Soft Power in International Relations: Opportunities for Small States like Nepal

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Abstract

The study of power has been one of the main features of IR. While hard power remained at the forefront of the academic discourse for a long time, soft power emerged as an alternative to understand the complex interactions between states and how states employ different sources of non-coercive means to persuade global actors. Nye, in the late twentieth century, perpetrated the idea to indicate the shift from assertion to attraction. This research has focused on why soft power has been a more relevant device for certain states in the system that lack military might. The research has largely analyzed and described the various ways in which small states around the world have resorted to soft power in the face of the interdependent world order. It then has looked into the different ways through which Nepal as a small state can effectively examine its soft power sources, to garner influence in the global power structure and obtain its foreign policy objectives, keeping in mind that the soft power of any state is dependent of the resources that it has and is also able to mobilize.

Keywords: small states, soft power, hard power, foreign policy.

Introduction

Power has been central to the theoretical debate encased within the discipline of International Relations; with noted theorists explaining the scope of power and its impact on state behavior. Dahl (1957), a cited expert has claimed that power has been defined as the "relation among people" (p. 202) in the way that one can influence another. Holsti (1964) following Dahl's ideas further mentioned that states with varied capabilities interacted in different capacities, generating different means of influence. According to him, influence could be achieved in several ways. In particular, he listed six: (i) persuasion through various means of punishments or rewards where considered necessary; (ii) through the offer of some advantageous rewards for another; (iii) granting rewards (with the ability to do so) in the case that a state's offer is not insurance enough for the other to comply; (iv) the threat of punishment is available for states by means of intimidation of the possible use of force; (v) the infliction of non-violent punishment that would act as a warning of sorts where any form of penalty is not with the intent to harm; and (vi) finally, when all options are exhausted through the use of active force (pp. 189-190). Similarly, Hart (1976) defined power almost synonymously with "control" over various "actors", "resources" and the "events and outcomes" (p. 289). This form of thought has been borrowed from the Realists based on their explanations of the inter-state power play throughout history.

In this way, the definition of power has changed over time with different schools introducing their varied perspectives of the term. Quite often though the concept is considered to be an exclusive strand that emerged from Realism, a dominant school of thought that relegates its use to a quite traditional understanding of the term. While the theoretical framework has always enjoyed a prominent place in the academic discussions, particularly while defining and analyzing the various strands of power, it has found its fair share of critiques that have claimed that there are drawbacks to this approach. Barnett and Duvall (2005), for instance, have opposed such notions claiming that the "failure to develop alternative conceptualizations of power limits the ability of international relations scholars to understand how global outcomes are produced and how actors are differentially enabled and constrained to determine their fates" (p. 41). Furthermore, this has in turn prompted different waves of scholarly contributions to observe and explain the changing global phenomena. Shortly after the Cold War, an emerging trend of interdependence, globalization and interstate cooperation on diverse issues indicated that the traditional idea of power and security, which was based on military capabilities was not sufficient enough to explain the evolving international structures.

While Realists have adhered to the military and defense as the primary strongholds of power, Liberals and Neoliberals in the later age, acknowledging the prior contributions argued that there may be a new element of power that needed to be brought into the forefront. It wasn't until Joseph S. Nye Jr. published his seminal work on "Soft Power: the Means to Succeed in World Politics" that the clear dichotomy between the different ways through which states utilize their influence abroad was contextualized. He later went on to include the terminology of smart power as well, adding on the layers of the existing understanding of power strategies. In this way he delineated the different forms of power to reach certain foreign policy objectives, each with its own significance.

There has been no "consensus" on the definition of power, despite its widespread theoretical practice in inter-state politics (Lukes, 2005, p. 61), and Gilpin (1981) has made it a point to note that "its proper definition remains a matter of controversy" (p. 13), since the concept has undergone great change in the ongoing debates of IR. This paper shall examine the manner in which theorists have comprehended power within the classical and contemporary schools of thought. In doing so, it will include the notion of soft power and how it has served as a productive tool to carry out national interests in the global arena for small states such as Nepal, with relative capabilities.

The Evolution of the Idea of Power: Classical Realism and Power in IR

The study of International Relations centers on the concept of power, and how the states in the system utilize it. Rooted in the Realist tradition, the study of power observes state behaviour from the lens of anarchy resulting from their bleak perception of the human nature. One of the most common examples that theorists from this school of thought employ is that of the balance of power between Athens and Sparta in Ancient Greece recorded by the historian Thucydides in *The Peloponnesian War*, describing the state of the island of Melos in *The Melian Dialogue*; a situation that Graham Allison in 2015 coined as "The Thucydides Trap" where war becomes an effect of states trying to accumulate power that serves as a challenge to the other influential states in the system. But the most prominent accounts in history of the importance of power, and the significance of who wielded it as studied in modern day Realism were given by the shrewd minds of Machiavelli and Hobbes.

The Italian advisor Machiavelli ([1515] 1908) preached absolute control of a ruler over their territory and the capability, and suggested to not be influenced in their domestic matters by external powers, as he concluded that a *Prince* was as powerful as he could "support himself with his own resources" (48). His claim rested on his belief that decision-making of a state was

based on the power that the ruler had gathered, regardless of the moral underpinnings of any action undertaken to acquire the said power. Hobbes (1651) in his magnum opus *The Leviathan* gave the reasoning for states (in particular any monarchy) to hold such absolute power in the light of the fact that humans, were in general chaos seeking agents and needed to be controlled by a central, structured authority – he labeled this chaos as the state of nature. Both Machiavelli and Hobbes focused on the human nature and the pessimistic view they held towards it. Power for them was a tool for states to preserve their respective interests from the looming presence of anarchy resultant of the inherent selfish traits of men.

The massive destruction caused by the First World War led Carr (1940) to pen down *The Twenty Years' Crisis* for the first time in 1939 and emerged as one of the major proponents of the resurgence of the Realist school of thought in the twentieth century. He stressed that international politics was essentially a product of power, and that the military was crucial in guaranteeing that a state held it. Carr's argument came at a time when Idealism had failed to explain such an outbreak of violence in Europe. Hans J. Morgenthau (1948), in the wake of the end of the Wars also claimed that the main objective of state interactions in the international sphere was simply to acquire, maintain and demonstrate control and power in relation to the other states existent in the system (pp. 13-18). He was an ardent critic of Idealism, and of what Realists labeled was the utopian thought that power was not of prime importance in state politics (Mearsheimer, 2005, p. 141).

Realists questioned the harmonious world that the Idealists envisioned would be possible within the structure of carefully constructed laws of international relations and respect of human life, emphasizing a positive opinion of the human nature. The major point of deviation between the philosophies lay on the importance placed by Idealists on morality and the faith that they placed on human reason. This opposition of view has been reflected in Carr's notion that "international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power" (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 25) and that in the anarchy of each state coveting power for themselves, acquisition of power was necessary for successfully governing the state's policies beyond its own borders. Morgenthau's ideals were prominent in the period of struggle between the United States of America and the Soviet Union.

It is important to note that these later authors based their assumptions largely on early Cold War politics where two great powers at the opposite spectrum vied to influence relatively smaller powers to embrace their respective policies, so, that they could deter and balance each other out. The United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had already started to engage in a nuclear arms race, resulting in a public standoff in 1962 with the Cuban Missile crisis. Both the superpowers also had military alliances encompassing most of the Western

Hemisphere against each other. Hard power, needless to say was the norm when the theorists were examining the undercurrents of world politics in the mid-twentieth century.

Adding on to the previous philosophies was Waltz (1959) who theorized the structural aspects of inter-state power relations – laying the foundation for the study of Neorealism, also called Structural Realism. In contrast to Classical Realists, Structural Realists held that the supposed inherent nature of humans were not why power was coveted amongst states, but it was the overarching "international system" where there is no ruling authority over states, and where "great powers are trapped in an iron cage where they have little choice but to compete with each other for power if they hope to survive" (Mearsheimer, 2013, p. 78). Neorealists were later divided into groups of Offensive and Defensive Realists, who further gave different views on how power should be accumulated and utilized in the international structure.

Mearshiemer (2013), an Offensive Realist himslf defined the separation between the school as,

> There is disagreement among structural realists about how much power states should aim to control. Offensive realists argue that states should always be looking for opportunities to gain more power and should do so whenever it seems feasible. States should maximize power, and their ultimate goal should be hegemony, because that is the best way to guarantee survival. (…) While defensive realists recognize that the international system creates strong incentives to gain additional increments of power, they maintain that it is strategically foolish to pursue hegemony. (p. 81).

Realists relied on the definition of power to explain their viewpoints of the state system, however, it is important to take into consideration that when they spoke of resources and power, they mostly spoke of the military strength and the strategic abilities of a state, more so than any other elements. This was in essence what is considered to be "hard power" in IR. The Neoliberal thought that came from Liberal Institutionalist, on the other hand, argued that power in the Realist sense has ignored the presence of interdependence and international institutions that lead to cooperation between states (Barnett & Duvall. 2005, pp. 40-41).

The potential of the military might to bring forth change in regional and world politics cannot be negated, however, it was not just the military that led the U.S. to stand as the lone superpower for some time after the fall of the Berlin Wall. As Pallaver (2011) has stated "(…) militaries are well suited to defeating states, but they are poor instruments to fight ideas" (p. 13), and for this purpose the paper analyzed the theoretical underpinning and practical scope of hard power, before moving onto the viability of soft power.

Soft Power and its Emergence in the Study of IR: the Neoliberal Argument

For most of history, hard power was the standard in practice, especially until the early Cold War era. And while people had already realized the importance of ideas and culture as potent influencing tools to realization of policies, it was Joseph S. Nye Jr. who coined the term soft power in the 1980's, and went on to theorize its significance. According to Nye (2004b), the difference between hard and soft power is that,

> Soft power is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. When you can get others to want what you want, you do not have to spend as much on sticks and carrots to move them in your direction. Hard power, the ability to coerce, grows out of a country's military and economic might. Soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced. (p. 256).

Nye (2004a) claimed that the soft power of a country could be measured through three main resources, which are culture, political values, and the foreign policy (p. 11). In the broadest sense of what soft power entailed, it basically looked towards the strength of persuasion as means other than coercion through military tactics that hard power generally relied upon (Wilson, 2008, p. 114). This persuasion would further be cemented when there is an existence a sense of legitimacy for the policies of a state that is assigned to it by the international community or by certain states that it wishes to attract. As Pallaver (2011) argued that "soft power works if the "powerless" actors not only obey the command issued, but if they voluntarily and actively worked to achieve the same objective as the "powerful" actors want" (p. 89). This in context of the claim hinted at the presence of willing actors being more productive and beneficial rather than having been forced by coercive tactics.

Nye in his work emphasized on the U.S.'s soft power, comparing it to the emerging powers, such as China, Brazil and other European states. In doing so he went towards lengthy discussions on the changing state behaviour, leaning towards attraction and persuasion. He gave an example of Norway as a country which lacked military clout, however, it took part in peace building efforts in different East Asian and Middle Eastern countries highlighting Norway's successful negotiating skills in the multilateral arena (Nye, 2004a, 10). Additionally, one of the leading emerging powers of Asia and the world, China has been making significant steps to cultivate its influences globally through the numerous instruments of soft power. A panel of experts speaking for the Center for Strategic and International Studies (2017) including Nye had commented on China's rise by pointing out that China became successful because the state had projected a positive image of its culture and economy though broadcast media.

Even during the Cold War, the U.S. influence extended throughout the globe due to its "American values" that were based on freedom, democracy and equality. The music and art produced by the nation were attractive in its notions of uncensored promotion of artistic creativity that spread across the world, even in regions where American entertainment was heavily curtailed, like the Soviet Union (Nowaki, 2014, p. 51). This elevated American ideals as highly desirable because they represented principles like the freedom of expression, economic liberalization, and a coveted lifestyle, which was further enhanced through the pervasiveness of the televisual, digital and electronic media. In contemporary times, the South Korean popular culture, or more commonly referred to as K-Pop, has gained similar heights and has become a potent instrument of soft power for the country offshore. Another similar case can be that of India with the global reach of its spiritual heritage, cuisine and the growing influence of its diaspora that has been promoting Indian values across the world.

Different sources have mapped out different variables to assess the influence that states hold in terms of soft power. For instance, *The Soft Power 30* report (Mcclory, 2018) published in 2018 evaluated the soft power of countries within the following indices;

- **Enterprise:** This index analyzed the country's capacity to attract investment, and foster economic connections within its growth policies.

- **Culture:** Measured the reach of the influence of a nation's traditions, values and ideas.

- **Digital:** This recent addition to the index took into account the significance of social media and the growing digital interconnectivity.

- **Government:** This index underlined the importance of a liberal model of governance and how countries utilized it for further positive influence in its relations with other countries.

- **Engagement:** This emphasized the value of having good diplomatic relations between states and the contribution in multilateral associations.

- **Education:** This stressed on student exchange programs and scholarships opportunities to foster an exchange of ideas and promote the state values abroad.

The United Kingdom ranked at the top even though its politics have seen tumultuous events like the Brexit, owing to cultural reach and global engagements through its media and entertainment industry. Similarly, Japan climbed up the spot to the fifth position due to its technological advancements compared to the other states and its emphasis on its industries and cultural influences, apparent in the worldwide popularity of Pokémon, and other similar characters. Other countries such as Sweden rose as a result of innovation and investment opportunities

within its socialist democratic policies. Netherlands, similarly, ranked high up on the list for its quality higher educational institutions and the engagement it produced through it.

It would be beneficial to note with regard to the report that what constitutes as soft power for one may not be an attractive resource for another. Moreover, soft power has never been a static tool for the measurement of power. While the U.S. has remained as the most powerful state based on defense spending, its ability to influence through its soft power has been difficult to ascertain. One may claim that the relative decline of America's liberal image after the election of its current President has been due to his unpopular foreign policy principles and actions like retracting from the Paris Agreement in 2017, his proposal to ban the entrance of Muslims from certain countries and publicly sprouting right-wing statements, to name a few. So, while hard power comprised of fixed indicators of military strength and economic muscle has been easy to understand, conversely, one of the main criticisms of soft power has been that it is ambiguous in its measurability (Raimzhanova, 2015, p. 7). While many scholars have certainly tried, the sources of soft power such as culture are complex at best.

Likewise other sources have given different yardsticks, or have added to the existent indices. The *Wu Rubric for Soft Power*, for example, showcases the levels of attraction towards a foreign state based on four variables, that is of knowledge of culture, knowledge of travel, foreign education and the desire to relocate.

Short-term attraction	Watch a movie	Visit a country	Study abroad	Emigrate	Long-term attraction

Fig.1 Irene S. Wu (2018), Wilson Center for International Scholars, p. 2.

Wu specifically focused on the aspects of culture that served as an indication of the manner of influence that a country holds in foreign soil. She made a point of highlighting the change in the attitudes of student emigration to China, stating that the increasing number of students came from not only the neighbouring areas but other parts of the world as well (4). As people move abroad for temporary or periods of time, they tend to learn about the socio-cultural processes of the place, that knowledge can turn into a base for furthering influence. Australia in this context has largely benefitted from the eminence that it has gained through its higher education programs (Wiseman 2018), as a tool for public diplomacy by creating an image of an open and multicultural society.

In the globally competitive environment, states around the world aim to amplify their soft power resources through greater exposure of their own societal values and customs like films, particularly in the case of India whose film industry has been a reflection of its culture and its place in the international arena. Wu's rubric emphasized the aspects of entertainment and the cultural appeal that a state holds in today's world.

A research made by the University of Edinburgh (2017) on this very subject concluded that soft power could be influential through cultural relations, networking, engagement of the audiences, and strategies of the stage (Singh & MacDonald 2017, 16). Thus, soft power has been envisioned in multiple ways via which state influence is measured. It can be said that each model has its own standards, but some elements have remained the same such as the cultural reach that a country has around the world in various capacities and its diplomatic strength that it uses to fulfill its national interests in the long run. In the following sections, the paper has looked into the scope and relevance of soft power for small states, in particular Nepal.

The Small States and their Use of Soft Power:

Hard power has been a resourceful tool for states that have been endowed with a substantive military and economic capability to maintain a constant stream of defense spending. Unlike such wealthy states, certain nations lack relative capabilities to realise their foreign policy objectives through hard power measures because of several factors resulting from their geopolitical position, structural scarcity, or the lack of human and material resources at their disposal. Small states in the global system have been characterized within these parameters.

There are various meanings that come from authors who define states in either the undertaking of relative capabilities or quantitative terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the overall territory of the nation, and the demography (Maass, 2017, 25). World Bank (2019) has categorized small states as having a population of 1.5 million or less, however, the Small States Forum that has operated within the same organization has classified numerous states as small based on additional variables such as access to markets, the land mass, dispersed territories, economic dependency, geography and their ability to respond to natural disasters. Likewise, Vital (1967), claimed that the small stature of state was determined by its ability to handle its policy matter free from any outward interference and take independent decisions.

• *Small States and the Effective Use of Soft Power*

Middle Eastern small states like Qatar and United Arab Emirates (UAE) both have served as examples of success stories through the effective utilization of soft power in key areas of international concerns. Qatar situated between regional powers of Saudi Arabia and Iran has counterbalanced the domineering presence in its regional sphere through the impact of its state media and its active involement in multilateral platforms, to achieve its national interests. Al Jazeera can be considered as one of the major soft power tools for the country where it has amassed great global influence by producing and dissementing information in multiple

languages across borders (Fadli, 2018). UAE, also acknowleding the potential reach of soft power diplomacy published a *Soft Power Strategy* in 2017, highlighting the significance of tourism, economy, arts, economy, culture and academics as apparatuses of building a positive image of the country's reputation. While these countries have been able to incorporate soft power seamingly well into their respective strategies, they also have a relative edge over other small states due to possessing a stable economy beacause of their vast oil reserves.

Each small state has to then play to their own strengths to construct an environment where they can be competetive and can realise their security and policy objectives. Slovenia, for instance has gradually created an image of itself as a peace-loving, modern and democratic society by employing public diplomacy within the fields of cultural awareness, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance, education and sports (Haxhimehmeti, 2015, p. 343). Having joined the European Union (EU) later in 2004 and simulataneously becoming a part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (or NATO) a year before, the state largely benefitted from the collective defense frameworks of the institutions. Considered a small state in the European continent because of its population size and geographic area, Norway has made its mark similarly by supporting and acting on several humanitarian and peace engagement agends (Stokke, 2010, p. 146) that has served as its soft power tool on the multilateral stage and in cases of certain domestic disputes in foreign states.

Other small states have their soft power based on their institutional capacities and diplomacy. Singapore can be considered as an example of this, whereby the nation has been able to attract a sizable amount of FDI by creating a favorable business climate due to its structural stregth also enhanced by its cultural components like the high standard of education, political values, cultural diversity and its vibrant transit and trade (Hong, 2015). It has become one of the examples of how a small state has developed through the own stregths of own robust economic and socio-cultural policies. It has been a founding member of the Forum of Small States (or FOSS) within which it had furthered plans and activities for the common interests of its member states.

The states that may not have such capacity of exploiting its natural resources or do not have stable institutions to support their policies, may look towards other variances of soft power mobilization such as cultural diplomacy, tourism and so on as keys sectors in order to increase their scope of GDPs. Gastronomy in the case of Malaysia has also been consideed to be a means of soft power (Hussin, 2018). The desire to gain a standing in the international community pushed Kazakhstan to participate in regional and multilateral engagements, further its educational standards and oversome its landlocked hindrances to spread the grasps of its

influences (Cull, 2018). Soft power cannot be simply delegated to public diplomacy, as Nye (2004a) has claimed, "(…) some have misunderstood it, misused and trivialized it as merely the influence of Coca-Cola, Hollywood, blue jeans, and money. Even more frustrating has been to watch some policy makers ignore the importance of our soft power and make us all pay the price by unnecessarily squandering it" (p. xi).

The way a state might utilize its soft power has been relative to its own capability to harness and tap into its resources. There has been no fixed way or measurement to determine the soft power abilities of the states in a uniform manner in multilateral and bilateral contexts. Small states, especially have had to rely upon their external environment to make effective use of their soft power in a way that it would benefit their domestic and foreign policy goals.

- *An Observation of Nepal: The Possibilities of Soft Power Utilization*

Nepal situated between the rising giants of Asia, India and China, has witnessed both states respectively apply soft power as a major foreign policy apparatus to achieve their state agendas and have successfully managed to increase their sway abroad over the years. While in the beginning, soft power was used to analyze the foreign policies of Western powers in particular the US, many states have in contemporary times, adopted Nye's ideology as a compelling instrument for increasing their global reach and simultaneously raising their status as influencing states in the international arena. Having neighbours who have practiced the use of soft power diplomacy efficiently, it has yet to be seen if Nepal can inculcate the philosophy of soft power to achieve its own interests in the global sphere as well. Nonetheless, there are certain opportunities that Nepal could possibly expand upon, that have as of yet not been fully realized.

The use of soft power in the academic discourse of Nepal has been recent in current debates. The Institute of Foreign Affairs (2012) has included the concept of soft power as a vital element for a state where hard power would not necessarily be enough to ensure the state's interest abroad. In that regard itself, the report that the Institute has issued has claimed that,

> In terms of soft power with richness in natural resources, biodiversity and ethnicity we are not diminutive. As large countries possess hard power, Nepal must develop 'soft power' such as the ideals of democracy, pluralism, welfare state and human rights. Nepal has to manage pluralism and multiculturalism wisely and the Nepalese people are very fortunate to have the current configuration of the Nepalese nation-state. There must be a sense of national ethos and ideals, which need to be protected, preserved and promoted to strengthen our sovereignty. (p. 8).

Therefore, despite limited resources for cultivating hard military power, Nepal has been deemed to contain potential to execute its soft power through various means in order to fulfill its national interests. Though this has been a recent acknowledgement in policy frameworks of Nepal, more and more scholars and leaders have been recognizing the importance that such a variation of power would serve for a small state like Nepal, that is surrounded by states that are relatively stronger in both military and economic terms and have a firm grip on the implementation of both hard as well as soft power on a broader scale. Aacharya (2001) had, very early on before the surge of the debate, claimed that for Nepal, development of socio-economic processes could very well be a point of consideration for harnessing Nepal's soft power. Furthermore, in the context of how soft power can be an effective option, variables such as tourism, geography, and religion have also been included in the debate (Chaulagain, 2014).

Furthermore, Nepal in comparison to the surrounding countries has lacked a global reach in terms of media exposure – both in the terms of broadcast media and having a digital presence that has made it difficult for it to permeate into the daily consciousness of global citizens, especially in the developed states. Adding to it, the country lacks the capacity to increase its influence through educational institutions, so culture and diplomatic relations may certainly serve its interests in a positive manner, should Nepal prioritize these variables as instruments of soft power.

Nepal has been a democracy and has been recognized as such for more than a decade and now carries strong diplomatic relations with around 166 countries in the world (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal, 2019). Post the conflict period of 1996-2006, Nepal's formal Constitution (2015) has tried to uphold its image as a "federal democratic republic" with values centered on "secular, inclusive, democratic, socialism oriented" (Part 1, section. 4) belief systems. One of the core ideals of soft power has been for a state to make its presence felt with the art of persuasion through diverse non-coercive means by the legitimate acceptance of its values. Nepal has been able to uphold a positive image by means of a grand legacy of its participation in the UN Peacekeeping Operations worldwide (Jaiswal, 2018). For Nepal to extend its reach, increasing its military potential may not be an economically viable option, and neither does it have a vast pool of resources to attract a significant amount of business investment in the immediate future. For a small state with such a rich heritage, it would be a feasible choice to look towards extending its cultural reach through either formal or informal actors, which can be seen in the table below:

Formal Channels of Soft Power for Nepal.	• Diplomatic Channels of Embassies and Consulates.

	• Bureaucratic Institutions.
Informal Channels of Soft Power for Nepal.	• Private Sector: corporations, small and medium sized businesses.
	• People-to-people Engagement: diaspora, student population, public figures.

Table.1 Soft Power Opportunities in Nepal.

The state has been considered as one of the main actors in the pursuit of soft power in IR. State agencies like diplomatic missions for Nepal as Khanal (2019) has stated has been regarded as the foremost means to secure the state's interests and increase its influence within the worldwide community as a small power. Additionally, bureaucratic agents also play a role in advancing the interests in matters of attracting foreign cooperation in various sectors as it could be observed in the international event organized by the Nepal Investment Board in March 2019 that had promoted key investment areas inviting state and non-state actors alike to generate income and enhance the nation's economic engagements. Whether the government would be able to accomplish its targets through the formulation and implementation of its policies has been a matter of debate, nevertheless, the government resides as the crucial factor that could attract diverse investors and aid in facilitating such large-scale cooperation.

The informal channels, on the other hand, in Nepal have been vast in comparison; nonetheless certain key channels can be identified. Diaspora has been identified to be very crucial with regards to this. In an event of MOFA (2019) the current Minister of Foreign Affairs had argued that the "ever expanding Nepali Diaspora, our culture, civilization heritage make our soft power. We will continue to harness existing soft power and build on its strengths for the long term benefit of the country and the people".

Within the people-to-people engagements, public diplomacy plays a very important role, as at the very base level interactions amongst the citizens of one country with another generates a reach that sometimes may not even be possible through formal and state channels. One of the main examples of this can be tourism and the positive image that it has been able to generate from the several layers of communication and affirmative interactions between the people who share their values and culture within the structure. It has also added to the overall economic development of the country, as the tourism sector contributed a whopping NRs. 91b to the GDP of the country in just 2017 (Magar, 2018).

Additionally, public personalities who have gained fame in various sectors around the world have also acted as individual agents to strengthen the stature of the state in the foreign soil. All of this not only encourages the exchange of views but also provides a large platform for a state

to extend its influence beyond the confines of what hard power has constituted.

Conclusion

The international sphere has witnessed remarkable changes in the last few years. The interplay between many actors in a globally competitive environment has ensured that states need to apply several ways of increasing their influence and reach their foreign policy agendas. Soft Power has become a crucial element of explaining and understanding these transformations.

While hard power has and will always be an option for many great powers in the foreseeable future, soft power may remain as the principal means through which some small states could persuade other states to fulfill their aims on a global platform. In this process it would become a matter of import to carefully analyze the resources available within the country to mobilize them as tools for soft power diplomacy in the setting of multilateral and bilateral relations.

Several small states have had different success stories throughout the ages. None of these individual achievements can completely serve as a perfect example for the other. All of the aforementioned states have weaknesses and strengths that can be used to build a concrete soft power blueprint that can be replicated by other small states. Since Nepal has displayed a lack of hard power assets to achieve a global scale of engagement, it may need to start with constructing a strong base of policies within its own state level engagements to suit its best interests. This study, for instance, has encouraged of the use of tourism as a key soft power apparatus for Nepal that is surrounded by emerging powers and has relatively lesser influences when it comes to wielding other forms of power. For states like Switzerland, Qatar, or even Slovenia, the ways in which they frame their ideas of soft power is different. Thus, soft power is a tool that has mostly been played to a small state's strengths more effectively due to the fluidity of the nature and application of soft power itself.

This research has acknowledged that it would be difficult to gauge the extent as to which soft power could be fully employed in the case of Nepal, particularly, because of the dearth of literature on soft power efficiency regarding the state. However, it becomes essential for any small state to first assess its non-military strengths in broadening its soft power framework, rather than playing to a particular definition of what soft power entails.

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