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POLITICS IN HUMANITARIAN AID: REJECTION OF TAIWAN'S AID BY NEPAL

The devastating earthquake of 2015 in Nepal overwhelmed the Nepal government, which resulted in the government seeking help from the international community. The call from the Nepal government was responded to quickly by many countries. While the government accepted the help from far countries, the Nepal government rejected the humanitarian aid offered by Taiwan saying that Nepal only takes such aid from its neighboring countries. This paper examines the reasons behind the aid rejection of Taiwan by Nepal and tries to answer what could have happened if it was accepted. Though Nepal is one of the Least Developed countries, even during the disaster time, the aid was rejected. The paper concludes that, even during the most crucial time, there is politics in accepting aid. Nepal's rejection of Taiwan's aid was because of the pressure to obey the diplomatic relation with China, as Nepal is dependent on China but not on Taiwan.

Keywords: Nepal, Taiwan, humanitarian aid, earthquake, China, diplomatic relation

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Гуманитарлық көмектің саяси өлшемі: Непалдың Тайвань көмегінен бас тартуы

2015 жылы Непалда орын алған жойқын жер сілкінісі үкіметті дүр сілкіндірді. Нәтижесінде Непал үкіметі халықаралық қауымдастықтан көмек сұрауға мәжбүр болды. Көптеген елдер Непалдың үндеуіне тез жауап берді. Ел үкіметі алыс шет елдердің көмегін қабылдаса, Непал Тайвань ұсынған гуманитарлық көмекті қабылдамай, оның себебін Непал тек көрші елдердің гуманитарлық көмегін ғана қабылдайтындығымен негіздеді. Бұл мақалада Непалдың неліктен Тайвань ұсынған гуманитарлық көмектен бас тартуының себептері қарастырылады. Сондай-ақ, Тайваньның гуманитарлық көмегін ел үкіметі қабылдаған жағдайда бұл процесс қандай жағдайға алып келуі мүмкін деген сұраққа жауап беруге тырысады. Непалдың табиғи апаттан есенгіреп қалғанына қарамастан, әлеуеті аз дамыған елдердің бірі екенін ескерсек, ол әлі күнге дейін Тайваньның гуманитарлық көмегінен бас тартып келеді. Бұл зерттеу мемлекеттің тағдыры ең қиын жағдайларға тап болған жағдайда да гуманитарлық көмекті алуға қатысты шешім қабылдауда саяси компонентті ескеруге мәжбүр деген қорытындыға келеді. Непалдың Тайваньға көмектесуден бас тартуы – оның Қытаймен дипломатиялық қарым-қатынасты позитивті түрде сақтау қажеттілігіне байланысты болды. Өйткені Непал Тайваньға емес, Қытайға тікелей тәуелді екендігін ескеру қажет.

Түйін сөздер: Непал, Тайвань, гуманитарлық көмек, жер сілкінісі, Қытай, дипломатиялық қарым-қатынас

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Политическая составляющая в области гуманитарной помощи: отказ Непала от помощи Тайваня

Разрушительное землетрясение, произошедшее в 2015 году в Непале, потрясло правительство страны. В результате чего Непал обратился за помощью к международному сообществу. На призыв Непала быстро откликнулись многие страны. В то время как правительство страны приняло помощь от стран дальнего зарубежья, Непал отклонил гуманитарную помощь, предложенную

Тайванем, заявив, что Непал принимает помощь гуманитарного характера только от соседних стран. В этой статье рассматриваются причины отказа Непала от помощи, которую предложил Тайвань, а также делается попытка ответить на вопрос, что могло бы произойти, если бы данная помощь была принята со стороны правительства страны. Учитывая, что Непал является одной из наименее развитых стран, к тому же потрясённая стихийным бедствием все-таки отказалась от гуманитарной помощи со стороны Тайваня. В исследовании делается вывод о том, что даже в самых критических ситуациях присутствует политическая составляющая в принятии решений. Отказ Непала от помощи Тайваня был обусловлен необходимостью соблюдать дипломатические отношения с Китаем, поскольку Непал зависит напрямую от Китая, а не от Тайваня.

Ключевые слова: Непал, Тайвань, гуманитарная помощь, землетрясение, Китай, дипломатические отношения.

Introduction

On 25 April 2015, Nepal was hit by the devastating earthquake of the 7.8 Richter scale that affected 30 districts out of 75 districts. The earthquake killed nearly 9000 people, 22000 people were injured, and more than half a million houses were collapsed or destroyed (National Planning Commission, 2015). Nepal government immediately declared a state of emergency after the earthquake and asked the international community for aid (Rafferty, 2020). The call from Nepal was quickly addressed by neighboring countries India and China by sending aid and rescue teams. Besides, Pakistan, Australia, Israel, Japan, UK, USA also helped Nepal (BBC News, 2015). While many countries rushed to help Nepal following the call of the Nepal government, Taiwan's humanitarian aid was declined by Nepal though Taiwan has the expertise in disaster recovery and relief (Rauhala, 2015). According to the government of Nepal, Nepal only accepts such aid from its neighboring countries like India but the reasons might be deeper than this as Nepal accepted humanitarian aid from far countries like the USA, Israel, Japan (Chronicle, 2015). So, this paper seeks to find the possible reasons behind the aid rejection of Taiwan by Nepal and the possible impact that might happen to Nepal. While talking about Taiwan's aid policy, it is also necessary to cover the China case as Taiwan and China has been for long had the controversies.

Research Methodology

The main objective of this paper is to find the reasons behind the rejection of Taiwan's aid to Nepal during the devastating disaster time. This study is based on secondary data. For the study, historical relations of Taiwan with China, relations of China and Nepal, and few instances of what might happen for being inclined to Taiwan are analyzed.

Since Taiwan and China continue to have a rivalry, for this study the historical background of Taiwan and China is used. Similarly, China has been using foreign aid to promote the "One China Policy". Therefore, Chinese foreign aid policy is also used to prove the hypothesis.

Importance of the Study

The literature related to humanitarian aid is a popular topic in the field of international relation. There are many studies done on humanitarian aid, especially related to the motives of developed countries to provide aid to developing countries. Unlike the ongoing trend of humanitarian aid, this study seeks to find the reason of aid rejection by one of the least developed countries for which Nepal has been taken as an example. Nepal rejected the humanitarian aid of Taiwan during the major disaster in Nepal. So, this study would be an interesting piece to find the politics behind humanitarian aid from the receiver's perspective.

Defining Humanitarian aid

Humanitarian aid is needed the most at present because of the many ongoing problems in the world like the present pandemic, climate change related natural disasters, refugee crises, and many more. Though the traditional concept of humanitarian aid is believed to be out of altruism, Khakee (2018) argues humanitarian aid to be the subject of state power. This type of aid has been used by the state as a tool to gain influence and build alliances internationally. Therefore, as per the political interests of the state, the size and scope of the aid are also determined. This is the realistic perspective where national security is the main goal of the state. The next paper by Duffield, Macrae, and Curtis (2002) mentions the term 'new humanitarianism' to explain the changing role of humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid now has been one of the most important strategies of the western governments to settle violence, decrease violence and prepare for liberal development. Therefore, politics in humanitarian aid is not a new thing in the literature of aid.

Humanitarian aid was there in the world from the very past but the modern concept of humanitarian aid started in the mid 20th century after World War I with the Treaty of Versailles. After World War II there was the sudden rise of non-governmental organizations and aid started becoming global also because of the advent of transportation and communication (Rasaback-Smith, 2015). The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in 1965 formulated the principles that should guide humanitarian aid which should be guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. This was also endorsed by 194 state parties to the Geneva Conventions. This aid should benefit the affected people from natural disaster or a complex emergency like armed conflict. The guideline hinted that the humanitarian aid is out of philanthropic will but modern humanitarian aid is not limited to that. One state aid other state for many reasons like economic growth but accepting the aid indirectly also shows the recipient state's weakness. So, time and again can see the events where aids are rejected for the leaders of the states wish to improve their international prestige which shows their self-sufficiency (Carnegie, Dolan, 2020).

Cases of aid rejection

There are number of cases at present where aid was rejected by the nation. In August 2018, one of the Indian states, Kerala was hit by the worst flooding that affected 5.4 million people and killed over 400 lives. The government of Kerala estimated that because of the flood and associated landslides, there was more than USD 3.8 million in economic loss (Hunt, Menon, 2020). The flood got attention internationally where several countries, including the United Arab Emirates, offered USD 100 million in aid to the state. However, the central government of India rejected the aid saying that India does not have the policy of accepting aid for the crisis like since 2004 (Mohan, 2018). Bagchi (2018) explains that India is now the enthusiastic aid giver who has extended the assistance to other developing countries. Through the aid giving and not accepting aid, India wants to change its image as a self-sufficient nation from the country with poverty.

The next case of rejection is by the United States when Tropical Storm Katrina in August 2005 hardly hit the communities of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama badly. There were more than 1500 casualties from the Storm Katrina (Kelman, 2007). Former President George W. Bush said this to be one of the worst natural disasters in the country's history that did severe devastation throughout the Gulf Coast region. After the destruction by

Hurricane Katrina, soon many countries around the world pledged aid to help. More than 90 countries offered the U.S \$854 million in cash and oil but many including the biggest pledge of UAE was rejected (Borgen, 2013). Bush at that time said that the rejection was done because the country was able to manage by themselves and would not want to depend upon other countries (Dany, 2018). In some way, it makes sense as the U.S.A is the most powerful country and self-management does not look ambitious but later Bush was criticized for not being able to handle the disaster properly (Sylves, 2006). So, this shows that though the country was not able to handle the disaster by itself, rejection of the aid has different reasons, most likely to show the world its power and capability.

Similarly, Japan also rejected the humanitarian aid during the Great Hanshin Earthquake in Kobe in 1995. Many humanitarian aids were rejected by Japan at the time, but the most noticeable was the flu vaccine offered by the United States. At that time, flu was spreading all over the world, and an American relief group thought the earthquake victim might need it. So, they offered to send a million doses of flu vaccine but was rejected by Japan (Landers, 1995). In this case, Japan has the lots of experience in managing disaster as Japan is one of the most prone countries for earthquake and the country is one of the developed one (Dany, 2018). So, self-reliance in disaster management make sense.

In all the cases, India, the USA, and Japan wanted to show their capability of handling the disaster without anybody's help though the reality was not the same. Unlike the case of India, Japan and the USA, in the case of Nepal which is still in the least developed list, the reasons for showing their self-dependency in disaster management are not valid. Nepal rather itself asked the help from other countries and organizations but the humanitarian aid proposed by Taiwan was turned down though the country has the long experience and good manpower of handling the disaster.

China-Taiwan Relation and Nepal's inclination to China

Since the end of the civil war in 1949, Taiwan and China compete for diplomatic recognition in the international arena and both are using foreign aid to show their presence. After China replaced Taiwan in the United Nations in 1971, Taiwan has been struggling for its recognition (Maggiorelli, 2019). However, it is since 1949, Taiwan has been a de facto sovereign nation but for China, Taiwan is still their territory which China expects to bring under control. Since China views Taiwan wayward

province, China will not have diplomatic relations with any country that recognizes Taiwan as a state (Lyon, 2019).

Recently, Kiribati cut off the diplomatic relation with Taiwan to join diplomatic ties with China. Taiwan then immediately, shut down its embassy in Kiribati (Lee, 2019). This shows that, it is impossible to have a diplomatic relation with both the countries at the same time. Kiribati's cutting off the diplomatic relation with Taiwan and joining China is related to China's One China policy which began after the end of the civil war. This has been the main feature of China's foreign policy, where other countries maintaining the diplomatic relations much recognized only one Chinese government and cannot establish diplomatic relations with China and Taiwan at the same time. China takes this policy seriously. In between 1987 and 1989, Belize established diplomatic relations with both the countries where Belize adopted the Two Chinas Policy for which China canceled its relations with Belize (Maggiorelli, 2019).

The relation between Nepal and China is long where the formal diplomatic relation started in 1955. The relation is much broader and close also, because of its proximity. Nepal has respected China's one-China policy where Nepal and China enjoy friendly and cordial relations by respecting each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. This statement has been mentioned in the site of the Chinese Embassy to Nepal. A similar thing about the relation between China and Nepal is written on the site of the Ministry of Foreign affairs of Nepal. It adds that Nepal is fully committed to the One China policy and will not allow its soil to be used for unfriendly activities (Government of Nepal). Nepal's foreign policy is directed towards preserving autonomy and addressing domestic economic and security issues. Nepal's foreign policy has also focused on maintaining close and intimate relations with China for national security and independence (Dahal, 2018). China has also respected Nepal's sovereignty. Time and again, India comes under the controversy of trying to control Nepal but in the case of China, China has never interrupted in the sovereignty of Nepal. So, the experts in the field of international relations say that the China's non-interference policy has helped China create a positive image among Nepalese people (Sharma, 2018).

China's contribution to Nepal

China is one of the major donors for Nepal. Nepal has been received China aid for many developmental projects which are mainly focused

on infrastructure development which Nepal takes in a positive way (Shakya, Gurung, 2015). At present also, there are many ongoing projects like hydropower projects, road projects, airport project which are under Chinese assistant (MOFA Nepal). With the help of China's aid, more than 30 projects are completed in Nepal over the past 50 years which played a constructive role in the social and economic development of Nepal (Prasad, 2015).

Nepal being rich in natural beauty, Nepal tourism is always in the priority for which China is the major tourist boost to Nepal. China is the second-largest tourism source for Nepal's tourism industry. In the year 2015, the total of 66,984 tourists from China visited Nepal whereas only 5301 tourists came from Taiwan (Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, 2015). In order to promote tourism in Nepal, Nepal planned to organize Visit Nepal 2020 with the aim to welcome two million tourists in 2020 (Pandey, Dhakal, 2019). The plan was not successful due to Covid-19 but the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Hou Yanqi posted her picture on social media where she was showcasing Nepal's beauty (Wang, 2019).

China is also the second-largest trading partner to Nepal. Nepal exported goods worth Rs. 2.18 billion to China in the fiscal year 2013-14. Though the import is high and there is the trade deficit, China from their side has given zero tax entry facility more than 8000 Nepali products since 2009 to encourage Nepali's export (The Himalayan, 2018). According to that data by United Nations COMTRADE, while Nepal exported goods worth \$22.33million in 2017, Taiwan is nowhere on the list. Nepal and China under the government biannually host Nepal-China's Tibet Economic and Trade fair since 1990 which gives the new business opportunities (RSS, 2015). The trade between China and Nepal became even more important after the unofficial blockage was done by India in 2015. The importance of China was seen clearly when India did blockage and Nepal got a shortage of daily products including fuel. At that time also China helped Nepal by providing 1.3 million liters of petrol as a grant (Tiezzi, 2015).

Discussion

Through the above discussions, it is seen that Nepal and China have a very good diplomatic relation. More than just being a neighboring country, China has been helping Nepal in many fields like trade, tourism, and other infrastructure development. Nepal knows how much China is

needed for its economic development. Having harsh relation with China may have a big impact to Nepal and China is vigilant if the nations with whom China has diplomatic relation is maintaining good relations or not.

Recently, Nepal was not invited to the 2021 Boao annual conference despite Nepal being the founding member. Though there is no exact information of why Nepal was not invited, the expert in international relations says that in 2018, Nepal's prime minister Oli did not participate in the conference because he was on a state visit to India and he even did not send his representative in the conference. Nepal's closeness through Prime minister Oli might have become an issue to China which resulted in Nepal being disqualified for the conference (Giri, 2021). Though the exact reason is unknown, this anyhow shows how much reactive is China when China sees closeness with the country they do not want to see. This is just one instance to show the impact that might have on Nepal for ignoring the relations with China.

Nepal's relations with Taiwan are not visible. Even in relation to the tourism industry, the number

of tourists that Nepal gets from China and Taiwan is incomparable.

Conclusion

The paper aimed to find the reasons behind the aid rejection of Taiwan by Nepal but the cases related to Taiwan are not much discussed. They are significant events that show the good relations between Taiwan and Nepal. Looking at the foreign policy of Nepal, Nepal is very much committed to China's one china policy and from China's side also, China has respected Nepal's sovereignty and helped Nepal in many developmental fields. Though China has its self-interest to maintain relations with Nepal, especially because of Nepal's proximity to Tibet, the load of maintaining good relations seems heavier on Nepal's side. So, Taiwan's aid rejection by Nepal during the earthquake in 2015 is related to maintaining the diplomatic relation with China. Accepting Taiwan aid at that time could have created a negative image about Nepal which could have affected Nepal's economy. At the same time, ignoring Taiwan is no loss for Nepal.

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