



Article history

Received: 17 Nov 2023

Accepted: 21 Jan 2024

Nepal's Portrayal of Its International Image

Sudip Adhikari*

Abstract

This paper examines the evolution of Nepal's national identity in the modern context, moving beyond its traditional associations with stunning mountains, Buddha's birthplace, and Gurkha bravery. The study argues that Nepal's portrayal on the global stage is a complex interplay of ancient narratives, diplomatic engagements, and evolving national identity, all influencing its global status. The methodology employs historical analysis to explore Nepal's interactions with other nations, emphasizing the role of its Cold War-era strategic neutrality in shaping its diplomatic stance. Additionally, it analyzes documents to track changes in self-presentation, considering cultural aspects, tourism promotion, and humanitarian efforts as tools for crafting a positive global image. It further explores Nepal's involvement in UN peacekeeping, multilateral forums, and regional dynamics to illuminate the connection between self-presentation and diplomatic goals. Ultimately, the research underscores the importance of a comprehensive diplomatic strategy that aligns with Nepal's national interests and cultural heritage, enabling effective navigation of the complex global landscape while safeguarding its sovereignty.

Keywords: National image, global perception, neutrality, diplomatic strategy, peacekeeping

Introduction

"Embark on a journey to see Mount Everest, Such a spectacle as Nepal's is not found in other lands."
- Laxmi Prasad Devkota

The nation of Nepal was founded in the face of extreme odds. In the roughest terrain conceivable odds. The Nepalese people gained unity in the face of unimaginably tough terrain, and they subsequently resisted the British threat to govern all of South Asia. The Nepalese people passionately proclaim their independence within the international community despite being landlocked and surrounded by powerful nations. Their main worry at home is growing. Even though Nepalese forces are respected worldwide, the country stands for nonalignment and peace. Few people, have achieved the tranquility that the Nepalese people enjoy (Stiller, 1993). Nepal's history of defiance against British control, its difficult terrain at birth, and its

* MPhil-PhD Scholar
Email ID : sudip.adhikari.tuedu.np@gmail.com

unwavering dedication to nonalignment and peace in the face of topographical obstacles. Highlights the country's distinct fusion of fortitude and global diplomacy.

Nepal's geography has shaped its history in significant ways. Nepal features lowlands in the south, snow-capped mountains (including Mt. Everest) in the north, and a mountainous and valley-filled midland. Being a mountainous country, Nepal also had the benefit of making its people skilled at guerilla warfare. Sultan Shamsuddin was forced to flee due to his dread of the valley's guerilla fighters. The surprise onslaught of Gorkhali guerillas decimated Gurgin Khan's army, and Capt. Kinloch's mission met a similar end. Due to the region's mountainous terrain, the invaders—particularly the plains soldiers—were unable to ascend the high mountains and were unaware of the proper routes. In contrast, the Gorkhali warriors, who were well-versed in the mountains' ins and outs, would ambush the invaders without warning and finish their task quickly, much like the Marathas did against the Mughals (Vaidya, 1993). The varied topography of Nepal, which includes valleys and mountains, was essential in molding its people into expert unconventional warriors who successfully repelled foreign invaders from their homeland. Like the Marathas' resistance against the Mughals in history, it underscores the value of ambush tactics and local knowledge in the difficult hilly terrain.

Jesuit Ippolito Desideri wrote of the Tarai: "Anyone daring to take this journey at that time is liable to catch a disease called Aul by the natives so the air is pestilential." Desideri traveled through Nepal in 1721–1722 and lived in Lhasa from 18 March to 1716 to 28 April, 1721. The disease is usually fatal, and even if a guy lives, his health will never fully return." "There (Tarai) the air is unwholesome from the middle of March to the middle of November: the people in their passage catch a disorder called in the language of that country, Aul, which is putrid fever, and of which the majority of people who are attacked with it die in a few days," wrote Giuseppe, a missionary of Prithvi Narayan Shah's day (Vaidya, 1993, pp. 8-12). Emphasizing the health risks associated with traveling through this area, it highlights historical accounts from Jesuit missionaries, Ippolito Desideri and Giuseppe, describing the Tarai region of Nepal as plagued by a deadly disease known as "Aul," making the air unwholesome and causing high mortality rates.

Historians have primarily examined the Anglo-Gorkha War (1814–1816) from military, political, and diplomatic angles have paid close attention to it, with a concentration on accounts of military actions, diplomatic ploys, and nationalist feelings. The majority of Nepali historians consider the war to be the apex of contemporary Gorkha's territorial expansion, which ended in 1816 with Gorkha's defeat. Less commonly expressed is the idea that the disagreements surrounding the Anglo-Gorkha War (1814–1816) present a special chance to investigate issues of state formation and spatiality. To be fair, academics like Ludwig Stiller and Mary Des Chene have hinted at possible links, if tenuous ones, between spatiality issues and the Anglo-Gorkha War. Stiller skims over the disputed ideas of political territory that the two states argued over and the British attempt to draw boundaries along a straight line. The insightful statement that "Neither the idea of connected territory nor the concept of a 'line of frontier' entered into the Gorkhali understanding of possessions" can be found in Mary Des Chene's cultural history of the "Gurkhas." But aside from these efforts, little focus has been placed on the spatial dynamics that support the statemaking and governance cultures along the Anglo-Gorkha frontier (Michael, 2013).

In just ten years, the Maoist uprising had enough momentum to cause the nearly 242-year-old regal regime to quake. The failure to meet the public aspirations of the people, the old structure's unwillingness to change the antiquated feudalistic pattern of society, and the exclusion of common people from the elite ruling system were the main causes of this collapse. The instability in Nepal can also be attributed to the following: unequal access to opportunities and resources; poor service delivery; injustice to identities and political ideologies; inept governance; a lack of transparency and accountability; intolerance for bureaucracy and technocracy; and a lackluster approach to diplomacy (Bhattarai, 2016).

In Nepal's recent history, there have been numerous turning points that have influenced the direction the nation has taken in the years that have followed. 1990 saw the return of democracy; 1996 saw the start of the Maoist insurgency; 2002 and 2005 saw partial and total takeovers by the king; 2006 saw the "Second People's Movement"; the same year saw the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the end of the Maoist conflict; 2007 saw the adoption of the Interim Constitution and the emergence of various social movements challenging its fundamental principles of inclusion and federalism; 2008 saw the election of the first Constituent Assembly and the Maoists' rise to power; and 2015 saw the earthquake that occurred in Nepal and the adoption of the country's new constitution a few months later. On its heels came the unofficial blockade by India. The year 2017, which saw elections to the three tiers of the federal government bring an end to the political shift that had started over ten years earlier, rounds off that list (Kumar, 2019). Nepal's recent history has been dynamic, characterized by conflicts, peace accords, constitutional modifications, and natural calamities.

Madhu Raman Acharya, the author of *Nepal World*, goes on to examine how the global order is shifting and all of its diverse effects, leading him to believe that Nepal is likewise at a "crossroads of realignment in its traditional worldview." He claims that one of Nepal's primary foreign policy issues is adjusting to a fast-changing external environment since geopolitics gives Nepal little leeway in choosing its foreign policy alternatives. Mr. Acharya suggests doing away with the constricting psychology that comes with thinking of Nepal as a "yam between two boulders" and instead focusing on the vast economic potential that comes from its advantageous placement between China and India—the next "superpowers in the making." When Hindu nationalism grows in India, he also predicts political and geopolitical ramifications for Nepal, which has a mainly Hindu population. According to the author, Nepal will develop a "new international economic personality" after joining the LDC group, but first it must "improve its bargaining power and negotiating skills" and create a "national consensus on foreign policy matters" (Nepal, 2021).

It is highly unusual for two superpowers to play chicken over a development grant given to a non-aligned government attempting to grow by enlisting the aid, cooperation, and goodwill of its allies and supporters worldwide. The acrimonious exchange between the United States and China concerning the Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC)-Nepal Compact, which the former awarded to Nepal, illustrates the increasing vulnerability and brittleness of Nepal's geographical location as well as the continuous rivalry and competition between major powers in Nepal (Bhattarai, 2022). It emphasizes how unique the dispute over Nepal's development fund is between the US and China, two superpowers. It draws attention to Nepal's continued big power rivalry and geopolitical vulnerability. This scenario demonstrates how difficult it is for non-aligned countries to navigate international politics and development assistance.

Methods

The purpose of this study is to look into how Nepal is portrayed internationally. A qualitative method strategy was used to accomplish this. The purpose of choosing this design is to give a thorough grasp of how Nepal is viewed and represented internationally. Content analysis is done in order to find recurring themes and narratives about to Nepal's international image. A thorough content analysis of pertinent media sources, books, academic journals, daily columns, government websites, magazines and conference proceedings is taken into consideration. The study has used sub-numerical data as well.

Results

Geo-Political Complexity

David H. Kaplan asserts that a country's geographic location has a fundamental influence on its national identity. Nationalism is essentially a geographical notion in that its goal is to bring together a self-identified group of people into a single, sovereign, geographically defined "state." Since national identities can never truly exist without the presence of a nationalist territorial ideology, national identities are in a permanent state of conflict with their spatial representations. Spaces are defined by boundaries, textures, and meanings that are infused with different facets of the national identity (Klodkowski, 2016). It emphasizes David H. Kaplan's claim that a nation's national identity is significantly shaped by its geographic location. By highlighting the objective of bringing a self-identified group together inside a state that is defined by its physical location, it highlights the relationship between nationalism and geography. It also highlights the fundamental tension that exists between national identities and how which they are represented spatially, with areas being characterized by borders and meanings that symbolize different facets of the national identity.

Positioned between two superpowers that can often dominate or, more likely, deeply influence the policies of any government in Kathmandu, Nepal is a landlocked country that usually plays its political games carefully to avoid both political "Big Brothers" being severely disappointed, at least not simultaneously and for different reasons. It is significant to note that, due to their numerous competing, if not conflicting, interests in this part of Asia, Nepalese politicians always select one of the two "external factors" in their calculations: China or India. This is not to say that Nepalese officials are adamant about everything they do at home or, more significantly, abroad—which is untrue. Nepal has become a new battleground for both Asian countries, and it is anticipated that this intense international conflict will only get worse in the years to come as Beijing asserts its rights in the "close neighbourhood" and Delhi vehemently opposes Chinese ambitions in the region. Indeed, other foreign players—the US, EU, and Russia—have a big voice in Nepalese politics as well, and their objectives and strategies can be different from Beijing's or Delhi's. As a result of its financing dependence and key location in Asia, Nepal has created a significant political "temptation space" for all of the regional and global players in the Great Game of the twenty-first century. The Game is definitely less global and more regional than it was in the past, even though various players may have different viewpoints (Klodkowski, 2016). With an emphasis on the shifting dynamics in the Great Game of the region, Nepal's importance as a political theater where regional and international forces struggle.

An analyst S. D. Muni argues that China now has an advantage over India in Nepal due to its pragmatism. Beijing has no close cultural or emotional ties to Nepal, in contrast to India. It can therefore identify with any political force that is in power in Nepal, be it the traditional democratic parties or the Maoists. India severed seems to have reconsidered its military links with the then Royal Nepal Army during the King's direct and autocratic reign. At the same time, India appeared to its twin-pillar policy of multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy. China immediately filled the void in 2005 not halting its military cooperation with the King's Government. Later, China strengthened ties with the Maoist-led government in power (Manchanda, 2012). Muni contends that China's ability to adjust to different political forces and lack of strong cultural or emotional ties has given it an advantage over India in Nepal due to its pragmatism.

The "special relationship" strategy that India and Nepal had been pursuing during the 1950s started to crumble when King Mahendra took the throne in 1955. He changed Nepal's foreign policy dramatically. Before separating himself from the democratic forces, he was a constitutional king for a brief period. While genuine concern for the direction the country was headed could have been one reason, Muni pinpoints two primary reasons for the change in foreign policy. One was that Mahendra's temperament rejected the constitutional function of royalty, unlike his father's. The second element was the elite Ranas' strong support for Mahendra in his quest to regain the power and influence that had been lost due to King Tribhuvan, democratic forces, and those Ranas who had agreed to political reforms (Thapliyal, 2012).

The limits of Nepal's foreign policy toward its neighbors, as established by its founder, were rigorously adhered to by the nation's succeeding ruling authorities. Nepal once had an isolationist policy that included physical separation from China and India as well as the notion of a peace zone. Over time, these isolationist measures changed to equal distance from both countries (Atique, 1983). Nepal's foreign policy has remained consistent with upholding the borders set by its founders and how it transitioned from isolationism to keeping a similar distance from India and China, its neighbors.

Nepal is in a geopolitical hotspot due to its position between China and India. Nepal's worldview is shaped by the complex dance between these two giants, which affects its diplomatic and foreign policy choices. Historically, Nepal's foreign policy has been based on the 'non-alignment' principle, which has helped the country maintain a delicate balance with its powerful neighbors. It is crucial to remember that the political climate in the area is dynamic and that Nepal's position could alter as a result (Acharya, 2014). Despite its strategic location between China and India, Nepal can negotiate the complexity of its powerful neighbors thanks to its sophisticated non-alignment-based foreign policy. Nepal's diplomatic balance requires a flexible strategy due to the constantly changing dynamics in the region.

Nepal's worldview is heavily influenced by religion, with Buddhism and Hinduism being the two most common religions. These religions' coexistence fosters a sense of spirituality and a connection to the natural world. Nepal's perspective on the world and its awareness of the environment are influenced by its respect for the Himalayas, especially Mount Everest, as a sacred site (Gurung, 2019).

Nepal shares parallel connections with China and India because of a range of physical, social, and ethnic factors. Owing to its geographic location, its proximity to water, the Tibetan-Mongoloid and Hindu-Buddhist civilizations' impacts, and other factors, Nepal is caught

between China and India in a regional security equation. Some opine that, in light of China's growing sway over Nepal, New Delhi has requested guarantees from Kathmandu. The Chief of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Samant Kumar Goel, made a visit to Nepal on October 21, 2020. This coincided with the visit of Indian Army Chief Manoj Mukund Naravane to Nepal on November 4, 2019. It has been suggested that New Delhi sought to regain its historical dominance over Nepal due to border disputes. India has attempted to leverage the historical connections between the two powers. This is presumably why Goel informed Oli about China's alleged and grab initiative in the Nepali districts of Sankhuwasabha, Darchula, Humla, Gorkha, and Sankhupalchowk. Interestingly, some claims that Nepal has acknowledged that Rasuwagadhi-Kerung and Numatopani-Zhangmu, two Dolakha boundary pillars, are part of China's 1.5-kilometer extension of control. Important hubs for trade between China and Nepal are these two stations. The intricate geopolitical factors at play in Nepal's relations with China and India, wherein New Delhi's attempts to maintain influence in the region are influenced by historical ties and border conflicts. It also emphasizes Nepal's attempt to strike a balance between the two regional giants and its readiness to use diplomatic gestures to resolve territorial conflicts.

Nepal's options for foreign policy are frequently restricted when one considers the foreign policy of relatively smaller states and the difficulties they face. Keohane's "Lilliputian dilemma" succinctly describes the difficulty minor governments encounter when navigating more powerful nations. Bandwagoning and balancing are not very helpful strategic options for a country like Nepal because they do little to bolster the material forces of any of the major powers in the region, increasing the likelihood that it will draw adversarial nations to meddle in its internal affairs. The position that is thought to benefit Nepal the most is "neutrality," which allows small buffer states to "exist" by claiming to be morally secure. Nepal's record has been uneven in that it has not been able to benefit from the development of its two neighbors or put in place defenses against these countries interfering in its domestic affairs, despite its best efforts to use diplomatic manoeuvres to suggest that it is cultivating positive ties with both countries (Adhikari, 2012). The difficulties of Nepal's foreign policy as a relatively smaller nation and the drawbacks of conventional tactics like bandwagoning and balancing highlight the need for neutrality to uphold moral security. It also draws attention to Nepal's mixed track record of reaping benefits from its neighbors while avoiding outside meddling in its internal affairs.

This is sometimes described as the Asian century. Asia is becoming the center of global geo-economics as a result of the region's unparalleled economic vitality, which is changing the global development landscape. China and India, our neighbors, have already become major players in the world economy. Due to its advantageous position, Nepal has a plethora of commercial and investment options. Then government's motto, "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali," may be realized through stable governance, and maintaining policy coherence is crucial to fostering a positive atmosphere (Institute of Foreign Affairs, 2021). It focuses on Asia's rise as a major hub for global trade, with China and India playing key roles. In addition to highlighting Nepal's potential for trade and investment, it also highlights how crucial stable governance and consistent policies are to the country's progress.

Nepal's Historical Engagement and Cold War-Era Neutrality

"The distinctive power of great states flows from their military strength, but for the small state diplomacy is the tool of statecraft," writes Annette Baker Fox in her widely read book "The Power of Small States." Convincing China that the distinct Indo-Nepalese relations do not come at the expense of Nepal's longstanding friendship with China is another crucial task for the new administration to keep its promise to the people (Simkhada, 2018). Nepal must use diplomacy to persuade China and India that it will continue to retain ties without endangering its interests as a nation.

People are influenced by their surroundings. A people's relationship with the land they live on is reciprocal. The land itself compels people to adapt, even changing their way of thinking and viewing the world, just as people shape and use the land to fit their needs. This has been understood for a while. This relationship has been specifically defined, if not labeled, by the word "motherland." Nevertheless, it is not at all clear how much of an impact it has on men's lives (Stiller, 2017). People and their land have a reciprocal interaction in which both adapt to one another and shape one another's perspectives and ways of thinking. It emphasizes the traditional idea of a "motherland" but calls into question how much of an influence it has on people's lives.

Nestled in the Himalayas, Nepal had a unique history of diplomatic involvement and strategic neutrality during the Cold War. Nepal managed to keep its foreign policy impartial and independent by striking a tricky balance between the US and the USSR, two global superpowers (Rose, 1963). Nepal's strategic location during the Cold War presented a challenging issue. An important regional force, The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which supported neutrality in disputes between superpowers, was led by India. Additionally, India was not aligned (Dahal, 2007). India's immediate neighbor, Nepal, adopted a non-alignment stance as well. King Mahendra adopted an "equidistance" policy from the superpowers in the 1950s (Khadka, 2017).

Nepal's worldwide image has been significantly shaped by its historical interactions with foreign countries. Nepal's "Nepal Zone of Peace" project, which was also a policy of strategic neutrality, played a crucial role in establishing the country as a peaceful and non-aligned state throughout the Cold War (Thapa, 2010). In addition to influencing Nepal's diplomatic approach, this strategic neutrality helped to establish Nepal as a country dedicated to world peace and stability.

During the Cold War, Nepal maintained its neutrality as a proactive foreign policy meant to advance disarmament and peace. The most notable expression of this neutrality came from King Mahendra's 1959 UN proposal, in which he demanded the creation of a "Zone of Peace" in South Asia. This program strengthened Nepal's reputation as a country committed to peace and was warmly appreciated internationally (Thapa, 2010). Nepal's proactive, peace- and disarmament-focused foreign policy during the Cold War, with King Mahendra's "Zone of Peace" concept helped to establish the nation's reputation as a steadfast peacemaker and win it international respect.

Self-Presentation and Image Building

Nepal was among the first nations in South Asia to have its independence acknowledged by the British in 1923—even ahead of its two enormous neighbors, China and India. On the other hand, the two nations' diplomatic ties date back to the early 1800s. Even after the conclusion

of the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814–16, the British chose not to colonize the Himalayan nation because they were cognizant of Nepal's vital location as a commerce route between Tibet and the Indian kingdoms. Rather, the European powers decided to turn it into a feeble border ally (Shah, 2018). The British chose not to annex Nepal following the Anglo-Nepal War emerged because of the country's strategic significance as a trading route between Tibet and India, and the almost respect earned as formidable warriors.

Like any other country, Nepal's reputation is shaped by both its internal conditions and its external actions. Nepal's long history of independence and sovereignty, remarkable natural beauty, a wealth of natural and human resources, world-famous sites like Sagarmatha (Mount Everest), Pashupatinath, and Lumbini, a diverse range of cultural and ecological offerings, and a friendly people all contribute to the country's overall splendor. Among more than 200 nations, it holds a medium-sized position, coming in at 95 in terms of geography, 49 in terms of population, and 97 in terms of GDP. On the other hand, it also faces challenges related to poverty, underdevelopment, and poor global rankings in a few fields. With its friendly relations with all governments, its long-standing non-alignment policy, its active engagement in regional and multilateral forums, and its dedication to international peacekeeping through the United Nations, Nepal has earned a respectable position in the international community (Hamal, 2023). Along with its ranking in the world, many elements have contributed to maintaining Nepal's reputation, such as its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and hospitable populace. Despite obstacles relating to poverty and underdevelopment, Nepal has gained respect in the international community through its diplomatic tactics and dedication to international peacekeeping.

The fraudulent refugee scam from Bhutan has once again revealed the corrupt relationship between Nepal's most influential political elites and the bureaucracy. Former home Secretary Tek Narayan Pandey and home minister Ram Bahadur Thapa's security adviser, Indrajit Rai, were both jailed for actively helping Nepalis falsify documents to flee their country and enter the US as refugees from Bhutan. Even while the scandal has upended the country's political structure, it has hurt Nepal's standing overseas. In the wake of the Bhutanese refugee scam, concerns about Nepal's worldwide reputation are growing. Former Nepali Army Major General Binoj Basnyat said, "Externally, this incident has eroded our trust, tarnished our image and downgraded our confidence; domestically, questions will be raised about our national security, the credibility of our institutions and system and commitments made by the political parties" (Giri, 2023). It exposes corruption of some in the political elites and bureaucracy and emphasizes the negative effects of the Bhutanese refugee fraud on Nepal's reputation internationally and domestically. It emphasizes worries about diminished credibility and trust, as well as issues with institutional integrity and national security.

The public's rising expectations pose yet another formidable challenge to the democratic government. It's accurate to state that "democracy will not be valued by the people unless it deals effectively with social and economic problems and achieves a modicum of order and justice." Nepal's poverty is starkly visible when socioeconomic indicators such as average calorie consumption, access to drinking water, health and sanitation, and literacy are looked at. Most people reside in rural areas, which are rife with poverty. 60% of people who reside in rural areas are thought to earn less than the federal poverty line (Khadka, 1993). The difficulties that Nepal's democratic administration has as a result of growing public expectations and the

necessity of finding practical answers to social and economic problems to win over the populace to democracy. The alarmingly high rates of poverty, particularly in rural areas where a sizable fraction of the population lives below the federal poverty line is a matter of concern.

Following the creation of republics, Nepal's foreign policy has also evolved, with a proposal for trilateral collaboration between China, Nepal, and India in the areas of infrastructure development, particularly in the hydropower sector and tourism industry. The idea for trilateral collaboration in Nepal's hydropower development stems from the fact that India has a market for electricity and China has the technological know-how and resources for large power facilities. The communist majority administration headed by chairman KP Sharma Oli has stressed the 2009 Prachanda-led government's proposal for trilateral cooperation with China, Nepal, and India (Adhikari, 2018).

Prime Minister KP Oli reaffirmed Nepal's goal to serve as a bridge between China and India during his June 2018 visit to China. The tenet of "amity with all, and antagonism with none" still guides our foreign policy. This is confirmed by Nepal's adherence to Panchasheel, the UN Charter, and international peace standards. We place a great value on our relationships with all of the nations and organizations that you represent, guided by this spirit. The path thus far has been marked by the growth of bilateral ties, trade, commerce, and economic ties; membership in the majority of multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations; support for regionalism; adherence to the UN Charter's principles; non-alignment; and a steadfast commitment to international law and norms (Institute of Foreign Affairs, 2021). Over time, Nepal's international image has changed to reflect the country's shifting goals and the dynamics of the world at large. Foreign policy declarations and promotional materials are examples of official publications that offer important insights into Nepal's methods of self-presentation. These declarations frequently highlight Nepal's dedication to human rights, democracy, and sustainable development (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). Nepal's foreign perception has changed throughout time in line with the nation's shifting goals and changes in the world economy. The significance of foreign policy proclamations and marketing materials, which frequently highlight Nepal's dedication to democracy, human rights, and sustainable development, representing the country in the global sphere.

It is impossible to overestimate the role that tourism, culture, and humanitarian endeavors have played in establishing Nepal's reputation abroad. The nation's vibrant cultural legacy, which includes customs, artwork, and festivals, is a potent instrument for presenting its distinct character. Environmentally conscious tourists throughout the world are positively impacted by Nepal's dedication to responsible tourism, which emphasizes sustainability and the protection of natural resources (Poudel, 2019).

Furthermore, Nepal has gained international respect and goodwill for its humanitarian initiatives, especially in the wake of natural disasters. The nation's prompt reaction to the 2015 earthquake, for instance, demonstrated its adaptability and ability for cross-border collaboration, bolstering its standing as a responsible player in the world economy (Institute of Foreign Affairs, 2021). It emphasizes how well-regarded Nepal is internationally for its humanitarian activities, especially in disaster assistance, and how its prompt response to the 2015 earthquake improved Nepal's standing with the world.

Cultural Diversity and World View

Nepal has around 120 distinct ethnic groups living inside its borders, contributing to the country's rich cultural variety. Nepal's worldview, which emphasizes harmony and coexistence, is influenced by this mosaic of cultures, languages, and customs. Festivals, customs, and artistic traditions have left a rich legacy that both connects the past and lays the groundwork for the future (Shrestha, 2017).

Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, is referred to as the "city of temples" and has a remarkably extensive cultural past. Within a 7-kilometer radius are the seven essential world heritage sites: Pashupatinath Temple, Baudhanath Stupa, Swayambhunath Stupa, Changuarayan Temple, Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square, and Bhaktapur Durbar Square. In Kathmandu, galleries showcase both historical and modern artwork, and museums hold vast collections of significant art, historical, and archaeological relics. A popular tourist destination, the Kathmandu Valley is teeming with art, architecture, and culture. Travelers may observe how a prosperous and culturally varied society coexists happily in Nepal because the country is a hub for festivals and celebrations (Tourism in Nepal, 2023). The rich cultural legacy of Kathmandu, dubbed the "city of temples," as well as the proximity of seven significant world heritage sites. The lively art and museums of the city as well as the rich cultural heritage of the Kathmandu Valley, demonstrate the peaceful cohabitation of a varied population marked by a multitude of festivals and customs.

Nepal's worldview is heavily influenced by religion, with Buddhism and Hinduism being the two most common religions. These religions' coexistence fosters a sense of spirituality and a connection to the natural world. Nepal's perspective on the world and its awareness of the environment are influenced by its respect for the Himalayas, especially Mount Everest, as a sacred site (Gurung, 2019). It draws attention to Nepal's significant religious impact, especially that of Buddhism and Hinduism, which foster a spiritual bond with the natural world. Nepal's worldview and environmental consciousness are shaped by the Himalayas, particularly Mount Everest, which is revered as a sacred mountain.

After ten years of fighting that claimed many lives and stunted economic growth, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2006. Since then, Nepal has had protracted and challenging constitutional amendments, which resulted in the 2015 acceptance of a new federal structure. By the end of 2017, successful elections had been held at the federal, state, and local levels. There is a newfound sense of optimism for inclusion, good governance, sustainable growth, and enhanced political stability. In light of the new federal system, Nepal has the unprecedented opportunity to entirely rewrite its development story, according to the Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) (The World Bank in Nepal, 2023). It traces Nepal's path from ten years of war to the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, contentious constitutional changes, and the creation of a new federal system in 2015. The hope for political stability, sustainable prosperity, inclusiveness, and good governance, gave Nepal the chance to rewrite its development story in the framework of the new federal structure.

The quest for "national identities" in Nepal has deep roots in the country's statehood history and did not only begin during the political shift that followed the overthrow of the monarchy. Following the collapse of the monarchy, which was once regarded as a symbol of harmony among Nepal's various ethnic groups, nationalisms are currently evolving further in the country. Nepal succeeded to remain free from British colonial authority in South Asia, and

as a result, Hindu nationalism and the state's religious identity were fostered by the Shah Kings and Ranas. There was a convergence of interests between Hindu nationalism and monarchy, despite efforts to integrate non-Hindu populations through the process of Hinduization and institutionalizing monarchy. It is thought, therefore, that neither political mobilization nor war has been sparked by religion in Nepal. In Nepal, some non-Hindu people are contesting the state's religious identity, which has been under pressure in recent years. The historical foundations of Nepal's ongoing search for national identities, predate the toppling of the monarchy. Hindu nationalism and monarchy have historically been intertwined, as well as how non-Hindu people's recent challenges to the state's religious character have led to a desire for secular nationalism and a unique ethno-cultural identity.

Nepal's International Engagements and Peacekeeping

Since 1955, Nepal has participated actively in the United Nations. Nepal has received widespread recognition for its more than 60 years of involvement in UN peace operations, which has helped to sustain global peace. Nepal has had two positions in the UN Security Council. Nepal is a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Human Rights Council's coordinator for the Asia Pacific region, a member of the UN Peace Building Commission, a deputy member of the ILO Governing Body, the Chair of the Committee on Conference, a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF, a member of the Executive Board of UN-WOMEN, a member of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, a coordinator of the Colombo Process Countries, the Vice-Chair of the UN Disarmament Commission, and a Nepali expert serves on the CEDAW Committee (Institute of Foreign Affairs, 2021). Nepal is the largest (as of February 2024) state contributing to peacekeeping forces, having dispatched troops to various parts of the globe (Bhattarai & Pulami, 2022). The statement highlights Nepal's proactive involvement with the UN, encompassing its noteworthy contributions to peacekeeping missions and its multiple leadership positions within UN organizations.

The UN diplomatic process can be characterized in a variety of ways. It has also historically been known as conference diplomacy, public diplomacy, multilateral diplomacy, or parliamentary diplomacy. On occasion, it has also been referred to as bloc diplomacy, group diplomacy, and majority diplomacy. Even though the diplomatic processes employed by the UN more closely mirrored conventional diplomatic methods, they have been referred to as "private" or "quiet" diplomacy. When the components of covert and overt diplomacy are combined, the diplomatic process at the UN is referred to as preventive diplomacy, also known as the diplomacy of reconciliation (Hovet, 1963). To foster rapprochement and uphold global peace, it blends conventional and modern diplomatic techniques.

Nepal's dedication to international peace and security is demonstrated by its participation in UN peacekeeping operations. Nepal has gained international recognition for its peacekeeping efforts by continuously providing one of the largest numbers of soldiers to UN peacekeeping missions (Peacekeeping, 2021). Nepal's reputation as a country committed to maintaining global peace and stability has been enhanced by its active participation in peacekeeping operations (Bhattarai, 2018). It draws attention to the variety of words—such as conference, public, multilateral, and parliamentary diplomacy—that are used to characterize the UN diplomatic process. It also includes subtle strategies like quiet, private, and preventive diplomacy, which illustrates the intricacy of the diplomatic strategies used by the UN.

Since joining forces in 1958, Nepal has been a reliable ally and contributor to UN peacekeeping missions. We are the nation that contributes the second most troops and police, and we are presently engaged in 12 missions. More than 151,000 Nepali troops have bravely, professionally, and with great distinction served under the UN banner. There are no national restrictions on how we deploy our contingent. We have always backed the UN Secretary-General's reform proposals, such as A4P Plus. Nepal has declared that it will not tolerate any form of sexual assault or exploitation. We guarantee the peacekeepers adhere to the strictest standards of behavior and discipline (Rijal, 2021). Nepal's significant and admirable contributions to UN peacekeeping operations, notably its sizable troop contingent and dedication to maintaining the highest moral standards. It emphasizes Nepal's strong opposition to sexual assault and exploitation by peacekeepers as well as its support for the reform measures of the UN Secretary-General.

Nepal sought to join the global organization with three primary goals in mind. First and foremost, Nepal desired to move past the period of isolationism that, despite its active participation in both World Wars, left the nation virtually unknown to the outside world for a century. Second, Nepal sought to present itself as a sovereign, independent country, particularly because during British colonial control, to some it appeared to be a part of India. Nepal thus wished to eliminate any uncertainty over its independence, as did its patriotic and proud people. Thirdly, Nepal desired to use the UN to further its modest goal of enhancing its reputation as an accountable member of the global community, which it accomplished (Acharya, 2022). Nepal's reasons for applying to the UN, highlight its goals of breaking free from isolationism, reclaiming its sovereignty, and improving its standing internationally. These objectives were achieved by Nepal's UN membership, which established it as a responsible player in the global community.

The core of Nepal's "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" foreign policy has been UN peacekeeping operations. Nepal has been able to present an internationalist image in international politics thanks to its participation in UN peacekeeping. It is also thought that Nepal's election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council twice, in 1969–1970 and 1988–1989, was strengthened by the fact that peacekeeping has always been beneficial in preserving and enhancing its independence and sovereignty (Bhattarai & Nepali, 2021). Nepal has improved its reputation as an internationalist actor by focusing its foreign policy on UN peacekeeping missions. Nepal's independence and sovereignty have historically been upheld by its participation in peacekeeping operations, which probably helped the country get elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

The Way Ahead

Parties and leaders vie for power in multiparty democracies, but this internal rivalry cannot obstruct the main players' ability to reach a minimal level of national agreement on the nation's crucial foreign and security policies as well as its essential national interests. The new foreign policy agenda for Nepal may have "Development Diplomacy" as its top priority after maintaining the country's critical interests (Simkhada, 2018). In multiparty democracies, while parties and leaders compete for power, they must still find common ground on crucial foreign and security policies and national interests. Nepal's emerging foreign policy agenda may prioritize "Development Diplomacy" after safeguarding its vital interests.

Nepal's poverty rate dropped from 49% in 1991 to 21% in 2016. Even if the rate of poverty has decreased, it remains the poorest country in the region. Moreover, Nepal shares borders with the world's poorest Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) around it, as well as the densely populated border areas of India and Tibet, China, to the north and south, respectively (Shrestha, 2023). As per the 2023 data published by Global Finance Magazine, Nepal, with a GDP-PPP(\$ of 5,101\$ ranks as the 42nd poorest country globally and the poorest country in Asia (Ventura, 2023). Although poverty has decreased, Nepal is the poorest nation in Asia, according to Global Finance Magazine, underscoring the necessity of ongoing development initiatives. Nepal faces a significant challenge in accelerating its development pace.

Nepal's worldview is a multifaceted fabric made up of several religious traditions, cultural variety, geopolitical issues, internal difficulties, and environmental consciousness. Because of its location between the two world's most powerful countries, China and India, this Himalayan nation must exercise caution when navigating the dynamic field of international relations. Nonetheless, Nepal's aspiration to play a constructive and significant role in the world arena is highlighted by its rich cultural legacy, dedication to environmental sustainability, and active involvement in international organizations.

To sum up, how Nepal is portrayed internationally is a complex and dynamic process that has a big impact on the nation's foreign policy, tourism, and international relations. The positive and negative aspects of Nepal's portrayal were identified through the examination of media content and narratives, highlighting the importance of truthful and impartial representations in influencing global attitudes. Important informants highlighted how government initiatives, diplomatic efforts, and media tactics manage and improve Nepal's reputation abroad. Nepal's economy and geopolitical power may increase as a result of fostering diplomatic contacts and drawing tourists from around the world. The study did note certain difficulties, though, including the necessity of ongoing image management and dealing with any potential prejudices and stereotypes that may still exist in media representation. Ultimately, Nepal's present and future will be determined by how well it portrage its international image.

References

- Acharya, A. (2014). Nepal's foreign policy and its options. *Asia Pacific Policy Studies*, 1(1), 189-198.
- Acharya, J. (2022, March). Rishikesh Shaha: A Historical Perspective. *Journal of Foreign Affairs*, 2(1), 175-182.
- Adhikari, D. R. (2018, July). A Small State between Two Major Powers: Nepal's Foreign Policy since 1816. *Journal of International Affairs*, 2(1), 43-74.
- Adhikari, M. (2012). Between the Dragon and the Elephant: Nepal's Neutrality Conundrum. *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, 25(1/2), 83-97.
- Adhikary, A. & Bhattarai, G. (2016). Dynamics of Nepali Nationalism: An Analysis of Nepali Nationalism after 2006. *MIRD Journal*, 1, 9-20.

- Atique, F. (1983). Nepal's Foreign Policy. *Pakistan Institute of International Affairs*, 36(4), 94-108.
- Bhattarai, D. (2022, March). Understanding the Primacy of Geography in the Conduct of Foreign Policy. *Journal of Foreign Affairs*, 2(1), 1-17.
- Bhattarai, K.U. (2016). Geopolitical Dimension of Nepal and its Impact in South Asia. *Journal of International Affairs*, 1(1), 63-75.
- Bhattarai, S. (2018). Nepal's Role in South Asian Regional Dynamics. *International Journal of South Asian Studies*, 6(1), 45-59.
- Dahal, D. R. (2007). Nepal's Foreign Policy: A Study of Non-Alignment and Neutrality. *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 12(1), 55-90.
- Giri, A. (2023, October 28). Concerns grow over Nepal's global image after Bhutanese refugee scam. *Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2023/05/09/concerns-grow-over-nepal-s-global-image-after-bhutanese-refugee-scam>
- Gurung, P. (2019). Religious coexistence in Nepal: A study of the interplay between Hinduism and Buddhism. *The Journal of Religious Studies*, 25(3), 101-120.
- Hamal, Y. B. (2023, October 28). Nepal's global image. *The Kathmandu Post*.
- Imran, S. (2021, Spring). Sino-Indian Strategic Balancing in Nepal. *Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad*, 41(1), 67-86.
- Institute of Foreign Affairs. (2021). Foreign Policy of Nepal: Orientation and Priorities. *Institute of Foreign Affairs*.
- Jr., T. H. (1963). United Nations Diplomacy. *Journal of International Affairs*, 17(1), 29-41.
- Khadka, N. (1993, Spring). Democracy and Development in Nepal: Prospects and Challenges. 66(1), 44-71.
- Khadka, N. (2017). Nepal's Role in Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War. *Strategic Analysis*, 41(1), 79-85.
- Klodkowski, P. (2016). Geopolitics and the issue of the broken national identity in Nepal. *Księgarnia Akademicka*, 40, 373-394.
- Kumar, D. (2019). Politics in Federal Nepal. In D. Thapa (Ed.), *The Politics of Change*. Himal Books for Social Science Baha and The Asia Foundation.
- Stiller, S. L. F. (1993). *Nepal: Growth of a Nation*. Human Resources Development Research Center.
- Stiller, S. L. F. (2017). *The Rise of the House of Gorkha*. Kathmandu: Educational Publishing House.

- Manchanda, R. (2012). Where India and China Meet: 'Periphery' Takes Centre Stage in South Asia. *India International Centre*, 39(1), 78-83.
- Michael, B. A. (2013). *State making and territory in South Asia*. Anthem Press India.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, N. (2017). Foreign Policy of Nepal. Government of Nepal.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2023). *Tourism in Nepal*. <https://mofa.gov.np/about-nepal/tourism-in-nepal/>
- Nepal, R. K. (2021, January). Book Review on Nepal Worldview. *Foreign Policy and Diplomacy*. 1(1). Institute of Foreign Affairs.
- Nepali, G. B. (2021, January). Ethos of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' in Nepal's contribution to UN Peacekeeping Operations. *Institute of Foreign Affairs*, 1(1), 123-150.
- Peacekeeping, U. N. (2021). *Contributors to UN Peacekeeping Operations*. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>
- Poudel, A. S. (2019). Tourism in Nepal: Current Status and Future Prospects. *Nepal Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 3(1), 76-91.
- Pulami, G. B. (2022, August 18). Mapping Nepal's Foreign Policy Behaviour towards Great Power Politics: A Study of Nepal's Foreign Policy Response to the Russia-Ukraine Crisis. *Nepal Public Policy Review*, 2, 147-179. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3126/nppr.v2i1.48400>
- Remarks by Hon. Dr. Minendra Prasad Rijal, Minister for Defense of Nepal at the Virtual 2021 Seoul UN Peacekeeping Ministerial. (2021). Seoul.
- Rose, L. E. (1963). Nepal's Foreign Policy: Balancing between Two Giants. *Pacific Affairs*, 36(1), 58-73.
- Shah, A. (2018). Shades of Sovereignty: Understanding Sovereignty in International Politics. *Journal of International Affairs*, 2(1), 19-42.
- Shrestha, B. (2017). Cultural diversity and national identity in Nepal. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22(4), 521-536.
- Shrestha, H. P. (2023, January 12). Poverty and Inequality Devastating South Asia. Kathmandu, Bagmati, Nepal. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/poverty-and-inequality-devastating-south-asia/#:~:text=Nepal%20has%20reduced%20poverty%20from,poorest%20country%20in%20the%20region.>
- Simkhada, S. R. (2018). *Nepal India China: Relations in the 21st Century*. Kathmandu: Biti Printing Press.
- Thapa, B. (2010). Nepal and the Cold War: A Neutrality Tested. *Himalayan Journal of Politics and Culture*, 5(2), 38-53.

Thapliyal, S. (2012, June). India and Nepal Treaty of 1950: The Continuing Discourse. *Sage Publications*.

The World Bank. (2023). *Nepal*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nepal/overview>

Vaidya, T. R. (1993). *Prithvinarayan Shah The Founder of Modern Nepal*. Kathmandu: Educational Publishing House.

Ventura, L. (2023, October 28). Poorest Countries in the World 2023. [Updated October]. <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world>

