

*Round Table*  
*on*  
**Indo-Nepal Relations**  
Concept note

Nepal-India relations are unique for reasons ranging from geographical contiguity to close cultural ties, and extensive institutional and social relationships. Cultural, economic and geographical factors along with the common bond of a shared religion have had a great influence on bilateral relations. As two sovereign nations, both India and Nepal are naturally guided by their national interests. These interests are related to cultural, economic and security issues. Despite some turbulence in the past, India-Nepal relations have remained close, stable and mutually beneficial. Given these multiple trajectories, the following aspects pertaining to India-Nepal need greater reflection:

- Cultural bond provides moral strength to the relationship, while respect for each others political identity as independent, sovereign countries provides the political base for meaningful interaction. Nepal recognizes and admires India's position as the largest democracy and as an emerging economic and strategic power that is striving to find its rightful place in the comity of nations. It appreciates the support accorded to Nepal in the spirit of the Panchsheel. There exist vast areas of complementarity and mutual benefits between the two countries. Both states can benefit tremendously from bilateral interactions. Greater creativity is required, however, to take full advantage of the complementarity of economies of the two countries
- Security issues are the most vital questions that determine the tenor and content of the relationship between the two countries at present. It determines the trust, endurance and sustainability of the relationship. There have been strong commitments to each other in the past like assurances not to allow their territories to be used for unlawful activities against each other. Formation of governmental committees and frequent consultations aim at bettering the security scenario. Despite these efforts, perceptions of Nepal not being adequately appreciative of India's sensitivities have caused some trouble in the bilateral interactions. As a result, mutual trust and confidence are sometimes shaken and put to stress. Promoting regional cooperation is another way of indirectly improving bilateral relations. A few areas marked for this purpose include trade and transit, energy, water resources, investment and combat of terrorism
- Currently India and Nepal share a relaxed political and bilateral environment. Nepal hopes to benefit from the economically prosperous and strategically confident India. The leadership position that India wields in the region brings with it obligations of assisting its smaller neighbors like Nepal in tandem with other developmental and financial agencies. The issues confronting the two countries are those of cooperation and not of conflict. Hence they should be addressed in the spirit of cooperation and understanding. In both traditional and non-traditional security issues, India and Nepal are juxtaposed in a 'cross-

asymmetry' relationship, wherein India is a military and economic power and Nepal is a hydrological and geographic power

- Nepal looks up to the emergent India as an opportunity for growth in the form of easy access to technology, investment and market. Nepal hopes for greater tangible cooperation from India. That way, it must look at the fact of being India-locked as an opportunity rather than a hindrance.
- Reflecting the long relationship between Nepal and India, and designed to facilitate trade and transit between the two countries, the open border agreement enables traffickers to easily transport the helpless poor from Nepal to India. Along with human trafficking, movement of refugees is a concern needing immediate bilateral actions.

In this context a comprehensive analysis of Indo-Nepal relationship with their domestic determinants is of immense importance. MAKAIAS proposes to organize a round-table discussion and is looking forward to a meaningful engagement with academics and opinion makers to examine relevant issues under the following themes:

1. History of India-Nepal relationship: A tale of brotherhood
2. Positioning India and Nepal in the contemporary context
3. Growing together: Making most of the economic complementarities
4. Misplaced perceptions: Issues of discord between India and Nepal
5. Building a common security agenda: Tackling traditional and non-traditional security issues
6. Dealing with the region: External factors in Indo-Nepal relations

The Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS) hereby invites papers on the above mentioned themes with reference to Indo-Nepal Relations.

**Date : 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013**

**Venue : MAKAIAS, Kolkata**