

Bhutan- Germany relations

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Bhutan's biggest neighbour to the South- India has safeguarded the Bhutanese approach and the revised friendship treaty of 2007 is testimony to that. With the new diplomatic ties of Bhutan with Germany one can notice how the mountain nation is opening up to the international community. However, given the strategic importance of Bhutan, India should be wary of Bhutan's relations with other countries, mainly China.

In news: Bhutan has established formal ties with Germany.

Placing it in syllabus: Foreign relations

Static dimensions

1. Bhutan's diplomatic relationship with other countries
2. Why doesn't Bhutan have relations with P5?

Current dimensions

1. In news
2. Bhutan- Germany relations
3. How is this helpful to India?

Content:

In news:

- Bhutan and Germany established formal diplomatic relations with one another.
- The **exchange of note verbales took place between Ambassador of Bhutan to India Maj. Gen. Vestop Namgyel and Ambassador of Germany to India Walter Lindner**, at the Royal Bhutanese Embassy in New Delhi.
- The move is aimed to "strengthen" and develop "mutually" beneficial relations between the two countries.
- Once diplomatic relations are established between two countries, they often open embassies on each other's

territory.

- But in the present case, **the German ambassador in New Delhi will be accredited for Bhutan too, and will maintain Germany's relations with the country from across the border.**
- Bhutan also has an embassy in New Delhi.
- This connection has been used for dialogue with Germany in the past.
- With the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two countries will now be able to collaborate more closely than ever before.

Bhutan-Germany relations:

- The modern kingdom of Bhutan ruled by the House of Wangchuck was created in 1907 and the country closed itself off to the outside world.
- As part of the domestic reforms introduced by King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, who reigned from 1952 to 1972, Bhutan then gradually established international relations with a small number of countries.
- It joined the United Nations in September 1971.
- Germany has been supporting Bhutan's socio-economic development since the 1980s, even in the absence of diplomatic relations.
- It has been a trusted partner of Bhutan for some time in a number of fields (e.g. international organisations, climate policy, cultural conservation).
- Both countries established consular relations in 2000.
- The government of **Bhutan Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tshering**, since November 2018, has continued to cautiously open up the country – leading to the decision to establish diplomatic relations with Germany.
- Now with Bhutan's diplomatic relations with Germany being established, the restricted number of capitals that **Thimphu has formal ties with is increased to 53 states and the EU.**

- **Bhutan continues to receive support from the EU, of which Germany is the largest contributor** to the Union's budget.

How is this helpful to India?

- Though Bhutan has diplomatic ties with more than 50 countries, it has only three resident missions in Thimphu – that of India, Bangladesh and Kuwait.
- Its mission in New Delhi interacts with many of the 50 countries with which it has diplomatic ties.
- Germany establishing diplomatic ties with Bhutan comes against the backdrop of relentless efforts by China to open similar ties with it.
- New Delhi has been seen as wary of any such move given that China is a strategic rival and India has special ties including extremely close security relations with Bhutan.
- India has taken note of the development and is aware that the two countries already had established consular relations in July 2000.

The India-Bhutan Friendship treaty, 2007:

- To update the 1949 Treaty, through mutual consent, relating to the promotion of, and fostering the relations of friendship and neighborliness between India and Bhutan;
- Reaffirming their respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- Recalling the historical relations that have existed between two countries;
- Recognizing with deep satisfaction the manner in which these relations have evolved and matured over the years into a model of good neighborly relations;
- Being fully committed to further strengthening this enduring and mutually beneficial relationship based on

genuine goodwill and friendship, shared interests, and close understanding and cooperation;

- Desiring to clearly reflect this exemplary relationship as it stands today;

Bhutan's diplomatic relationship with other countries:

- **Until 2007**, when Bhutan conducted its first election, **it had formal relations with just 22 countries** in the world.
- Most of these countries were donor countries like Japan, Australia and several Nordic countries.
- After the election of Prime Minister Jigme Thinley in 2008, however, the Bhutanese government rapidly increased its diplomatic forays, signing agreements with 31 countries in five years.
- It had a view of winning the election for a non-permanent seat election at the UNSC in 2013-14, which it eventually lost.
- The recent ties with Germany mark the first new diplomatic agreement made by Bhutan since March 2013, when it had established ties with Oman.

Why doesn't Bhutan have relations with P5?

- The monarchy is not keen to establish diplomatic relations with not only China, but any of four other permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) – US, Russia, China, France and UK commonly referred to as P-5.
- While Thimpu engages with all P-5 states, it has been maintaining a consistent position despite pressure of not establishing diplomatic ties with any of the five global powers.
- Bhutan has always held that allowing any of the P-5 states to set up an embassy in Thimpu will open the door

for other four powers to explore their presence in the Himalayan state.

- **Bhutan is extremely conscious of its ethno-cultural identity and wants a gradual process in dealing with the larger international community.**
- Bhutan had remained circumspect that a formal presence of China in its territory could invite further political and economic pressure the country may find difficult to handle.

Mould your thought:

1. Explain the history and importance of Bhutan- Germany relations. How does it affect India?

Approach to the answer:

- Write why it is in news
- Brief about its importance
- Explain the historical ties
- Write how India is benefited (also mention with respect to China)