandhi's peaceful doctrine, India mended its foreign participation, nominating a curb through feedback. Silence, whereby, besides an enervation, it deemed policy lexicon, which put efforts to segregate the brittle country after continued exogenous factors. (Harder, A. (2015)

This self-centred technique was renewed through the former Panchsheel Accord of 1954, whose enthusiasm persisted to alter India's strategic attitude contrary to apostasy. Regardless of repudiating assumptions about pacifism (Abitol, A. D., 2009), India ironically retained them, further gripped, deciding that proper credibility will be recognized through deliberate flaw. Panchsheel, primitively encircled for the sake

of affinity with China, wobbled indicator for India's adamant cohesion towards its dignified strategy, although confronted with power struggles with moving diplomatic littorals.

In South Asia, India's silent strategy is indicated prominently in its management of intricate disputes with Nepal and Bangladesh. Regardless of its aggressive contending nature, India has constantly recommended tackling strains silently, using conversation and guided with perseverance. (M Bhasin 2008) Either due to the strained boundaries altercation including Nepal and the policy-making turmoil during self-sufficiency in Bangladesh, India's inclination had an obligation to evade direct conflict, in preference to utilizing convictions, dealings, and particular involvement. Silence, recently, turned to preserve, whose purpose is to secure its regional cordiality by saving time to rethink domestic integration. (Ahmed, A. (2017) 21(5), 10-14.)

Influence of India's silent strategy on Nepal:

From the sophistication of its entanglement in South Asian diplomatic ties, India has frequently been observed as a hegemonic regional participant engaging with strategic apparatus to ascertain its partnerships, including with neighbouring nations. Amidst these, its involvement with Nepal swayed during patent incline and diplomatic taciturnity. (Lamichhane, D. P. (2023) pp-3(2), 20-43).

Recently, an eminent alteration has evolved with India's strategy to Nepal turned out to be progressively attributed to what scholars have named as "silent strategy" or "quiet politics." The way of interpretation, denoted with reticent evolvment, negligible collective verdicts, based on partial information about response discussions, which relooked at the outlines of bilateral dealings. This approach mediates India's aspiration for recovery of its potency, increasingly altering the geostrategic conditions, additionally urging analysis about its prolonged influence over regional stability and mutual trust. (Barik, M., & Laishram, C. (2024)

The roots of India's silent diplomacy with Nepal lie in a series of past misunderstandings and diplomatic hiccups, including the 2015–16 economic blockade, which severely strained relations. Following intense backlash and anti-India sentiments in Nepal, New Delhi began to reassess its mode of engagement. Rather than continuing with overt assertions of influence, India appeared to pivot toward a less intrusive, more calculated strategy. This shift coincided with broader regional developments, including China's growing presence in Nepal through the Belt and Road Initiative, prompting India to adopt a subtler but strategically mindful posture. The silent diplomacy approach enabled India to pursue its interests without exacerbating nationalist sentiments or pushing Kathmandu further into Beijing's orbit. (Chand, D. (2018)

India's quiet diplomacy manifested in several ways, ranging from discreet high-level visits and targeted development assistance to behind-the-scenes political engagement. For example, India's role in supporting post-earthquake reconstruction in Nepal, investment in cross-border infrastructure, and diplomatic outreach during constitutional crises were all handled with minimal publicity. This method allowed New Delhi to maintain a working relationship with the Nepali leadership while simultaneously managing

domestic political sensitivities on both sides. The emphasis shifted from headline-making interventions to sustaining long-term influence through calibrated and consistent engagement. (Shakya, A., & Bhattarai, T. N. (2016)

Nepal's strategic engagement with China has deepened significantly in recent years, particularly through its participation in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which Kathmandu officially joined in May 2017. The BRI has facilitated infrastructure expansion in Nepal, linking its remote provinces, such as Karnali, with trade and transit corridors connected to China's Tibet Autonomous Region. One of the central objectives of the Sino-Nepal partnership under BRI is to reduce Nepal's heavy dependence on India for trade and transit. The construction and upgrading of roads, tunnels, and dry ports in the northern border districts aim to create alternative routes to Chinese ports, enhancing Nepal's access to global markets via Chinese territory. The Karnali Province, in particular, has been a focal point in these connectivity efforts, with plans to link it through the Hilsa-Purang crossing point. Furthermore, Nepal has expressed interest in developing a trans-Himalayan multidimensional connectivity network that includes road, rail, and energy projects, which may potentially approach areas near the Siliguri Corridor, a critical and narrow stretch of Indian territory that connects the northeastern states with the rest of India. (Dihidar, A. (pp. 233-260) (2024)

China's deepening presence in Nepal also carries strategic implications for India, especially in the context of sensitive geographical chokepoints such as the Siliguri Corridor, also known as the "Chicken's Neck." This narrow stretch of land in West Bengal, less than 25 km wide in some areas, is vital to India's connectivity with its northeastern states. Several Chinese-supported infrastructure projects and trade routes in Nepal, including those in Province 1 and Bagmati, alongside Karnali, come within proximity to this corridor, raising concerns in New Delhi about the potential for geopolitical encirclement. Concurrently, the unresolved Susta territorial dispute between India and Nepal, located along the Gandak River in Bihar's West Champaran district, adds another layer of complexity to regional dynamics. The dispute involves shifting river boundaries that Nepal claims have allowed India to encroach on its territory. While not directly connected to the BRI, the Susta issue reflects Nepal's broader push to assert territorial sovereignty amid its diversifying foreign partnerships. Together, these developments highlight how infrastructure diplomacy, regional geography, and border tensions intertwine in the evolving Nepal-China relationship, posing strategic challenges for India in South Asia.

However, the aftermath of this silent diplomacy is far from uniform in its outcomes. While it has succeeded in reducing the immediate visibility of friction, it has also raised questions about transparency, accountability, and the sustainability of influence. Nepal's foreign policy space has continued to diversify, with Kathmandu engaging more confidently with global powers, including China and the United States. Moreover, civil society actors and political observers in Nepal often interpret India's silence as either disengagement or veiled manipulation, leading to a trust deficit at the grassroots level. As such, the silent approach has had the paradoxical

effect of stabilizing official ties while complicating public perceptions. (Cottle, D., Antonopoulos, P., & Thapa, S., 2019)

India's silent diplomacy with Nepal represents a significant departure from its earlier, more assertive engagement strategies. It reflects a nuanced understanding of the shifting regional order and a recognition of the limits of overt power projection. Yet, as this paper will explore, the effectiveness of this approach remains contested. By examining the political, diplomatic, and societal consequences of this strategy, we gain deeper insight into the evolving nature of India-Nepal relations and the broader challenges of conducting foreign policy in a multipolar South Asia.

Influence of India's silent strategy on Bangladesh

The relationship between India and Bangladesh has been shaped by historical ties, cultural affinities, and political complexities since Bangladesh's independence in 1971. However, beneath the surface of shared heritage and formal cooperation lies a subtle and carefully measured Indian strategy often described as a "silent strategy." Instead of aggressive posturing, India has largely relied on calibrated diplomacy, quiet negotiations, and selective engagement to manage tensions and assert its interests. This approach has been especially evident in sensitive areas such as water sharing, territorial settlements, and political influence within Bangladesh, where open confrontation is replaced by nuanced balancing acts. (Bhardwaj, S. (2003)

One of the most contentious issues between India and Bangladesh is the sharing of river waters, particularly the Teesta River. Despite years of negotiations, a formal water-sharing treaty remains elusive. India's silent strategy here has been characterized by a deliberate pace, often citing internal political complexities such as opposition from West Bengal, rather than taking a firm national stance. This quiet procrastination allows India to avoid direct conflict with Bangladesh while preserving strategic leverage. Although occasional assurances are given, the lack of urgency in resolving the Teesta dispute reveals a calculated move to maintain influence over Bangladesh's water-dependent agriculture and politics without overt confrontation. (Pattanaik, S. S. (2020).

Territorial disputes between India and Bangladesh, especially over enclaves along the border, were addressed through the 2015 Land Boundary Agreement (LBA), seen as a landmark in bilateral relations. Yet, India's approach before the agreement was a classic example of its silent strategy: prolonged negotiations, controlled engagement, and incremental trust-building. By delaying resolution until it could extract maximum diplomatic goodwill, India portrayed itself as a benevolent regional power. Even after the LBA, border killings and illegal crossings continue, but India tactically avoids sensationalizing these issues internationally, preferring back-channel communications and localized security arrangements to prevent the disputes from flaring up on the global stage. (Bhari, N. K. (2015).

Politically, India's silent strategy is most visible in its dealings with successive Bangladeshi governments. While publicly adhering to a policy of non-interference, India has tactically supported regimes that align more closely with its strategic

interests, particularly the Awami League under Sheikh Hasina. Through economic incentives, security cooperation, and selective public statements, India quietly reinforces its preferred political partners while avoiding the appearance of direct meddling. This has allowed India to maintain stability along its eastern frontier and counterbalance Chinese influence in Bangladesh, without triggering nationalist backlashes or diplomatic crises. (Sahoo, P. (2016). 20(3), 66-81).

Bangladesh's growing engagement with China under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) marks a significant shift in South Asian geopolitics. Since joining the BRI in 2016, Bangladesh has attracted over \$38 billion in Chinese investments and soft loans for infrastructure projects, including the Payra Deep Sea Port, Padma Bridge Rail Link, and the Karnaphuli Tunnel. While these investments have strengthened Dhaka's economic base, they have also raised concerns in New Delhi, especially in the context of China's increasing strategic footprint in India's neighbourhood. India, though not officially opposed to BRI, has maintained a cautious stance, citing sovereignty concerns over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

In response to these developments, India has adopted a posture of silent diplomacy, maintaining strong bilateral ties with Dhaka through economic assistance, connectivity projects, and security cooperation, without publicly countering Bangladesh's relations with Beijing. However, New Delhi's quiet engagement is under pressure due to internal policy moves like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), both of which have been perceived in Bangladesh as hostile, particularly when paired with inflammatory rhetoric about illegal migration. The Rohingya refugee issue further complicates the trilateral dynamics, as India has neither fully embraced Bangladesh's humanitarian position nor extended substantial support to manage the refugee burden, instead pursuing a limited repatriation-focused policy.

Bangladesh's pragmatic foreign policy, balancing ties with both China and India, reflects Dhaka's strategic autonomy, but also places India in a position of careful observation and recalibrated diplomacy. India has subtly reinforced connectivity with Bangladesh through regional platforms like BIMSTEC and BBIN, and increased Line of Credit (LoC) provisions exceeding \$8 billion, one of the largest for any country. However, the interplay of BRI-induced economic shifts, communal sensitivity around CAA-NRC, and India's muted response to the Rohingya crisis signals a need for recalibrated diplomacy moving from quiet observation to strategic engagement, if India seeks to maintain its influence in Dhaka amid Beijing's growing shadow.

In a dramatic turn of events, the reported asylum-seeking of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in India, if confirmed, would represent a watershed moment in South Asian political history. This development, possibly triggered by internal political instability and pressure from opposition forces within Bangladesh, has placed India in a diplomatically sensitive position. Simultaneously, global figures such as Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, who has faced legal and

political challenges under Hasina's administration, have reportedly urged New Delhi to refrain from intervening in Bangladesh's internal affairs. This appeal aligns with the broader international call for non-interference and respect for democratic processes. India, traditionally invested in maintaining a stable and friendly government in Dhaka, now faces the challenge of balancing its strategic interests with regional stability and non-interventionist principles.

The political landscape in South Asia has grown increasingly volatile following the ascent of Yunus to power in Bangladesh. His administration's growing alignment with Pakistan and other foreign entities has not only intensified regional diplomatic tensions but also raised serious security concerns for India. Of particular concern is the surge in hostile rhetoric and military posturing along the Indo-Bangladesh border, especially near the northeastern states. Without consulting India, Bangladesh has initiated the construction of a strategic bridge in its northern territory, sparking allegations of territorial encroachment and undermining bilateral trust. Simultaneously, targeted actions against minority communities within Bangladesh have fueled cross-border migration pressures and humanitarian alarms. These developments have far-reaching implications for India's trade corridors, border security, and demographic stability in sensitive northeastern states such as Assam, Tripura, and Meghalaya, demanding urgent strategic reassessment.

Prospects of India's Silent Strategy towards Nepal and Bangladesh:

India's eastern neighbourhood holds critical importance in its regional strategy, particularly concerning Nepal and Bangladesh. While traditional diplomacy has often been visible and high-profile, there now appears to be a silent, more nuanced approach shaping India's prospects with these countries. With history, geography, and socio-cultural ties binding them, India's engagement strategy today reflects both quiet opportunities and underlying anxieties, shaped in part by emerging external players like China. (Das, A. (2016)., 4(1), 18-37.)

A significant geographical concern central to India's eastern policy is the Siliguri Corridor, commonly known as the Chicken's Neck. This narrow strip of land is the lifeline connecting mainland India to its northeastern states. Silent strategic recalibration is evident as India seeks to safeguard this vulnerable point through deeper connectivity, infrastructure, and stronger ties with both Nepal and Bangladesh, recognizing that instability here could severely threaten national security and regional influence.

China's growing presence in Nepal and Bangladesh adds a new dimension to India's silent diplomacy. Through massive investments, infrastructure projects like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and strategic partnerships, Beijing challenges India's traditional sphere of influence. India's silent prospects thus involve not just strengthening bilateral ties but subtly counterbalancing China's assertive moves without escalating confrontation or appearing coercive. (Kannan, M., & Singh, M. (2020). (pp. 57-93). CRC Press.)

Despite cultural and historical proximity, India faces several concerns in its relations with Nepal and Bangladesh: rising nationalism, anti-India sentiments, border management

issues, and economic competition. (Pal, P. (2018). 6(4), 217-228). Silent diplomacy aims to rebuild trust, promote mutually beneficial development, and avoid overt interference, all while navigating sensitive issues like water sharing, border tensions, and trade imbalances that could otherwise be exploited by external actors like China. (Das, B. (2019). 9(2), 730-742.)

India's silent prospects thus reflect a broader understanding: sustainable influence in Nepal and Bangladesh requires patience, respect for sovereignty, and proactive support for local aspirations. Rather than grand statements, India's strategy leans on quiet but firm engagement through development partnerships, people-to-people connections, security cooperation, and regional frameworks like BIMSTEC to create a resilient eastern frontier amidst an increasingly competitive external environment. (Sahoo, P. (2016). 20(3), 66-81.)

5. Conclusion

India's silent strategy towards Nepal and Bangladesh represents a conscious shift from traditional diplomacy to a more subtle, patient, and adaptive approach. Recognizing the complex realities of rising regional competition and internal nationalisms, New Delhi seeks to strengthen bonds not through dominance but through development, dialogue, and deeper cultural connectivity. The silent moves enhancing infrastructure, fostering people-to-people ties, respecting sovereignty, and carefully countering external influences like China reflect a mature understanding that true leadership in South Asia rests on trust, not coercion. As India continues to bridge borders quietly but steadily, its long-term success will depend on sustaining this balance of assertive yet sensitive engagement, ensuring that geography, history, and shared futures work together to secure a stable and cooperative regional environment.

After the political turbulence in Bangladesh and the shifting dynamics in Nepal, India has adopted a strategically quiet yet calculated approach toward its neighbors, signaling a subtle pivot from reactive diplomacy to proactive alignment-building. In Bangladesh, the re-election of Sheikh Hasina's government amid controversy and opposition boycotts provided India a moment to reinforce ties without overt interference, allowing for backchannel assurances and trade recalibrations, especially crucial as Bangladesh faces growing trade deficits and domestic economic strain. Simultaneously, India's engagement with Nepal has taken a culturally nuanced path, emphasizing *people-to-people* connections rooted in shared heritage, religion, and migration patterns, rather than headline-grabbing political moves. This dual-track engagement reflects India's evolving neighborhood-first policy where silent diplomacy and cultural outreach form the foundation of long-term alliance-building, steering clear of loud geopolitics while ensuring strategic depth.

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