

UNLEASHING NEPAL'S DEMOGRAPHY AS SOFT POWER

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Abstract

For small powers like Nepal, enhancement of soft power to achieve national interests and economic aspirations is important. For this, however, the aspect of Nepal's demography has not been considered as a source for advancing Nepal's soft power. Owing to the same research gap, this study emphasises how Nepal's demographics can be a significant facet to enhancing Nepal's soft power. With the same objective, this paper has essentially explored the unexplored territories of demography, migration and also women's contributions to Nepal's economy to boost up Nepal's soft power ambition. Stressing on the changed narrative away from the conventional notion of "yam between two boulders", the study introduces the idea of "Global Nepali" as a component to enhance Nepal's soft power, considering the changing demography of Nepal. Also, by shedding light on the contribution of Nepali women in Nepal's economic growth and its potentiality to advance Nepal's soft power, this study reiterates that the soft power of a country like Nepal lies in the hearts of its people and what they have to offer to the world.

Keywords: Nepal, Nepali, Soft Power, Demography, Women, Small Power

Introduction

Till the 19th century, the power of a nation was associated only with its military capabilities and material resources, or the hard power. But along with the process of globalisation and industrialisation, the notion of power changed, with more emphasis on soft power (Digester, 1992). Soft power has been referred to as a component of national power, presently based on ideational and cultural attractiveness, which is intentionally or unintentionally utilised by actors in international relations to achieve strategic imperatives (Culligan, Dubber & Lotten, 2014). Likewise, soft power establishes more than ordinary cultural power, rather it incorporates the political values and ideas, socioeconomic and educational systems, and authentic national strategies as acknowledged by other nations and people. Theoretically, the importance and relevance of soft power has increased (Fan, 2008).

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The term “soft power” was first coined by Joseph Nye in the 1980s as “the ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without force or coercion” using the nation’s “intangible power resources such as culture, ideology and institutions” (Nye, 1990). For Nye, soft power is an instrument to create, harmonise and co-exist (Nye, 2008). After many decades of the first introduction of the term, soft power has now gone on to become, arguably, one of the most largely invoked terms in foreign policy debates all around the world.

As a concept, soft power has experienced certain modifications since it was created. Soft power can be understood with two notions of soft, both with a narrow difference in the understandings. First is the one that Nye defined previously, soft power as the power of attractiveness, and an ability to “get others to want what you want” through your good repute and affirmative appearance (Trunkos, 2013). Nevertheless, his newest explanation of soft power presents the idea in much wider terms, as “the capacity to affect others to acquire favoured results by the co-optive means of outlining the schema, persuasion, and progressive magnetism” (Nye, 2009).

But, critics claim that governments are incapable of entirely regulating soft power or envisage its efficacy due to limited idiosyncrasies in each recipient state. Nor does it seem possible to measure and quantify it (USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2019). Concurrently, the internet, communication and technology changed the definition of soft power, as a result of which Korean music and dramas took over the internet, Instagram posts started to decide which country is the best tourism destination, reviews on platforms like Trip Advisor determined how safe a country is and videos posted on YouTube influenced people’s eating and travelling habits as well as their leisure and entertainment habits (Anshan, 2008).

While much of the soft power debate is concerned with the future narratives of the dimensions of soft power and global order, the capacity to have an impact on its imminent course is beyond the means of all but a handful of large and powerful states (Stokke, 2010). However, this does not imply that middle-sized and small powers do not have any significant part to play. Without a doubt, with clarity of purpose and the right capabilities, soft power offers small powers an instrument to attain tangible impressions on the global stage and future of soft power diplomacy. For small states wanting to make a positive impact on the world stage, soft power offers the best means to do so. Small states can best do this by focussing on how they can contribute to securing their national interests (Ulrichsen, 2016).

However, Nepali soft power is in a quagmire of dichotomy. As a country situated in between two of Asia's largest and most powerful states, China and India, the model and conduct of soft power are remarkably poor in Nepal (Karki & Dhungana, 2020). On the one hand, Nepal is blessed with the best of the Himalayan range, culture and religion and, thus, enjoys a brand image as a country of great nature and nice, welcoming and brave people across the world. However, on the other hand, Nepalis themselves suffer from very low self-esteem about their country's power capability, which is believed to have been generated by the very narrative of being a yam between two boulders (Aditya, 1998). Having been geographically hemmed in-between the world's second-largest economy-China, and the world's fastest-growing economy-India, Nepal views its position as something bestowed by geography and history and, thus, projects an image of dependency (Karki, 2020). The narrative of representing Nepal as a small power, while also providing an impression that the country will find it hard to coexist with its fast-growing neighbours, is not new.

In the 18th century, King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of modern Nepal, had described Nepal as "a yam between two boulders" in terms of its distinct geographical position as well as the geopolitical situation, location and size of the country concerning its two giant neighbours (Baral, 2018). Since the emergence of modern Nepal with that narrative, Nepal has been represented and described as a dependent country. Further adding to the narrative, Shah also suggested that Nepal should be cautious with the South and maintain a close friendship with the North (Baral, 2020). In the Divya Upadesh, Prithvi Narayan Shah had counselled maintaining a treaty of friendship with the emperor of China while emphasising the significance of a treaty of friendship with the British East India Company (Khanal, 2019).

Later, when the Rana period began in Nepal after Jung Bahadur Rana wielded absolute power, Nepal established a new direction in its foreign policy. It was the foreign policy of isolation coupled with ignoring China, as it was seen as a declining power, thus, strengthening the relationship with the British. Nepal started viewing international affairs through British-centric lenses (Baral, 2018). In the years after this, when democracy got established in Nepal, the country's foreign policy was more of a "special relations" with India. In these periods, Nepal never took the issue of soft power seriously.

Besides this, the leading thinkers in society, the political leaders who represent the country and historians, who have the opportunity to articulate narratives that are later taught as history, continued to portray Nepal as a small power

with very little prospects due to its landlocked nature and geography as its destiny (Aditya, 1998). Neither have the leaders, who have had the chance to change the narrative, communicated so, nor have the people who live with the same narrative challenged it. The dependency that has been stressed upon throughout history has been perceived as a lesson that a sustained economic expansion will not entirely benefit Nepal, as there will always be interference from its neighbours (Pandey, 2011).

Despite being a multifold size of the district of Darjeeling in India, the Indian State of Sikkim or the country Bhutan, Nepal continued to compare itself with these places. Even today, Nepal, with a population of 30 million, continues to compare itself with Darjeeling with 2 million people, Sikkim with less than half a million people and Bhutan with 800 thousand people (Dahal, 2018). We have never tried to examine what makes Nepal and Nepalis think that they are small.

Even though soft power as a concept is progressively being incorporated into policy-making and diplomatic efforts, and although soft power provides small powers with an opportunity to attract other actors to emulate their position and inspire them to take collective action, previous researches have not incorporated or have been lingering on the debate to conceptualise soft power as a foreign policy tool. Moreover, Nepal's soft power practices in real world politics have been minimal, and the study to enhance this opportunity in the globe for Nepal has been marginal. Specifically, the study of Nepal's demography as a potential soft power tool has been insignificant. Thus, the objective of the study is to establish the changed narrative of Nepal other than the yam metaphor, explore the changing demographics of Nepal and project Nepalis, especially women, as the source of soft power.

Methodology

The research design of the paper is qualitative with the inclusion of data from secondary sources. The data in the study have been collected from government publications and independent research organisations. The data thus have been studied and analysed for the results of the study, primarily by an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying the pattern among the categories to complete the research objectives. Academic journals, books and magazines related to soft power and small powers have been taken into consideration to critically analyse the research gaps and complete the objectives of the research.

Results:

Rethinking the Narrative for Nepal

The metaphors of “yam”, “buffer” and “bridge” are the various interpretations made at different periods about the geostrategic location of Nepal. Many believe that Nepal’s landlockedness has turned itself into a hostage, limiting its economic, political and diplomatic outreach (KC & Bhattarai, 2018). Given how Nepal has been presented in today’s growing world, rethinking the yam mindset is essential for Nepal to be able to engage more with its neighbours economically. We also need to look back at history where India and China dominated the global economy until the 17th century-before the British and European dominance across the world. The GDP of India and China accounted for as much as 55% of the world total at the end of this period (Abdullahi & Phiri, 2019). At the same time, during the Malla period in Nepali history, the Kathmandu Valley, adjacent areas and trade points along the border were all very well developed. The three cities of the valley were rich with excellent infrastructure; they excelled in Buddhist, Hindu and other learnings as well as in artisanship, crafts and engineering (Dahal P., 1986). This suggested that Nepal was not much behind the glory and achievement that the two boulders were enjoying. Now, with China and India estimated to control 40% of the global economy by 2040 (PWC, 2019), Nepal needs to explore its prosperity between these two countries. In today’s interdependent world, countries across the globe are connected by their diverse social and political relationships rather than those of security and military power. For Nepal to catch up with its neighbours and for all three of the states to emerge as extraordinary powers of Asia, connectivity has to be initiated and intensified (KC & Bhattarai, 2018).

The conventional “India-locked” identity of Nepal has been ceded with a transit and transportation agreement with China in 2016 (ibid). Now, Nepal’s land-linked status has brought a change in the political, economic and diplomatic context. Through this geostrategic location, Nepal can foster its prosperity through transit diplomacy or trilateral cooperation between India, China and Nepal. In the increasing context of interactions in the area of culture, trade, tourism, investment, security and politics, the potentiality to promote Nepal’s soft power diplomacy has synergised the geostrategic location of Nepal (Kumar, 2017). Hence, Nepal should go beyond its conventional mentality of being ‘landlocked’ and use its geostrategic location in promoting promote soft power to accrue maximum benefits, not only economically but also politically and diplomatically.

Changing Demographics: Potential Soft Power Mechanism for the Future

It is time to look at Nepal through a new lens as a country which has undergone demographic changes in the past three decades. Nepal has experienced very rapid demographic vicissitudes in the past few decades, resulting from a high fertility-high mortality society to a low-fertility-low mortality society within a comparatively short time. This conversion is a tremendously affirmative result of the state's development (National Planning Commission, 2017). Nepal is experiencing the "demographic window of opportunity" where the section of the working-age population is predominantly prominent. States like the "Asian Tigers" formulated and executed the right policies and required investments and were able to successfully take benefit of this opportunity and secure their demographic dividends in the form of enhanced human development and economic growth (Chalise, 2018). Thus, Nepal should also capitalise on this prospect and use this tremendous human resource as an instrument to enhance Nepal's soft power in various ways.

According to Nepal's National Youth Policy, approximately 20.8% of the total population of the country falls in the age group 16-25 years and 40.68% in the age group 16-40 years (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2015). This indicates that youths constitute the largest segment of the population, providing Nepal with a unique opportunity to take advantage of its population dividend. Moreover, a Nepali woman gives birth to an average of 2.3 children in comparison to 6.3 in 1976 (Ministry of Health, 2016). The comparison of the population pyramid of Nepal (1997-2017) shows that new cohorts in recent years are shrinking, suggesting that Nepal is in a demographic transition. Additionally, the population pyramid also shows that there is a decline in the population aged less than 10 years of age, again indicating that Nepal is experiencing a shift (Chalise, 2018). The examination of Nepal's demographic statistics over the last several decades shows that Nepal has not only experienced the beginning of its demographic changeover but has also been experiencing rapid demographic change, resulting in positive socioeconomic developments (National Planning Commission, 2017).

However, when talking about demographics, the emigration of the youth in search of labour began from the beginning of the very demographic window of opportunity. Although Nepali youths have been making significant contributions to the country's economic growth, the increasing poverty, political instability and lack of a right policy environment have, unfortunately, pushed the dividend to become a demographic burden (Bossavie & Denisova,

2018). This is why the large diaspora of Nepalis in different parts of the world, as well as the ones present here, has to be capitalised as a device for enhancing Nepal's soft power. Projections of Nepal's population suggest that it will remain a relatively young country for several years into the future (UNFPA Nepal, 2017). Thus, it is imperative to reap the benefits of the finite demographic dividend within the "demographic window of opportunity" for advancing Nepal's soft power diplomacy.

The Global Nepali: A Concept for Nepal's Soft Power

The concept of migration in Nepal has existed throughout history with people travelling to faraway lands in search of economic opportunities or to escape wars and natural calamities or to get away from social problems (Bruslé, 2010). For a long time, migration has been associated with hardships, challenges and separation from family, and, simply, as a curse. However, there has been an increased dependence on migration that is bringing in the much-needed money to the country (Kunwar, 2015). Therefore, in the context of understanding the Nepali diaspora and its migration, it is imperative to shift the narrative to exploring migration as a soft power tool and unleashing its potential.

The first batch of migrants that went out of the Kathmandu Valley would perhaps be the one that left with Princess Bhrikuti in the 7th century. Thereafter, in the 12th century, Arniko triggered the culture of migrating for work and later for business (Prasad, 2015). With Tibetan Buddhism flourishing, craftsmen from Nepal found work building monasteries and furthering their craft in the Himalayan kingdoms. Migration has, thus, always flourished in Nepal (Kunwar, 2015). However, the formal movement of Nepalis to different parts of the globe started from 1814-1816 after the end of the Anglo-Nepal War, after which a total of 4,650 Nepali youths were recruited into the British armed forces (Kunwar, 2015).

Likewise, the migration of Nepalis for employment, to work in the tea estates of Darjeeling and the forests of Assam, India, began in the second half of the 19th century. International labour migration, basically to the Gulf States, Malaysia and other Southeast Asian states, is a relatively new form of migration in the Nepali milieu with about a 30-year history (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2014). Nonetheless, no matter what the reason for migration, the perception of migration being bad perhaps stems from the fact that it is about leaving one's nation. Along with this, the government's inability to create employment opportunities in Nepal is also a key factor for labour migration. Moreover, the open and porous border which it shares with its southern neighbour, India, has allowed steady stream of Nepali workers to India for work (Prasad, 2015).

Given the similarities in language, culture and tradition, India is a preferred destination for Nepali workers. A substantial number of workers going overseas for work through irregular channels travel to India as it does not necessitate labour approval (Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, 2020). The Foreign Employment Information Management System (FEIMS) reports that till fiscal 2018/19, Nepalis have travelled to 132 countries for work and business. In addition to this, in the Gulf region alone, as per 2017/18 records, there are about 400,000 Nepalis in Saudi Arabia, 400,000 in Qatar, 200,000 in the UAE, 70,000 in Kuwait, 25,000 in Bahrain and 20,000 in Oman (Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, 2020). Labourers apart, there are prominent Nepali doctors in Australia, successful designers and models in the US and businessmen in many parts of the world. Such international labour migration has become widely accepted for Nepal's economic growth. The Nepali diaspora spread in various parts of the world is beginning to offer strong support for the rise of Nepali soft power (Shrestha, 2017).

Apart from workers travelling in search of job opportunities, Gurkha soldiers and Nepali Army peacekeepers have made a name for themselves at home and abroad with their khukuris, a utility knife that has become a symbol of bravery (Dahal R. K., 2018). As Nepal entered the modern era in the 1950s, the legendary success of the Gurkhas in foreign armies was already well known. The Nepali economy had defined its comparative advantage and its primary export: its loyal, trustworthy and brave youth. Considering this, in Nepal's context, the positive image of the Gurkhas, peacekeepers and cheerful workers serving in the service industry around the world has to be given broader coverage (Suhrike, 2011).

Apart from this, there has always been a tradition of learning from other countries. Today, Nepali students make up the third largest foreign student community in Australia. In the United States, Nepali students are among the top ten enrollees (Ghimire, 2019). In the same vein, multiple foreign institutions have links with institutions in Nepal, providing a range of world-class degrees. The integration of this dimension can be used as a tool for promoting Nepali soft power. As Joseph Nye puts it, education and collaboration with prestigious foreign institutions can be a tool of soft power in creating national goodwill, image, appeal and attraction among foreign students (Fan, 2008).

Thus, the large diaspora of global Nepalis can be used as a soft power instrument and as an aspect of global diplomacy.

Women in Nepal's Economic Growth

As we have seen, numerous factors contribute to Nepal's soft power. While the demographic dividend described above is one part, the other is the emergence of women in politics, the administration and economy. Since the early 1980s, Nepal has made specific policy declarations to integrate women in development (Asian Development Bank, 2016). Although women's access to political and administrative decision-making positions were minimal in the early decades (i.e., less than 10% and 5% respectively) due to reasons such as lack of access to education and economic resources, social expectations for household responsibilities and restricted mobility (Asian Development Bank, 1999), the situation has been witnessing gradual changes. While there are instances of inequalities that persist in the economy, progressive laws have also been introduced.

One such instance of progress in the political arena is the 1996 Ordinance on Local Elections, which required all contesting parties in the election to have at least one woman candidate among the five ward member contestants. The provisions of the law have been seen as a progressive move (Acharya, 2017). In 2017, the Local Level Election Act required that for every five candidates, two must be women. As a result, 20,000 Nepali women were standing for the election in the first two phases out of the 50,000 candidates campaigning to lead 283 regions (Samjhauta Nepal, 2018). This mandate suggests how the country has started doing things differently after decades of turmoil, patriarchy and monarchy.

Providing a chance for women to be representatives and have the decision-making power can empower them and contribute accordingly (Acharya R. C., 2020). For instance, in rural Nepal, it is believed that running a shop means making sales in person to deliver products, which often requires talking to men. That is why few women take up business. However, with laws that provide women with a chance to become local representatives, women, even in rural Nepal, now have access to a platform to prove their worth. Bringing inclusive and socially conscientious changes lays the foundation for women to be able to contribute to the nation and its progress. With increasing opportunities for women-most of all bottom-up inclusiveness-Nepal has been experiencing monumental changes, and this has also allowed Nepal to maintain its economic growth (Mawby & Applebaum, 2018).

In the earlier decades, when social customs restricted women's role to the household, women were mostly involved in home-based industries, such as food processing, garments, hosiery and handicrafts. But with the gradual

decline of these industries due to competition from imported products, the result was the displacement of traditional crafts by industrial-scale production, which meant the replacement of female workers by male labourers (Acharya R. C., 2020). Today, with the change in the demographic dividend coupled with an increased working-age population, there are more working women in the country. The population of working-age males stands at 9.2 million while that of females is 11.53 million. According to the Nepal Labour Force Survey 2017/18, for every 100 working-age males, there are 125 females. Additionally, for every 100 employed males, there are 59 employed females (Government of Nepal, 2019).

Although these numbers suggest a significant change, women still struggle to find an appropriate environment to work in the formal sector because of their social responsibilities at home. Only 22.5% of the working-age women are employed in the formal sector while the informal sector comprises 66.5% of women (WOFOWON and GAATW, 2019). In the informal sector, women face wage gaps, lack of social security, lack of exposure and training as well as a “family penalty” for not working during motherhood. The wage decisions by most enterprises depend on how much time the workers can contribute, and as women still have to undertake most of the household work, they become subject to lower wages, resulting in wage gaps (Acharya R. C., 2020).

Economic Index to Capture Women’s Contribution

There is a need to work on the fundamentals of how the transition can be furthered to move towards the development of an economic index. As termed by Arlie Hochschild in 1989, women in our world face a double shift. The “first shift” is the remuneration in terms of wages and salaries that workers receive. As for the second shift, it entails grossly underpaid and undervalued work. While women perform their jobs and complete their first shift, they still have to go through the second shift, which are the domestic duties and daily household chores faced by working women (Gorp, 2013). Among many others, Hochschild’s findings suggest that, on average, working women spend three hours a day on housework while men spend an average of 17 minutes a day, and that women work roughly 15 hours longer per week than men (Blair-Loy, Hochschild, Pugh, Williams, & Hartmann, 2015). Thus, in the preface of the book *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*, the author, Arlie Hochschild, talks about the adjustments to rapid transitions those impact women’s lives in combining both work and family life (Gorp, 2013). And this holds for what the working women in Nepal face also, because the second shift and the struggles of experiencing it in various forms exist for all working women.

While progressive laws in different areas in Nepal have guaranteed significant improvements for women, Nepali women still struggle to advance their professions. As there is a serious dearth of focus on rewarding the unpaid care work that women perform, it is imperative to closely examine what exists to develop a measurable method to address it and to also look at ways to empower women. The soft power in terms of women's roles and responsibilities can then be appreciated and rewarded.

Taking reference from how Bhutan has been measuring its Gross National Happiness (GNH) after declaring in 1972 that "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product" and also giving importance to sustainable development as well as non-economic aspects of well-being (Tideman, 2013), the same can be done by Nepal with regard to "women soft power". The idea of GNH has influenced Bhutan's economic as well as social policy and has also allowed Bhutan to be able to position itself as a global thought leader in this matter (Brooks, 2013). Similarly, the role of women as well as the growing changes with regard to women's roles and responsibilities should be placed at the heart of Nepal's peace-building and state-building agenda. Nepal can begin counting women's roles and responsibilities as a part of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and output computation.

According to a report published by ActionAid in 2016, for every hour spent by Nepali men on unpaid care, women spend 1.4 hours (ActionAid Nepal, 2017). Feminist economists like Gayle Rubin have successfully established that the actual profit is extracted from the unpaid household work, most of which is undertaken by women all around the world (Berik, Rodgers & Seguino, 2009). It is not a point of contention for many economists that unpaid household work or reproductive work is still not calculated in the GDP. This could be a great opportunity for Nepal as surveys show that Nepal's GDP would nearly double if reproductive work is included in the GDP. According to a 2008 survey, it is estimated that if reproductive work were assigned a monetary value, it could contribute to about 91.3% of the country's GDP (Resource Centre for Primary Health Care (RECPHEC) and Health Bridge, 2008). Calculating reproductive work in this GDP index can be an opportunity for Nepal to not just amend its poor gender equity index and hit the right notes on strengthening soft power, but also to climb higher on the rank of prosperous nations.

Wielding Soft Power for Nepal

While Nepal is branded and promoted in the international arena as a country of Mount Everest and the birth country of Lord Buddha, it has not done justice to Nepal's true potential and changing dimensions. Nepal has much to offer the

world besides this prowess. Presently, Nepal's Peacekeeping Forces in several parts of the world have contributed to the national image and enhanced the soft power as well (Baral, 2020). A new kind of branding is required for Nepal to truly live up to its soft power potential. The promotion and branding of Nepal as a country and Nepalis as its people should be based on humanity, outright friendliness and hospitality. The local Nepali touch and the smile that the Nepalis wear can become Nepal's goodwill. The promising faces of the Nepali youth can be the next step for Nepal in leveraging both its economic and social status.

The soft power of a country like Nepal lies in the hearts of its people and what they have to offer. Given the country's strong demographics where 64.65% of the people are between 15-64 years of age and 94.22% are under 64 years of age, coupled with an environment fit for the growth of women and the large Nepali diaspora, Nepal can reach many new heights using the demographic component to enhance the soft power of the country. The way Nepal utilises its soft power is an essential and immediately required ingredient for its engagement with the world. It is the right time for Nepal to unleash its soft power through demographic means.

Conclusion

Soft power is the co-optive capacity of a state to persuade other states and people through strong appeal to achieve the national interest. Unlike hard power, soft power uses the methods of attractiveness and persuasion. However, the applicability of soft power and its inclusion in the state's foreign policy is minimal. For small powers like Nepal, it is an important tool to further the national image and achieve national interest goals. But, Nepal's narrative as a "yam" destined by geography had put previous policymakers into the swamp of indecisiveness to examine other models of foreign policy choices.

Rather than following the narrative that Nepal has become a hostage to its landlockedness, Nepal should rethink the narrative. While examining such a notion for Nepal, enhancement of soft power is important. One of the unexplored areas of Nepal's soft power is Nepal's demographic dividend. The changing demographics have created a "demographic window of opportunity" for Nepal to further its development plans and economic growth. Benefitting from a huge working age population, Nepal can achieve rapid economic growth and enhance soft power capabilities. Moreover, this demographic dividend has a huge potential for advancing the country's soft power.

Furthermore, Nepali youths who have migrated to different parts of the world for labour and other purposes provide Nepal with the notion of "Global Nepali"

to advance the country's soft power. Like the brave Gorkhali soldiers who are one of the essential components of Nepali soft power, the migrants for labour, study, business and other purposes provide ample opportunities to promote Nepal's image and economic objectives. Besides, the incorporation of women into the notion is important. Enhancing the potentiality of women by providing them with opportunities can bring monumental changes in Nepal's economic growth. In conclusion, Nepal's soft power engagement is necessary for the state's development and economic growth. For this purpose, unleashing and exploring Nepal's demography is important to the concept of soft power for Nepal.

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