

BRI AND NEPAL: A SOFT POWER DIPLOMACY ANALYSIS

A Dissertation

Submitted to

Department of International Relations and Diplomacy (DIRD)

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Tribhuvan University

in Fulfillment of the Requirement for the

Master's Degree

In

International Relations and Diplomacy

Submitted by

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August, 2019

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

I certify that this dissertation entitled “**BRI and Nepal: A Soft Power Diplomacy Analysis**” was prepared by **Sweta Khadka** under my supervision. I hereby recommend this dissertation for final examination by the Research Committee Master’s in International Relations and Diplomacy, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of MASTER’S IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY.

.....
Prof. Dr. Khadga K.C.
Supervisor
August, 2019

DECLARATION

I, Sweta Khadka hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it contains no materials previously published. I have not used its materials for the award of any kind and any other degree. Where other authors' sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere gratitude goes to MIRD Coordinator and the Head of the Department and my supervisor Prof. Dr. Khadga K.C. for his continuous support, guidance and encouragement from the beginning until the completion of my dissertation. I would also extend my thanks to all the staff members of MIRD, TU.

I would like to acknowledge all the authors of the papers I reviewed for this study. This study wouldn't be complete without their research. A heart full of thanks goes to my family who has continuously helped me and provided me moral and technical support which was very necessary for this study.

Lastly, I would like to thank all those who directly or indirectly helped me in the study and thesis preparation.

Sweta Khadka

ABSTRACT

China is Nepal's northern neighbor. It is the world's nation by geography and an economic giant while Nepal is medium sized country with a dwarf economy. Nations share a harmonious yet limited relation as they differ widely in culture, language and food. Also the landscape of their bordering area is mountainous and rocky making the movement of people and goods difficult. However with initiatives adopted by China under Belt Road Initiative (BRI) project, the bilateral relation is taking new heights with increased exchange at both government and public level.

BRI symbolizes China's unprecedented ambition for global connectivity as the project aims to lay the infrastructure for intraregional cross border connectivity. Nye categories power into three areas hard, soft and smart. Hard comprises of military and economy, soft power covers culture, values and foreign policy while smart power is a combination of both. BRI is an intercontinental infrastructural project centered on areas of hard power like trade and political cooperation among nation however it also has significant aspect of soft power attached as funds are allocate specifically to promote Chinese culture and values globally.

China's soft power diplomacy through BRI in Nepal has been a visible phenomenon.

Mushrooming confusions centers, student exchange program, scholarship programs, china study centers and language centers funded under BRI initiative confirms the above statement. China's soft power diplomacy will bear significant implication on Nepal therefore it is vital to study the BRI phenomenon closely and minutely.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBIN	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal Initiative
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CGTN	China Global Television Network
CPC	Communist Party of China
CSC	China Study Centre
IR	International Relations
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NCP	Nepal Communist Party
PRC	People's Republic of China
SAARC	South Asian Association For Regional Cooperation
SIIS	Sapporo Institute For International Solidarity
UN	United Nations
VOA	Voice o
f America	
WB	World Bank

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

This research aims to study the Nepal – China BRI partnership phenomena through the lenses of soft power diplomacy in Nepal. It was Joseph Nye who, in an article in *Foreign Policy* in 1990, first coined the term “soft power” and underpinned culture, political values and national foreign policies as its main constituents (Harris, 2018, pp. 17). BRI is an infrastructural project at the heart of which lies the mission of economic prosperity through wider cross border connectivity however it is also inclusive components relating to soft power diplomacy.

“When China wakes, it will shake the world”, Napoleon Bonaparte once remarked, wrote Kristof and Wudunn in their book *China wakes* published a decade ago, 1994 . This confirms that the rise of China was a foreseeable event a decade ago. In the 21st Century China has not just shaken but is ruling the world. Nation’s impact on international world order is irrevocable. China is the second largest economy in the world and is competing to be the global super power.

Against this backdrop China introduced Belt Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, the largest infrastructural project of the decade. BRI is a multifaceted project which aims to connect countries in Africa, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Russia, South Asia and South-east Asia along the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road by the construction of port facilities, air transport facilities, IT infrastructure, retail and distribution networks, as well as communications (Yagchi, 2013, pp. 45).

Nepal enthusiastically announced its participation in 2012. This partnership was followed by a list of joint agreements on various infrastructural projects along with establishment of various institutes, centers, and exchange programs fully funded by Chinese government with the aim of promoting Chinese culture in Nepal.

The project symbolizes China’s power and unprecedented ambition for growth. If completed, BRI transport projects could reduce travel times along economic corridors by 12%, increase trade between 2.7% and 9.7%, increase income by up to 3.4% and lift 7.6 million people from extreme poverty (James, 1967, pp.32).

As China is expanding and is asserting to take up leadership position on the international stage, it is concentrating its efforts to expand its soft power to harness cooperation needed for its growth. It attempts to promoting Chinese socialist values as an alternative to western values by offering “China development model” (Yagci, 2018, pp. 67).



Source: China council of foreign affairs

Power and diplomacy go hand in hand in International Relation. Jackson and Sorensen (2013, pp. 66) found that international politics is fundamentally a struggle for power while diplomacy is the art and practice of conducting negotiations between nations (James, 1967, pp.32). This relationship is carried out using various tools and methods. Both power and diplomacy is fundamental feature of global politics and its definition has evolved widened immensely with time

China's much-noted economic progress has been accompanied by a steady expansion in its cultural and diplomatic influence globally, especially in the developing world (Pan, 2006, pp.1). Connecting soft power in the light of China's BRI has been an interesting phenomenon globally. China has allocated enormous funds which are channeled through cultural exchange program, educational scholarships, establishment of study and language centers etc purely to deepen cooperation among people of BRI countries (Belt and Road Portal, 2019).

Nepal being a participant country of BRI has also experienced China's growing soft power. Reflecting on China's soft power expansion in Nepal under BRI through the lenses of Nye's three underpinning of soft power; culture, political values and national foreign policies we can say that there has been a significant progress.

Culturally, Nepal and China share an age old relation in terms of cultural exchange through art, architecture, spirituality and religion. Both nations have rich cultures and share a common affinity for Buddhism. Nepal is meeting ground of the cultural streams from the North and the South where Hinduism and Buddhism blend beautifully, resulting in a distinct culture which finds expression in temples and chaityas, homes and palaces, social ceremonies, religious festivals and fairs, customs and manners, and dancing and singing. (Shakya, 1954, pp.23). BRI

has institutionalized the age old cultural exchange. Sangroula writes concentrated efforts have been made by China to establish various institutions purely to promoted cultural exchange (2016, pp. 5)

Regarding foreign policy both Nepal and China have made efforts to ensure that the age old relation blossoms to new heights. China has always maintained limited yet cordial relationship and has not exerted any negative influence in Nepal's internal affairs. Soft power occupies major focus of Chinese foreign policy. The Economist writes, "A decade ago the Communist Party declared a new goal: to build "soft power", as a complement to its rapidly growing economic and military strength. It spends some \$10bn a year on the project, according to David Shambaugh of George Washington University—one of the most extravagant programs of state-sponsored image-building the world has ever seen (2017). As an extension of this policy China has adopted initiatives to extend its soft power in Nepal under BRI.

Likewise Nepal at the receiving end of has also responded well to create a favorable environment for China's policy of soft power expansion. Baral writes, a nations foreign policy is conditioned by various factors like geographical and strategic conditions, political obligations, economic necessities and historical ties (of race, region and culture) (2018, pp.19). Nepal's foreign policy is largely dominated by its size and geographic positioning. A small sized country, locked by India on East, West and South and China on North enthusiastically announced its participation in BRI with a hope of transcending its overly dependent relations with India through wider connectivity. Sangroula writes "Nepal is gearing up to ensure creation of feasible environment for the exchange to bloom" (2016, pp. 9).

Now reflecting on the third component of Nye's soft power; political values, China's although is marching toward becoming a super power by reaping growth from its economy which has championed values of liberalism at its core it is largely a communist nation. Country is ruled by one party which exercises complete control over the state. On the other hand Nepal's politics is fused with has many political ideologies however with its recent election it has received communist party as its ruling party by an overwhelming two third majority win.

Recent election in Nepal brought significant changes in political atmosphere of Nepal. Two leading communist parties united and received enormous success by winning 2/3 majority are set out for a five year term. Soon after commencing to power the majority government launched the constitution despite resistance from India by cutting through the bottle necks on various political affairs by the power its 2/3 majority. KP Oli, The Prime Minister of has set ambitious goals for radical economic reforms and is concentrating efforts in that direction in creating conducive environment at home and extending ties with nations in various international fronts. With this backdrop came BRI.

Therefore all the three aspects of Nye are soft power: culture, foreign policy and political values of both the nations seem to be working harmoniously or at least with minimal friction and thus creating a suitable environment to blossoming of Chinese soft power in Nepal. However critics project a grim picture for China soft power growth pointing that its growth will be hindered by its illiberal values.

Nye is of opinion that soft power is not something that can be constructed by state it can only flourish through civil society born out of free society which in the case of China is absent.

BRI partnership holds significant importance for both China and Nepal .Therefore research will study the initiatives adopted under BRI to with the intent of harnessing soft power and analyze the implication it will bear on Nepal political, social, economic and cultural aspects. It will also carefully examine the dynamics of China’s soft power growth.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

BRI is considered as a milestone event in terms of bilateral relation of Nepal and China. It also expected to influence the trilateral relation of Nepal, India and China and therefore the BRI as a phenomena holds primary importance for Nepal and worthy of study. China’s growing use of soft power in Nepal has been observed at many levels although much of the attention has been given to the political, geopolitical aspect rather than softer aspect like culture.

BRI phenomena have gained much attention in Nepal political spheres. Initially it only received a wide attention in terms of its geo political implication with its relation with India but gradually the shift has been towards analyzing the soft power aspect of BRI. It is a global phenomenon and needs to be studied intricately at domestic as well as international level. There are many literatures on China’s BRI in relation to soft power in general. There are also studies contributed to China’s BRI and its growing use of soft power in the south Asian region. However studies purely focusing on China’s BRI are growing use of soft power in Nepal against the backdrop of BRI is limited. This research gap, therefore, will be analyzed in this study. Therefore, the research will explore softer aspects attached to BRI in relation to Nepal.

1.3 Research Objectives

In connection with the research questions, the objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive assessment on the topic “BRI and Nepal: China’s soft power diplomacy

analysis”. The study will closely inspect the initiatives adopted under BRI to extend its soft power In Nepal.

The study has the following specific objectives:

1. To assess China’s soft power diplomacy in Nepal in relation to BRI.
2. To analyze the potential and implication of China’s soft power diplomacy in relation to BRI in Nepal.
3. To evaluate the success of China’s soft power diplomacy in relation to BRI in Nepal.

1.4 Research Questions

With reference to the statement of problem of this research proposal, the following research questions are set to be assessed:

1. What is soft power and how is China’s BRI adopting to it in relation to Nepal?
2. What are the measures adopted by China under BRI to flourish its soft power in Nepal?
3. What are the potential areas of common interest shared by Nepal- China which can be revived under BRI?

1.5 Organization of the study

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter includes background, the statement of the problem, research objectives, and research questions, significance of the study, definitions of key terms, and the organization of thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews relevant literatures on soft power, diplomacy and public diplomacy. This chapter will also explore the critical research works on these areas of study.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework and Research Methodology

This chapter includes the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research. It also sheds light on the research design, sources of data and methodology of the study. Correlating the concepts of soft power diplomacy with BRI this chapter will illustrate the phenomena extensively.

Chapter 4: BRI and Nepal: A Soft Power Diplomacy Analysis

This chapter will explore concepts of soft power and diplomacy and analyze the initiatives under BRI. It will also study traces history of bilateral relations of Nepal and China in specifically in the areas of soft power like culture, religion, political values to understand linkages and contribution in reviving the relations between nations.

The three elements of soft power underpinned by Nye will be carefully examined by critically analyzing the effectiveness of such initiatives adopted.

Chapter 5: Nepal and BRI

In this chapter researcher will dig deeper and into developing closer insight to Nepal and BRI partnership against the backdrop of China- Nepal historical ties. It will lay the ground work against which the BRI entered Nepal.

Chapter 6: BRI motivation and implication

This chapter will explore the various dimensions of BRI and its implication. Analyzing BRI from national, regional and global level to understand the motivation and driving factors of various actors in Nepal and probable influence it might exert in the China- Nepal partnership in BRI.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter will summarize the result, analyze the findings and explore the implications by evaluating the pros and cons of the initiatives under BRI aimed at promoting China's soft power in Nepal. The conclusion of the study will also be drawn in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The study begins by exploring the concepts of power and diplomacy independently and gradually correlates it with BRI. These concepts were broadly studied in the light of two major schools of thoughts in IR: Realism and Liberalism. Further the concepts of power was narrowed down to soft power with specific insights from the two major thinkers EH Carr and Joseph Nye, each representing particular school of thoughts. Their concept of power was studied minutely as it provided a base to examine China's soft power.

Further literatures on China- Nepal bilateral relation also studied to develop deeper understanding on the nature of the relations and factors influencing it. Nye underpins culture, political values and national foreign policies as the three major components of soft power. Literature elaborating on these components of Nepal and China was carefully inspected.

2.1 Concepts of soft power and soft power diplomacy

Before reflecting on China's soft power diplomacy in Nepal under BRI, it becomes vital to understand the concepts of power and diplomacy independently. Power and diplomacy go hand in hand in International Relation.

Soft Power

Power is the fundamental feature of global politics however its definition has evolved with time. Jackson and Sorensen (2013, p. 66) found that international politics is fundamentally a struggle for power. Social scientists have tended to conceptualize power as force and an action by one party to move another in an intended direction and to produce an outcome (Zartman & Rubin, 2007, p.7).

Further Guinote defines power as the potential to influence another in psychologically meaningful ways, inducing changes in behavior, opinions, attitudes, goals, needs, or values of another person or group (2007, p. 259). Therefore power has been defined in many ways.

As the discipline of international relations evolved, the rigid interpretation of power slowly started to change. Classical realists like Carr (1939), neorealist theorists such as Kenneth Waltz and his followers who became fashionable in the 1970s (Waltz, 1979) understood power completely in terms of coercion and payments only (Nye, 2017, p.2). However with the introduction of liberal economy scope of power widened. Liberalist relied on intangible aspects like freedom as state's true power. Hence there is a major divide in understanding of power in IR.

In an attempt to understand power and its type's researcher takes inferences from E. H. Carr and Joseph Nye, each representing particular school of thought. Carr was a Realist stated that military power; economic power and power over opinion were the three key forms of power in the international realm and maintains that while these are theoretically separable, in practice they are interdependent. Carr although acknowledged the importance of "power over opinion" and elaborated that its vital for state leaders to have the skill of persuasion to exert influence on power over opinion being a realist at core he placed military power; economic power central aspect of power as it ensures survival of the state by ensuring it with coercive power.

His concept of "power over opinion" was further elaborated and popularized as soft power by Nye (Yagci, 2018, p. 67) from the point of view of liberal ideology. Nye broadly categorized power into three types hard, soft and smart. Hard power comprised of elements capable of exerting coercive power like military and economy.

Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others, without the use of force, coercion or violence, but through intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values, institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority (Nye, 2008: 95). It focuses on persuasion and consent rather than coercion.

Another aspect of power was smart power which was the combination of both hard and soft powers. A phrase summarized the smart power rightly, “Talk softly but carry a big stick”. Further on smart power, Wilson says it is the capacity of an actor to combine elements of hard power and soft power in ways that are mutually reinforcing such that the actor's purposes are advanced effectively and efficiently (2008, p.123).

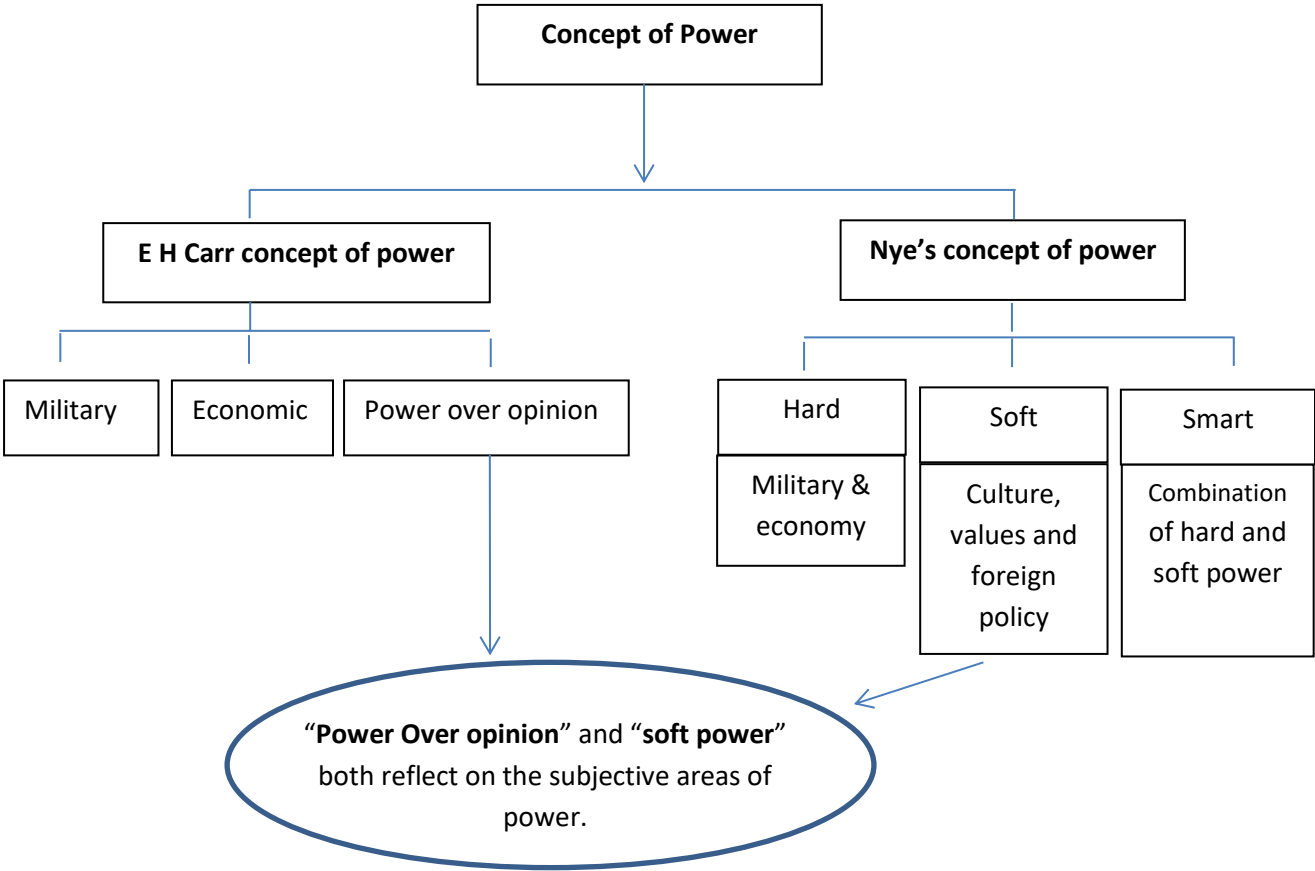


Figure 1: Concept of power

Therefore although both the thinkers acknowledged the idea of “soft power” they differed from in areas of “what constituents and who conducts this soft power diplomacy”. Unlike E.H Carr Nye stressed that eminence of a nation’s soft power relied on its credibility hence it should naturally grow out of civil society and media rather being state led. He believes that soft power is not something that can be constructed therefore state cannot be the prime actor. He advocated for civil society and media championing the state’s soft power.

Soft power diplomacy

Diplomacy is the art and practice of conducting negotiations between nations (James, 1967, p.32). This conducting of relationship is carried out using various tools and methods. Broadly depending upon the type of power used, diplomacy can be divided into hard and soft.

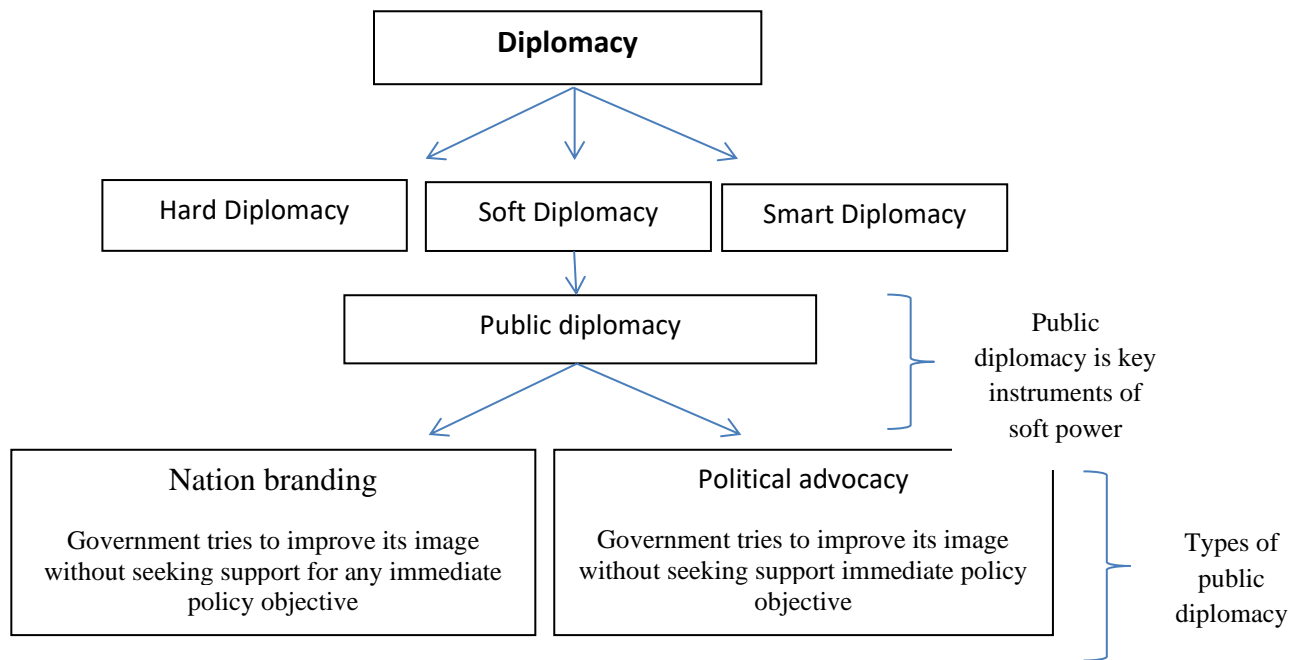


Figure 2: Diplomacy and its types

Hard diplomacy uses elements of hard power like military and economy while soft diplomacy uses elements of soft power ; culture, values and foreign policy. While a combination of both these types of power is referred as smart diplomacy.

Elaborating on conduct of soft power diplomacy, public diplomacy is the key instrument. Public diplomacy are of two types: nation branding, or cultural communication is the first type of public diplomacy in which the government tries to improve its image without seeking support for any immediate policy objective while the second type of public diplomacy is “political advocacy” which includes various strategies designed to garner likability for itself to build foreign support for immediate policy objectives.

With changing time and astounding advancement in technological advancements, soft power diplomacy has become pervasive and very effective tool of diplomacy in international relation. Public diplomacy and nation branding are also evaluated as instruments of soft power. Media is one of the most important channels for public diplomacy. Van Ham (2010) states that “Where culture is the glue keeping societies together, media offer the required infrastructure through which these social attachments are made and solidified” (p.91). Global media companies can influence other media spaces and eventually affect international politics.

Using elements of soft power to conduct soft diplomacy is a common among nations which has been practices since ancient times.

Nye, father of the concept of soft power takes much inference from “American soft power model” which was greatly built during the 1940’s in the aftermath of fall of USSR. United States rebuilt Europe through the Marshall Plan 1949 while simultaneously creating a web of international institutions to like United Nations, Bretton woods IMF to forge a system of global

governance and economics based on American values. On one hand it built necessary infrastructure to facilitate economic growth while on the other hand it promoted its nation's values globally through international institution. A parallel process of forging partnership based on infrastructural development and spreading of values gave USA the position of super power.

China is also following a similar path of extending its soft power globally. BRI lays down the vision of building a massive infrastructure while simultaneously establishing various centers, institute to harness Chinese soft power in the BRI partner nations. China offers an alternative model from the Western model of development.

2.2 China's Soft power and IR theories

Various schools of thoughts have a different perspective on soft power. In order to analyze China's soft power diplomacy researcher extracted insights from these theories to understand the concept of soft power and its contribution in the conduct of diplomacy.

Broadly there are two major approaches in IR, realism and liberalism. These two approaches differ radically in relation to understanding of soft power.

For Realist the world system is anarchic therefore military and economic power are absolute for survival. They place "state" as the central power of authority and the key actor in conduct of state affairs. The core idea is that the Realist believes that roots of international conflict lies in the imperfect human nature which results in anarchy therefore although they understand power in a variety of ways example military, economic and diplomacy but they ultimately emphasize on the coercive capacity as the detrimental of IR as it only control the anarchy. Soft power is only of value as long as it is backed by hard power and therefore only has a complimenting value not an independent existence.

Liberalism on the other hand is a political philosophy that privileged ideas of freedom and liberty. It inclines on the aspect of soft power greatly. It promotes equality and upholds democratic process and welfare states. Although it does not completely diminish the idea of survival but it also does not limit the possibility of other components.

It believes that survival is just too basic thing to strive for, it may lie at the core but “ideological and commercial advancement” also play an important role in state dynamics. It believes that the very aspiration “for more than survival” will therefore push them towards ideological and commercial advancement. Liberal values will harness human’s potential at its best. Democratic peace theory one of the major theories of describes the absence of war between liberal states by laying a strong foundation of interdependence and rising above anarchy.

Therefore both schools of thoughts of these types of power: hard and soft are acknowledged by both schools of thought however they differ in prioritizing it in terms of conduct of IR.

Liberalism inclines towards extensive use of soft power in conduct of state affairs both at domestic and international level while Realist only acknowledges the importance of soft power as long the state possess hard power in the conduct of state affairs.

Further in relation to conduct of diplomacy and use of soft power, there are also other schools of thoughts in IR which has attempted to analyze IR. Significant similarities between soft power concept and the Gramscian approach on hegemony is that according to Gramsci hegemony is “intellectual and moral leadership whose principal constituting elements are consent and persuasion rather than coercion” (Fontana, 1993: 140).

The ruling class has to use the private sphere, or civil society, to justify and maintain its dominance, and for this it needs the active consent of the subordinated class (Bieler and Morton, 2004: 92). Therefore concept of hegemony elaborates on the conduct adopted by nation to attain the position of a hegemon. It states that the power of hegemon use rest the ability of persuasion rather than coercion, which is linked to use of soft power.

Establishing linkages between the theories it was found that the divide between realism and liberalism in terms of understanding of power is filled by constructivism.

Constructivism is not a theory rather it is an ontology which provides a set of assumptions about the world and human motivation and agency. Its counterpart is not realism or liberalism. In the constructivists account, variable of interest to scholars eg military, economy, institutions are not important because they are objective facts of the world, but rather because they have a certain social meaning (Wendt 2000), these meaning is constructed from a complex and specific mix of history, ideas, norms, beliefs which a scholar must understand if they are to explain state behavior.

Constructivism lays importance in social context in which the relations among the nation evolve. Therefore to analyze explain state behavior it becomes vital to view it from the constructivist point of view. Iain Johnson argues that China has traditionally acted according to Realist assumption in IR, but based not on the objective structure of the international system but rather on specific accumulation of experience nation has historically.

2.3 Critical view on concept of soft power and China's soft power diplomacy

Limitation of the concept of soft power

Concept of soft power has received a global appeal. Literatures on soft power are mostly directed towards Nye. He has been the father figure in preaching the world on soft power and ways to expand it. Many Chinese scholars take inferences from Nye's concept. He has also delivered many speeches and attended state organized conferences on soft power elaborating on soft power and critically analyzing China's approach on Soft power.

However critics claim that his concept is not actually new to IR as it bears significant linkages and commonality to other concepts. Also the concept suffers from inadequateness in terms of purpose verifying it against other concepts with which it bears similarity in various areas.

E. H Carr concepts of "power over opinion" laid in 20th century bears a huge significance with Nye's "soft power". However since both the thinkers come from different schools of thought and vary widely in terms "who conducts soft power diplomacy".

Also the concept of soft power can be linked with concept of hegemony. Gramsci elaborates that in the concept of hegemony, political society and civil society are equally important because the exercise of hegemony needs "the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally without force predominating excessively over consent" (Gramsci, 1971: 80). This concept is very similar to that of Nye's concept as both concepts rest on aspects of persuasion over coercion and give equal importance to both political and civil society.

Further Nye's major underpinning of soft power "culture" which he said had a major capacity to exert influence has been stated by various branches of social science in their study of history and culture. Culture has been used by nations to maintain hegemony has been thoroughly studied

concept in history, anthropology and sociology. Rise of power has always been linked to domination over language and culture. Roman power and Imperial Britain in ancient times to the modern powers like former USSR and America both have exerted their influence through culture, institutional innovation and other factors.

In anthropology and sociology the word “assimilation” refers to the process whereby individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society. The process of assimilating involves taking on the traits of the dominant culture to such a degree that the assimilating group becomes socially indistinguishable from other members of the society.

Christopher Layne also claims that soft power coincides with IR theories; the role of norms is a part of democratic peace, institutionalism, and constructivism (Layne, 2010: 54). However, Nye explains that soft power is not a theory, it is an analytical concept which fits realist, liberalist, and constructivist perspectives; therefore, it should not be compared with other theories (Nye, 2010: 219).

. Criticism on China’s BRI soft power diplomacy

Fundamentally critics of China soft power stress on the fact that the “non-liberal values of communist China” will hinder China’s soft power growth. Nye says that much of the soft power was championed by the civil societies as they represent the voices of the general people but the power of control exercised by the Chinese government limits the growth of civil society which is ultimately believed to hinder the process of growth of Chinese soft power.

Nye advocates for “US model of soft power diplomacy” based on liberal values and says for any nation to expand its soft power growth has to imbibe liberal values. Nye is particularly critical of China’s soft power growth saying that much of it is state lead. He also outlines that although

China is moving towards progressive values it still exercised control over civil society and media the two most important catalyst of soft power. Therefore illiberal values have questioned the credibility of Chinese soft power.

Prime minister of Lee kuan also said “China will inevitably catch up to the U.S. in absolute GDP. But its creativity may never match America’s, because its culture does not permit a free exchange and contest of ideas. “Critics are of opinion that Nye disregard for China’s soft power confirms his bias. Further they are of opinion that “whatever has worked will only work” may not be true always as there are always room for newness.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework and Methodology

3.1 Conceptual Framework

Research centers on the concept of “soft power diplomacy”. It is the key concept which is studied in relation to China’s BRI. Components of soft power and conduct of soft power diplomacy are the two major area explored under this topic.

Soft power diplomacy adopted under BRI is illustrated in the following figure.

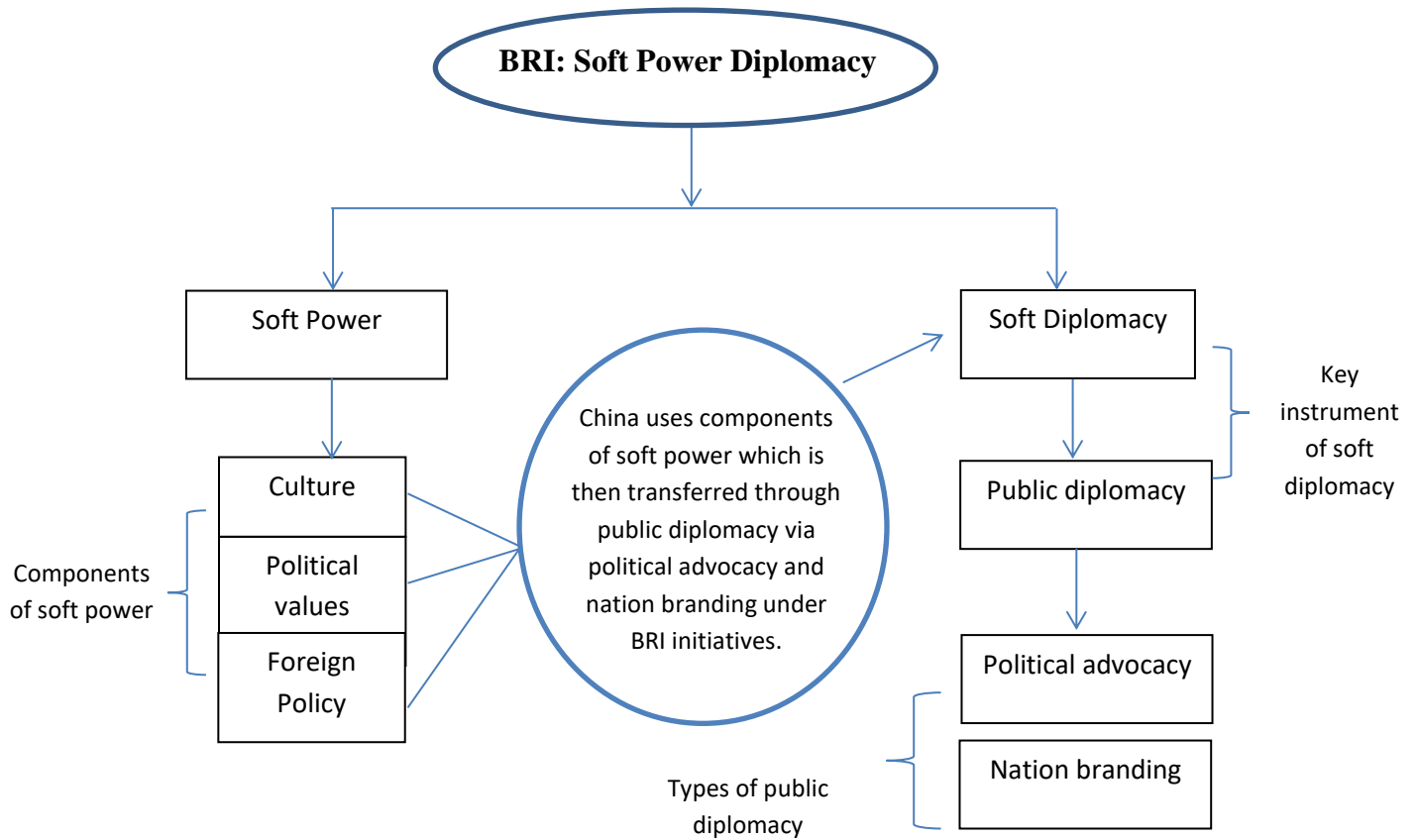


Figure 3 : Soft Power Diplomacy and BRI

Regarding what constituents of soft power, existing literatures is heavily dominated by Nye's concept in which he underpins: culture, political values and foreign policy of nation as three major component of soft power. These components have been widely accepted as the pillars of soft power.

However in relation to "conduct of soft power diplomacy" there has been mixed opinion. Nye proposition states that liberal values are perquisite of soft power growth while Critics are of view that it is not absolutely necessary that the world has to copy exactly the same model as the west to be successful. They claim that it is very notion that "western values are supreme and therefore cannot be replaced confirms the bias. In this regard concept of hegemony by Gramsci was also referred to understanding as how nations conduct of soft power diplomacy and why nations look for consent

Research has attempted to analyze these conflicting areas of soft power to make inferences on China's approach to soft power diplomacy under BRI in Nepal.

3.2 Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework of the research centers on three approaches Realism, Liberalism and Gramscian and constructivism. The research studied China's soft power diplomacy in Nepal against the backdrop of BRI therefore soft power diplomacy remains the key area of examination in relation.

These approaches although differ with each other on broader understanding of power however there is also an overlapping area of commonality regarding the concept of soft power. Research dealt in depth with these concepts and applied it to analyze the essence of China's soft power diplomacy under BRI.

Realism, liberalism and Gramscian approach on soft power gave a comprehensive understanding on soft power and soft power diplomacy in general as well as helped to evaluate China’s soft power diplomacy against the dominant view which was critical of China’s soft power growth.

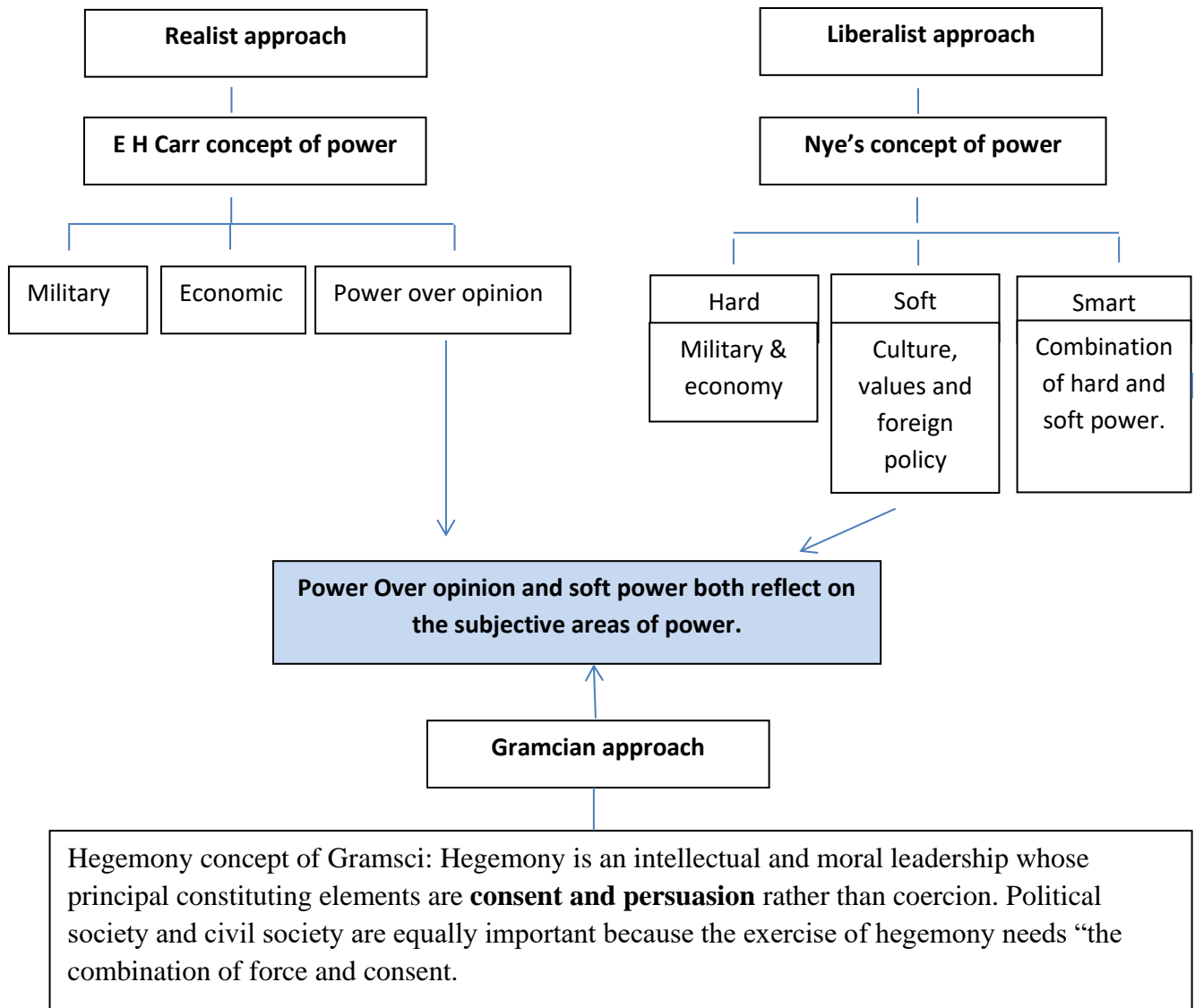


Figure 4: Approaches to Power in International Relation

3.3 Methodology

Research methodology entails the course framework of research. This study is qualitative in methodology. It primarily uses the secondary data.

3.4 Research Design

The research is qualitative in nature. The thesis is a library-based research.

3.5 Source of Data

The sources of data for this study are secondary. The published and unpublished data and information was accumulated from the library, the internet, journal, and newspapers.

3.6 Method

The descriptive study method was used for the study.

3.7 Limitations of the study

BRI is a massive project and includes multiple aspects. These multiple aspects are further are correlated with wide range of other components including trade, economics, politics, security etc. therefore the analysis of each aspect in a single study would be challenging. This study only focused on the elements of soft power attached with BRI in relation to China and Nepal relations.

3.8 Methodological Limitation

This is a qualitative in nature. Since this research was primarily based on secondary data, it lacks sufficient primary data.

3.9 Scope Wise Limitation

This study was limited in scope since it only explores the component to soft power attached to BRI in relation Nepal and China bilateral relations. However there are many other dimensions; trade, politics, geo-politics, security etc. to BRI which has significant influence in the bilateral relationship between the two nations.

3.10 Theoretical Limitation

This study is limited to the three theories related to soft power, realism, and liberalism and Gramscian approach.

Chapter 4: Belt and Road Initiative

4.1 Rise of China

China introduced Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) against the backdrop of the nation's rise.

Located in southeastern Asia, China is the third largest country in the world with a total area of 9,596,961 km² (3,705,407 sq mi), bordering 14 nations - Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, India, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Mongolia, and North Korea. It is the most populous country in the world with a population of nearly 1.37 billion (2014). As a cradle of civilization, the early hominids originated in the fertile basin of the Yellow River between 250,000 and 2.24 million years ago, and then established the first dynasty – Xian (Dunne & Schmidt, 2011, p. 87).

Nation's journey as modern People's Republic of China (PRC) begins with Mao Zedong when he established PRC in 1949 after 20 years of civil war. Soon he launched the "Great Leap Forward", a five-year economic plan. Farming is collectivized and labor-intensive industry is introduced (Chang, 1949, p.132). The drive produced economic breakdown and was abandoned after two years. Disruption to agriculture is blamed for the deaths by starvation of millions of people following poor harvests.

From 1977 Deng Xiaoping emerged as the dominant figure among pragmatists in the leadership. Under him, China undertook far-reaching economic reforms (Liu, 2000, p.132). Further 1990's China's "Open-door policy" opens the country to foreign investment and encourages development of a market economy and private sector and by the end of the decade International Monetary Fund (IMF) ranks China's economy as third largest in the world after the US and Japan.

Since the inauguration of Dengist reforms in the late 1970's, China's economy has gradually been slipping from center to provinces, plan to market, and public to private (Fisher, Uri, 1981, p. 11). In Principle, China remains a communist party state- a Leninist system committed to social transformation through elite planning and mass compliance. In practice, the party center is refurbishing some policy instruments with which to continue to guide the system, albeit more selectively and less directly.

4.2 Xi's China and BRI

In the fall of 2013, President Xi Jinping put forward the strategic framework of building the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and a counterpart "21st Century Maritime Silk Road," collectively referred as "One belt One Road" which later was commonly known as Belt and Road initiative. This initiative is very personal to President Xi. As with his rapid consolidation of political power, the striking feature of Xi's efforts in this area is the speed with which he is moving to put his own stamp on China's foreign affairs (Johnson, 2016, p.1).

BRI is widely seen as China's effort to increase its global influence, primarily through the financing and construction of rail, sea and other transportation routes running from Asia to Europe and Africa. With the introduction of BRI, China's approach to International diplomacy is changing. Having long been bound by deceased paramount leader Deng Xiaoping's injunction to maintain a "low profile" abroad, Beijing has in recent years begun to advocate a greater role for itself in the international order. BRI is emblematic of the shift in China's "going out" strategy in keeping with its effort to transform China's economic development model. Its soft power diplomacy is an integral part of this transformation which is imbibed in BRI.

In relation to Asia, following the Asian financial crisis in 1997-98 and again after the global financial crisis of 2008-09, Beijing used a combination of financial support, and appeals to “Asian solidarity” to build goodwill with its neighbors (Huisken, 1946 p. 13). China has been advancing bilateral engagements avoiding formal commitments that might constrain its advancement globally. China since 1990 has been an active participant in regional economic institution building, particularly in Southeast Asian nations.

The Xi Jinping leadership team made an early and deliberate effort to improve overall coordination and strengthen economic ties with neighboring countries all around its periphery. In particular, it has begun heavily investing, both rhetorically and financially in regional connectivity a key ASEAN priority. But China has repeatedly claimed that its development model is a win-win game. Chinese policy documents and leaders argue that central goal of China’s diplomacy is to create a peaceful and stable international development.

Xi’s vision of the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” is the essence of what he calls “Chinese dream”. In its most basic exposition, the great rejuvenation means that the PRC by 2049 intends to restore itself to a regional position of primacy alongside establishing its ideological foundation so early in his tenure.

If China does this well, it could attain President Xi Jinping’s “Chinese Dream,” not just for the Chinese people but for the entire world. It could also effectively lead to the Chinese Dream being seen as morally and intellectually superior to the American Dream (Lim, 2018). For all of the countries within its geographical coverage, the BRI is like a membership club to participate in the Chinese Dream. The BRI network could thus become an exclusive pipeline for these economies outside of China to access, realize and enjoy the trickle-down effect of the Chinese

Dream, without the need to physically reside in China, unlike the many legal and illegal immigrants who have had to travel to the US to realize the American Dream. When the BRI is completed, more than half of the world will effectively be connected to China politically, culturally and economically.

4.3 BRI and soft power

China after attaining the position as economic giant is now gearing up for a global presence. Emerging from a shell of defensive diplomacy dating back decades, China is now engaging with the world using its economic strength popularity to make gains. At the core of China's global movement lies a robust and thriving economy which is demanding for new markets, natural resources, and partners. BRI was launched against this back drop. It was founded principally on the same idea; expanding China's growth globally.

China is gearing up to make necessary arrangements to cater to the nation's need for continued growth. Under BRI China has adopted soft power diplomacy tool to engage in fostering deeper relations with partner nations. China is believed to spend billions of dollars to boost its international image by the use of following tools:

1. Investment
2. Peacekeeping and Humanitarian aid
3. Exchange Programs
4. Diplomacy
5. Multilateral Institutions (Albert, 2018)

All of these components have been included in BRI which has yielded significant results in the past few years. China efforts although is driven by its own national interest it also bears benefits to the partnering nations. China although assertive but attempts to avoid direct confrontation or

competition with the major West powers as it does not want to be drawn into any rifts that will hurt its economy. It aims to harness cooperation for BRI by maintaining a non-confrontational friendly and win-win diplomacy with BRI member.

It desires to be perceived as a friendly and benevolent nations and not a threat to nay nation despite its unprecedented economic and military growth (Plank, 2015). This is where it uses the tools of soft power diplomacy. China realized that for BRI to reap maximum benefits it is important that China engages in deeper integration which can only be brought through soft power diplomacy.

Gradually the cross border integration is facilitated by China's soft power diplomacy has been visible however China is still exploring ways to develop a roadmap under BRI for soft power expansion with Chinese characteristics. It may not (yet) have a 'grand public diplomacy strategy', but looking at the scope and variety of Chinese public diplomacy and considering how well-thought-out many of the actions are, one cannot deny China's soft will gain much success (Kurlantzick, 2007, p. 38).

However rise of China and its expansion of soft power under BRI has been viewed critically specially by the West. The fundamental question posed to China is its illiberal values as opposed to the western world. Dominant role played by an openly illiberal state in a global liberal order brings into open question the eminence of "liberal" component of the liberal international order.

So what is liberal international order? In its most restrictive sense, it requires some kind of commitment to open trade. A more expansive conception stresses multilateralism over unilateralism and bilateralism, and pursues cooperative attempts to address global commons problems. At its broadest, it entails a preference for liberal rights and democratic institutions into

international order (Nixon, 1981, p. 4). Nixon's definition of liberal international order "preference for liberal rights and democratic institutions into international order" has been given prime importance.

China has a strong communist history which over time has lessened but domination of ideology is still prevalent in almost over every aspect of the nation. During the process of its rise China reformed its economy without substantially reforming its political system. The nation gained massive economic growth under such reforms. Now in its attempt to expand its growth and power beyond borders it is facing challenges in political front in relation to the differences it has with the West.

In this sense China is struggling with the West specially America which is regarded as the champion of soft power. In a general sense, the American post-war order has combined aspects of all three however in case of China although it has made significant economic reforms in that direction its political fronts still lie very far from what is dominantly conceived as a default trait of nation engaging in international liberal order.

However many developing nations are looking to China and its strong state system, as an alternative to the economic liberalization of 'the West'. Findings is that developing countries have a significantly more positive view of China's rising influence than developed countries suggesting that China's soft power strategy in Africa, Asia, Latin America are yielding results.

Discourse on soft power within China's strategic studies community offers a unique window into Chinese strategy to establish relationship with the world. From the late 1990s, and especially in the last few years, there has been an upsurge of interest in the concept of "soft power" within China's strategic studies community (Lim, 2012, pp14).

In the 1990's, following the publication of Nye's book, *Bound to Lead*, the world was familiarized with the concept of "soft power". Although the details of the concept mainly the major components attributing to soft power was debated but basic hypothesis that a nations soft power compliments its hard power by giving it the ability to influence behavior of others states found a receptive audience globally as well as China. The concept found attention in academic circle in China.

After several years of debate about soft power, or *ruan shili*, among Chinese academics, China's then president, Hu Jintao, spoke up on the topic in 2007, telling a party congress that China needed to build it. Mr Hu's successor, Xi Jinping, has stepped up the effort (Furer, 2017). In 2013, about a year after he took over as China's leader, Mr Xi convened a meeting of the ruling Politburo to discuss soft power. Its members agreed that it was a vital ingredient of Mr Xi's "Chinese dream of the great revival of the Chinese nation"—the term "Chinese dream" being one of Mr Xi's favourites (Zartman & Rubin, 2007, p.12).

It is China's rapid economic expansion—and the country's need for natural resources, export markets, and political influence—that has led it to step up its engagement with developing countries in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America and in devising a strategy for engagement, soft power was regarded as an important element (Patton, 2005, p. 80).

Conceptualization of soft power development as a key component of China's grand strategy, as well as three particular means through which soft power resources are envisioned as useful in service of larger strategic objectives. China's soft power expansion strategy is all centered on how various forms of soft power can be developed and applied to attain foreign policy objectives. Researches are being conducted at major universities including Fudan research

centre, Tsinghua etc along with much effort from various ministries to forge academics on developing roadmap for China's expansion of soft power.

China tracks and measures its power against other nations through "comprehensive national power" (Keane, 2010, p.131). This analytical construct was developed in 1980s and components like economy, military, natural resources and social development were set as indicators. Later in 2000s "soft power" was added in the toolbox.

Guo Linxia, professor at Shandong University argued that there was a need to strike a "balance" between hard and soft power as components of CNP, and that the development of both should proceed concurrently (2012,p.2). Interest in soft power came with the realization that hard power alone would not be sufficient for China to reach the level of a global power. China successful rise in this decade will be significantly determined by its ability to exert its soft power.

Fang Changping, scholar at SIIS explains, "China hopes that, through soft power, it can achieve its most important goals, which are, at a regional and global level, to mitigate the 'China threat theory', earn the understanding of the international community, and garner support for China's peaceful development (2018,p.26).

China's soft power strategy centers on 'harmony'. This strategy was evoked in Premier Wen Jiabao's declaration that China's rise will not come at the cost of any other country, will not stand in the way of any other country, nor pose a threat to any other country'(Giri, 2012, pp 4).

In an interview, Nye elaborated on China's approach on soft power as follows:

China believes that it is not going to be a global power unless it has the ability to attract. I think China realizes that it isn't enough to have economic and military power; it's more effective if you combine that with soft power. I think that China has a three part strategy. The first is to

develop the content of Chinese soft power then there is more traditional ideas of culture: art, music, literature, Chinese traditional medicine, Confucianism etc. The third part of the strategy is developing the vehicle or the mechanisms by which China can project this soft power (2015,pp 45).

China realizes the primacy of establishing good relations with its periphery for regional economic and security stability. China has actively participated in or has assumed leadership roles in the creation of regional organization for economic and security cooperation like ADB, SAARC, ASEAN, the Shanghai cooperation etc. China's soft power is strongest in Southeast Asia and now it is gearing up to expand its influence in South Asia.

CHAPTER 5: Nepal and BRI

BRI envisions regional and global integration which makes it more than an infrastructural project and creating room for significant political and geo-political implication. Especially in relation to Nepal, a landlocked country (Southeast and West by India and North by China) is having difficult time balancing it two rival neighbors each fighting for it dominance in the region at large and particularly in its neighboring states. In order to analyze the current bilateral exchanges between Nepal and China under BRI aimed at cultivating China's soft power diplomacy in Nepal it was vital to study its historical relation to explore the areas where the nations have made exchanges in the past to understand the factors which has contributed in influencing the present day situation of Nepal-BRI partnership.

This chapter begun by briefly exploring the ancient relations among China and Nepal to understand the nature of relationship among the nation and factors influencing the current initiatives targeted to China soft power diplomacy analysis under BRI. This exploration was followed by the study of the present day relation between the nations which marked the beginning of BRI partnership. In the third section the researcher dwelled deeply in to Nepal- BRI partnership specifically through the lenses of Nye underpinning of soft power diplomacy: culture, political values and foreign relations.

5.1 Nepal - China historical ties

Political Relations

Nepal and China have a long history of political and economic relations. Nepal is a land-locked country situated between two emerging and fast-growing economies India (South, East, and West) and China (North). The first recorded official relations between Nepal and China dated

from the middle of the seventh century, although unofficial contracts between these two countries began in the fifth century (Sharma, 1967, p.76). The two countries formalized their relations on 1 August 1955 by establishing diplomatic relations. Nepal's relations in the North had been limited to Tibet since time immemorial.

The political relationship is primarily based on two pillars: Nepal's need for balancing India's over dominance on its territory and China's need for assurance that Nepal adheres to the "One China Policy". The series of co-operation and conflict existed between Nepal and Tibet (Baral, 1950, p.34). However, the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1950 changed the existing situation and Nepal needed to step up in order to maintain relations with its now giant northern neighbor, China. Diplomatic relation was established in the year 1955 with exchanging resident ambassadors in 1960.

In 1956, the treaty of Thapathali (Treaty of 1856 between Nepal and Tibet) was replaced by a new treaty, under which Nepal recognized China's sovereignty over Tibet and agreed to surrender all privileges and rights granted by the old treaty (Acharya, 2012, p.151). Some of the most prominent figures who immortalized Nepal-China relations are Fa-hsien, Hsuan-tsang, Wang Hsuan-Tse, Buddhahadra and Arniko (Manandhar, 1999). Both countries have relentless faith on the ideals of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence.

The successful conclusion of a boundary agreement in 1978, Chinese assistance in Nepal's economic and technical development and joint cooperation in international forums, including the United Nations have greatly increased mutual understanding leading to still closer cooperation between the two countries. It is commendable that all disputes, claims and counter-claims were settled in accordance with the principles of equality, mutual benefit, friendship, mutual

understanding and accommodation. Nepal is firmly committed to One China policy and is also committed not to allow its soil to be used for any inimical activities against China.

Economic Relations

Nepal and China economic relation was established in ancient times as a local trade between Tibet and Kathmandu. The first attempt to enhance the economic cooperation between Nepal and China was legally made only after the signing of agreement on trade between two countries on 20 September 1956(MOFA). The establishment of the Inter-Governmental Economic and Trade Committee (IGETC) in October 1982 was the next step to increase the trade between two countries. China economic cooperation can be broadly analyzed under four categories: trade, grant aid, investment and tourism (Rokka, 1978, p.27).

Over the past 50 years, with China's financial and technical assistance, more than 30 projects have been completed in Nepal. As recognized by people of all circles in Nepal, these projects have played a constructive role in the social and economic development of Nepal. The Arniko Highway, the Ring Road, Prithivi Highway, Kathmandu-Bhaktpur road, Gorkha-Narayanghat road, Sunkoshi Hydro Project, the Birendra International Convention Centre, Hetauda Cotton Mill, Bansbari Leather and Shoe Factory, Bhaktpur Brick and Tile Factory, Bhrikuti Paper Mill, Lumbini Sugar Mill, Gorakkali Rubber Udhyog etc are some examples of such projects assisted by Chinese government(Prasad,2015, p. 30).

The 2012 'Sino Nepalese Joint Statement 'called on both China and Nepal to increase common economic development, trade, tourism, and co-operation in hydropower and infrastructure development- all types of exchange that require Chinese financial aid, investment and technical expertise to achieve as a means to increase co-operation between China's Tibet Autonomous

Region (TAR) and Nepal and to ensure security co-operation between the two areas. China has also aided Nepal during the times of emergency and has always been a loyal friend (“Bilateral Relations”, 2012, p.151).

Socio-cultural Relations

Nepal has been a meeting ground of the cultural streams from the North and the South where Hinduism and Buddhism have been happily blended, resulting in a distinct culture which finds expression in temples and chaityas, homes and palaces, social ceremonies, religious festivals and fairs(Reeves, 2000,p.21). Around 600–650 CE, Nepalese Princess Bhrikuti married Srong San Ghampo, the earliest known Emperor of Tibet. Princess Bhrikuti as a part of her dowry, is widely believed to have brought Buddhist relics and Thangkas to Tibet, and therefore, is attributed for establishing Buddhism as the Royal religion in Tibet. Gradually Buddhism spread across the nation and became a binding component of Nepal – China relation.

Lord Buddha’s teachings have profoundly impacted the sociocultural lives of the Nepalese and Chinese. In order to sustain the deep rooted cultural relations at present times, the two countries have reached an agreement on cultural cooperation in 1999 (Nayak, 2014, p.44).

Further under BRI, efforts have been concentrated to deepen people to people relation by building upon the commonality of social cultural ties. Chinese Embassy has been hosting cultural fairs in Kathmandu since 2003. It organized China Festival in Kathmandu in 2005 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Various activities have taken place since. Various student exchange programs, conferences- academic, business, media, development, cultural etc. have been held extensively in recent years all to strengthen Sino-Nepal socio-cultural ties.

A memorandum of understanding was signed by Shankar Nath Rimal, general secretary of the council and Will OOI, president of the association amid a programme held on Saturday on the occasion of the first “Belt and Road” China-Nepal Cultural Festival.

The MoU stressed the need for maintaining constant and close contact to promote the exchanges of artists and art works between the two countries. Following the signing of MoU, Rimal and OOI said that the agreement would help enhance and strengthen people-to-people and state-to-state relations between the two countries through the exchange of cultures.

5.2 Evolving nature of Nepal China Relations

Since the inception of the communist Government in China in 1949, China attempted to develop her relations with Nepal and since the conclusion of the Sino-Nepalese Friendship Treaty in 1956; her relationship with Nepal had been steadily developing barring minor instances of untoward interludes. Until the 1950s, connectivity between the two countries was rather poor. In this light, China signed an agreement in 1961 to construct a 112-km highway linking Kathmandu to the Nepal-China border in Kodari.

This was a vital step towards breaking Nepal’s total dependence on India. For over six decades, this highway served as Nepal’s only viable trade link with China. Border issues are always a threat to bilateral relations. But Nepal and China resolved their border issue amicably in 1961. Since then, there has been no major border dispute between the two neighbors, which has contributed to peaceful ties. (Although some minor border disputes remain.) In 1962, when India and China fought a war, Nepal decided not to take sides. It took the same stance in 2017 when its two neighbors were locked in a dispute over the contested territory of Doklam. On both occasions, China supported Nepal’s position (Nepal Country Guide 2012, p.136).

When King Birendra proposed that Nepal be declared a 'zone of peace' in 1975, China was the first country to support it. Import of military hardware from China in 1988 is considered one of the most important milestones in bilateral relations. When Nepal was a monarchy, China worked closely with the palace to safeguard its security interests in Nepal, mainly related to Tibet.

Conventionally, China has only sought to retain its position on its side of the Hinalayas, and would not intervene in the other side unless it would identify a threat to its security. China's attention towards Nepal grew with Nepal's political instability, especially since the Maoist insurgency in 1996. Observing the increasing engagement of external forces in Nepal, China was compelled to make increasing inroads into Nepal.

The abolishment of the monarchy in 2008 marked a turning point in China's policy on Nepal. After 2008, China started cultivating relations with various Nepali political parties and became more vocal about its security interest. Similarly, ahead of the Beijing Summer Olympics in 2008, Tibetan refugees living in Nepal staged large demonstrations, which led China to work actively on its Nepal policy (Reeves, 2016, pp 65-78). "The post-conflict political transition in Nepal coincided with large-scale anti-China protests between March and August 2008 by Tibetan refugees living in Nepal—the most organized demonstrations in the past 50 years," writes Nihar R. Nayak, a research fellow at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, in his book *Strategic Himalayas*. "In 2008 Tibetan separatists in fact tried to cross the border into the TAR to disrupt the journey of the Olympic torch to the Mount Everest and the summer Olympic Games in Beijing. This forced China to redraft its Nepal policy." After 2008, China began showing active interest in Nepal's political affairs, mainly in provinces, and the frequency of high-level visits from China to Nepal increased drastically.

Gradually progressing from high level visits China has attempted to transform its engagement with Nepal in a deeper level. Driving motivation for which is China's global outward movement. China willingness to move closer to Nepal was further supported by Indo-Nepal rift during Nepal's formulation of its constitution. India unannounced economic blockade in 2015 caused the Nepal incumbent leadership to further incline towards China. Signing of the Transport and Transit Treaty between Nepal and China in 2016 against the backdrop of India's undeclared blockade was another important development. The treaty, at least in principle, has paved the way for Nepal's use of Chinese ports and other routes for third-country trade, and ended Indian monopoly on Nepal's supply system.

Soon Nepal and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on 12 May 2017, which marked another milestone in bilateral relations. The major thrust of the MoU is to promote mutually beneficial cooperation between Nepal and China in economy, environment, technology and culture. Negotiations are underway between the two countries to finalize projects under the BRI and their investment modalities.

5.3 Global, regional and national context of BRI in relation to Nepal

Regional and global context

Against the back drop of BRI, Nepal and China have embarked upon an intimate relationship. Advancement of relation with China in a time when it is a global power and a regional giant has not gone unnoticed. USA and India have denied partnership with China in BRI. In the aftermath of BRI and other significant efforts adopted jointly by Nepal and China to solidify their relations there has been a chain of events clearly appearing to be in reaction to deepening of this bilateral

tie. US's Indo pacific strategy, MCC and India's significant move in Lipulakeh were therefore not mere coincidences.

Viewing these event from surface make it appear to sudden but looking at it through the lenses of international relations and diplomacy is completely surprising. China holds a significant position in the world and therefore any move by it is ought to be observed and responded accordingly specially by USA at global level and India at regional. Further geographical positioning of Nepal itself is of great importance to USA, China and India alike. Placed strategically between Indian subcontinent and Central Asia has put Nepal in place to play the role of an intermediary buffer in both regions. These regions are expected to be the heart of world economy in coming decades and therefore influence in the region is of immense importance.

The strategic geographic position of Nepal emerged with the discovery of Kerung pass in the seventh which linked Nepal directly with Tibet was the point of origin of "strategic friendship" between China and Nepal .Kerung pass replaced the existing route to Tibet via Kashmir Valley and made Nepal a strategic buffer between India and China. Nepal's position for China from a small remote neighbor to a strategic nation was thus an outcome of the Kerong pass.

In words of Rose and Fisher (1970) "The opening of Kerong pass changed the position of Kathmandu Valley radically from remote corner to strategic way station with the capacity to exercise a high degree of control over traffic between the markets of India and those beyond the Himalayas. This position of Nepal has vitally affected its subsequent history down to the present day.

China, India and USA fully aware of the strategic importance of Nepal, have accordingly extended their diplomacy in various forms at different stages of time. USA has directed its

foreign policy towards Indo Pacific and Asian region to contain China if not counter it. In response to the recent stir created on its Indo Pacific Strategy and MCC, American embassy, Kathmandu clearly stated that MCC (Millennium Challenge Corporation) to be an integral part of Indo Pacific strategy; a policy adopted by USA towards Asian Pacific nations including Nepal to exert in these nations and region at large to prevent them from falling into China's dominance.

Dominance on this region is peculiarly important because of South China Sea which holds immense importance both commercially and politically. Enormous funds channeled through MCC are clearly to tighten its friendship with Nepal in order to prevent it from inclining towards China excessively.

China's understanding of the Himalayan kingdoms has always been consistent and clear. Mao chairman of the party realizing the importance of Himalayan kingdoms envisioned connecting Nepal, Bhutan, Arunachal, Sikkim and Ladakh through railway therefore the concept of railway connecting Nepal and China is not completely new (Sharma, 2006, p.81). Although Mao's acumen as a leader for envisioning such a policy was applauded but it could not be materialized. Such vision demanded enormous resource which at that time China struggling with poverty and starvation could not afford.

Now China in every way has the capacity to turn its dreams into reality. Extracting from Mao's vision and taking inspiration from ancient silk route Xi's China has laid down the grandiose BRI. With regard to South Asia, China has identified Myanmar, Pakistan and Nepal as entry points and has concentrated efforts in strengthening relations. Nepal is important to China for it is both buffer and entry point in South Asia.

BJP's India has continued the role of "Big Brother" in the continent as its predecessor only with added zeal inspired by their conservative roots and strong religious inclination. Extracting from articles published by Hari Roka in Kantipur, Duo-Amit Shah and Narendra Modi do not like Gandhi's religious secularism and Nehru's non-alignment foreign policy which was founded on principles of international cooperation rather adhere to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's belief of merging independent neighboring states in India, if required by the means of force. They expressed their reverence for Patel by installing his statue; world's largest. Driven by the Patel's belief they opt for BIMSTEC in place of SAARC and BRI, gives importance to BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal partnership) because in absence of Pakistan it can exert its dominance easily.

With sweeping victory in recent election the party is fully geared to continue in the direction of their belief. Recent move on Kashmir, citizenship bill and recent incident on JNU all paves way towards the becoming of "Intolerant India". In case of Nepal, 2015 blockade and recent incident on Lipulake moves along the same line. India claims of "special friendship" with Nepal and has and will always tap on it to ensure its grip on the nation. There is no denying that the history of Nepal-India relation is such that the intricacies that has built overtime has made Nepal too dependent on India and thus difficult for it to attain a neutralist posture but the fact remains at present time have a blind eye to the Dragon is also not affordable.

National context

Nepal signed MOU on BRI- 2017. Although both nations share common interest of wider trade through BRI, there are also other driving forces behind this partnership. For Nepal it is the opportunity for interregional connectivity through BRI, which is of immense value as it has long endured the price for its dependency on India. Nepal shares borders with India (South, East and

West) and China (North) and since the northern side is mountainous and rocky Nepal practically depends on India for all the trade and connectivity. This overly dependent geographical relationship dominates every aspect of Nepal; political, economic, socio cultural or in other words Nepal's both soft and hard powers are in total grip of India.

Recent election in Nepal brought significant changes in political atmosphere of Nepal. Two leading communist parties united and received enormous success by winning 2/3 majority are set out for a five year term. Soon after commencing to power the majority government launched the constitution despite resistance from India. Nepal suffered India's blockade in a time when the nation had merely recovered from earthquake. Separatists forces were raging high in the name of federalism. Cutting through the bottle necks on various political affairs by the power its 2/3 majority. KP Oli, The Prime Minister of has set ambitious goals for radical economic reforms and is concentrating efforts in that direction in creating conducive environment at home and extending ties with nations in various international fronts. With this backdrop came BRI.

BRI presents Nepal with the opportunity to break from its overly dependence with India and establish independent trade relation with the world. This is why it is vital that the relationship between Nepal and China goes beyond mere trading partners and it blooms in the areas of deeper social cultural and political ties.

Nepal signed other 7 agreements and treaties

1. Trade and transit treaty in 2019 : Protocol on Implementing Agreement on Transit Transport gives Nepal access to sea
2. Handover Certificate of Grant-Aid for the Repair and Reinforcement Project of the Existing China-aided Projects

3. Agreement on Economic and Technical Co-operation
4. Minutes of Meeting on Strengthening Assistance Co-operation
5. Agreement on Co-operation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters
6. MoU on Co-operation on Standardization
7. Agreement on Preventing the Theft, Clandestine Excavation and Illicit Import and Export of Cultural Property (myRepublica,2017)

A closer tie with China is expected to neutralize the extreme dominance of India influence. However it is to be noted that the ties with India are incomparable to that of China as the relation of India and Nepal is bonded by culture, matrimony, language and religion. While in case of Nepal's relation with China there is very limited contact. Buddhism is the only overlapping area of commonality among the nations and the nations differ widely in the areas of culture, language, food etc. Realizing these differences China has adopted initiatives to promote its culture as to establish a deeper relation it becomes vital that the nation are familiarized with each other's culture. Deliberate efforts are directed in this direction through BRI. Nepal at the receiving end is attempting to generate necessary condition for Chinese soft power to flourish. Initiatives under BRI aiming to facilitate in building relationship are given prime importance by the government with necessary engagement at both state and public level.

In relation to Nepal much of the analysis on BRI concerns the geo-political aspect as it is expected to exert significant changes in the relation Nepal holds with India, its age old neighbor .Nepal is land locked by two giants India on three sides and China on one side. It acts as a buffer between these arch rival giants. Nepal depends on India for almost everything and shares limited

relations with China. India and China share tension at their borders and compete with each other to become the next economic power.

India is not a participant of BRI and is also not very enthusiastic about Nepal's announcement of partnership too as it is wary of Chinese infiltration in Nepal. Other major point of divide among the two is India's disapproval of China's "One China Policy". Indian openly supports the Tibetan establishment and has given shelter to Dalai Lama.

Amidst of these trajectory Nepal's participation in BRI raised many geo political concerns which was followed by many literatures pouring in the topic. Discourse on softer aspect of BRI received less attention initially but with visible efforts of Chinese in promoting its soft power gradually attempt have been made to study this phenomena. Although one cannot deny the grave importance of geo political aspect in Nepal-China BRI partnership nevertheless it is also vital to study the soft power politics attached to this phenomena.

BRI is the revival of old silk route. This road was initiated during the rule of Chinese Emperor Wudi in 150 BC and named 'Silk Road' by German Geographer named Ferdinand Von in 1877. The road was used for silk sale and trade of other items, exchange of culture, ideas and movements of military and people. The route had linked the regions where modern nations like Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Arabian nations, Nepal, India, Pakistan, China, Japan, Mongolia, Korea, Myanmar, among others are located. (Sharma, 1970,p 132).

Historically, Nepal provided a major free and unrestricted trading route between South Asia and China and even to central Asia via Lhasa. We can refer to the presence of a large number of people of Nepali origin residing in Lhasa and some other parts of Tibet for centuries and

Nepalese Mission is the only diplomatic presence in Lhasa. This is the time to recapture this trend and unlock the future growth potential of trade and connectivity between China and Nepal.

BRI has been a milestone in terms of bilateral relations. Linking the three underpinning of Nye's soft power; culture, political values and national foreign policies in relation to BRI phenomena in Nepal, we have witnessed some significant advances contributing to the in revival of bilateral relations of Nepal and China.

Chapter 6: BRI benefits and implication for Nepal

Although both nations share common interest of wider trade through BRI, there are also other driving forces behind this partnership. For Nepal it is the opportunity for interregional connectivity through BRI, which is of immense value as it has long endured the price for its dependency on India. Nepal shares borders with India (South, East and West) and China (North) and since the northern side is mountainous and rocky Nepal practically depends on India for all the trade and connectivity. This overly dependent geographical relationship dominates every aspect of Nepal; political, economic, socio cultural or in other words Nepal's both soft and hard powers are in total grip of India.

BRI presents Nepal with the opportunity to break from its overly dependence with India and establish independent trade relation with the world. This is why it is vital that the relationship between Nepal and China goes beyond mere trading partners and it blooms in the areas of deeper social cultural and political ties. A closer tie with China is expected to neutralize the extreme dominance of India influence.

However it is to be noted that the ties with India are incomparable to that of China as the relation of India and Nepal is bonded by culture, matrimony, language and religion. While in case of Nepal's relation with China there is very limited contact. Buddhism is the only overlapping area of commonality among the nations and the nations differ widely in the areas of culture, language, food etc. Realizing these differences China has adopted initiatives to promote its culture as to establish a deeper relation it becomes vital that the nation are familiarized with each other's culture. Deliberate efforts are directed in this direction through BRI.

Nepal at the receiving end is attempting to generate necessary condition for Chinese soft power to flourish. Initiatives under BRI aiming to facilitate in building relationship are given prime importance by the government with necessary engagement at both state and public level.

In case of China, through BRI it aims to fulfill its search for new markets for trade and creating a new image for itself by rising above the past and establish itself as a global power. After 25 years of remarkable economic growth, China has elevated its capacity to influence world affairs. Nations much-noted economic progress has been accompanied by a steady expansion in its cultural and diplomatic influence globally, especially in the developing world (Pan, 2006, pp.1). In other words China is heading out in harnessing soft power for itself. At the core of China's global movement lies a robust and thriving economy which is demanding for new markets, natural resources, and partners. BRI was founded principally on the same idea; expanding China's growth globally.

BRI holds a prime significance for China and therefore it is accordingly gearing up to make necessary arrangements to cater to the nation's need for continued growth. Parallel to building physical infrastructure through BRI it is also working on creating a new image of the country which has risen above from its past history. Nation tremendous transformation during the past half century, shifting from the war and revolution under Mao Zedong to an era of peace and development under the leadership of Den Xiaoping and further continued by Xi Jinping has been phenomenal.

Until two decades ago, China was viewed as an austere communist country standing contrary to democracy and international liberal order but in recent times China has increasingly established itself as capitalist, modern nations championing globalization truly. It global movement comes

with a realization of the importance of expanding nation's soft power together with economic prosperity. Adhering to this realization BRI was designed.

China's growing use of soft power has received much attention globally and has been one of the most talked about phenomena in Nepal. The kind of infrastructure the project aims to build it is expected to influence various dimension of world affair.

In relation to Nepal much of the analysis on BRI concerns the geo-political aspect as it is expected to exert significant changes in the relation Nepal holds with India, its age old neighbor .Nepal is land locked by two giants India on three sides and China on one side. It acts as a buffer between these arch rival giants. Nepal depends on India for almost everything and shares limited relations with China. India and China share tension at their borders and compete with each other to become the next economic power. India is not a participant of BRI and is also not very enthusiastic about Nepal's announcement of partnership too as it is wary of Chinese infiltration in Nepal. Other major point of divide among the two is India's disapproval of China's "One China Policy". Indian openly supports the Tibetan establishment and has given shelter to Dalai Lama.

Amidst of these trajectory Nepal's participation in BRI raised many geo political concerns which was followed by many literatures pouring in the topic. Discourse on softer aspect of BRI received less attention initially but with visible efforts of Chinese in promoting its soft power gradually attempt have been made to study this phenomena.

China believes that it is not going to be a global power unless it has soft power. It realizes that it isn't enough to have economic and military power; it's more effective if you combine that with soft power. I think that China has a three part strategy. The first is to develop the content of

Chinese soft power then there is more traditional ideas of culture: art, music, literature, Chinese traditional medicine . . . Confucianism. . . . The third part of the strategy is developing the vehicle or the mechanisms by which China can project this soft power.

One cannot deny the grave importance of geo political aspect in Nepal-China BRI partnership. Nepal as a unified nation was born on 17 November 1769. Nepal shares a 1,439 kilometer border with China with natural obstruction whereas there is a 1,880 kilometer long border with India that is open and porous. At this point Nepal has been in completely engulfed by power play at all levels; national global, regional. It is evident that the polarization on MCC bears linkages with political atmosphere crested in the aftermath of BRI. Advancement of relation with China at a time when it is a regional giant and an emerging global power has not gone unnoticed. Post, BRI through chain of events, significant efforts have been jointly made by Nepal and China to deepen their bilateral ties. US's Indo Pacific Strategy and MCC were, therefore, not mere coincidences.

India, China and the US, fully aware of the strategic importance of Nepal, have accordingly extended their diplomatic engagement in various forms, at different times. It is believed that the US have directed its foreign policy towards Indo-Pacific to contain China, if not counter it. In response to the recent stir created on its Indo Pacific Strategy and MCC, American embassy, Kathmandu clearly stated that MCC is the integral part of Indo-Pacific Strategy; a policy adopted by the US towards Asia Pacific nations, including Nepal, to exert in these nations and region at large, to prevent them from falling into China's dominance. Dominance on this region is peculiarly important because of contentious South China Sea, which holds immense importance both commercially and politically. Enormous funds channeled through MCC are clearly to strengthen its relations with Nepal in order to prevent it from inclining towards China excessively.

India and Nepal were politically bonded in the period after 1950's. Absolute involvement of India in establishing democracy in Nepal, which is believed to be the foundation for the "special relation", was borne out of its own security concerns with China. Existence of an oligarchic regime in the country which was once very close to British was intolerable to India. Further, the immediate reason for the Indian involvement in Nepal, however, is assumed to its own perception of security consideration arising out of the Chinese move into Tibet in 1950. Thus the trilateral political dynamics became intricately embroiled since the 1950's.

Existence of an oligarchic regime in the country which was once very close to British was intolerable to India. Further, the immediate reason for the Indian involvement in Nepal, however, is assumed to its own perception of security consideration arising out of the Chinese move into Tibet in 1950. Thus the trilateral political dynamics became intricately embroiled since the 1950's. The geographical positioning of Nepal itself is of great importance to the US, India and China equally, as Nepal is strategically located between Indian subcontinent and Central Asia, placing it to play the role of an intermediary buffer in both the regions. These regions are expected to be the heart of world economy in coming decades, and therefore, having an influence in this region has immense importance. US, India and China will lay their cards strategically to exert their dominance in the region. BRI bears linkages to all these and will definitely bear implications accordingly. It is vital that Nepal comprehends matters broadly and accordingly.

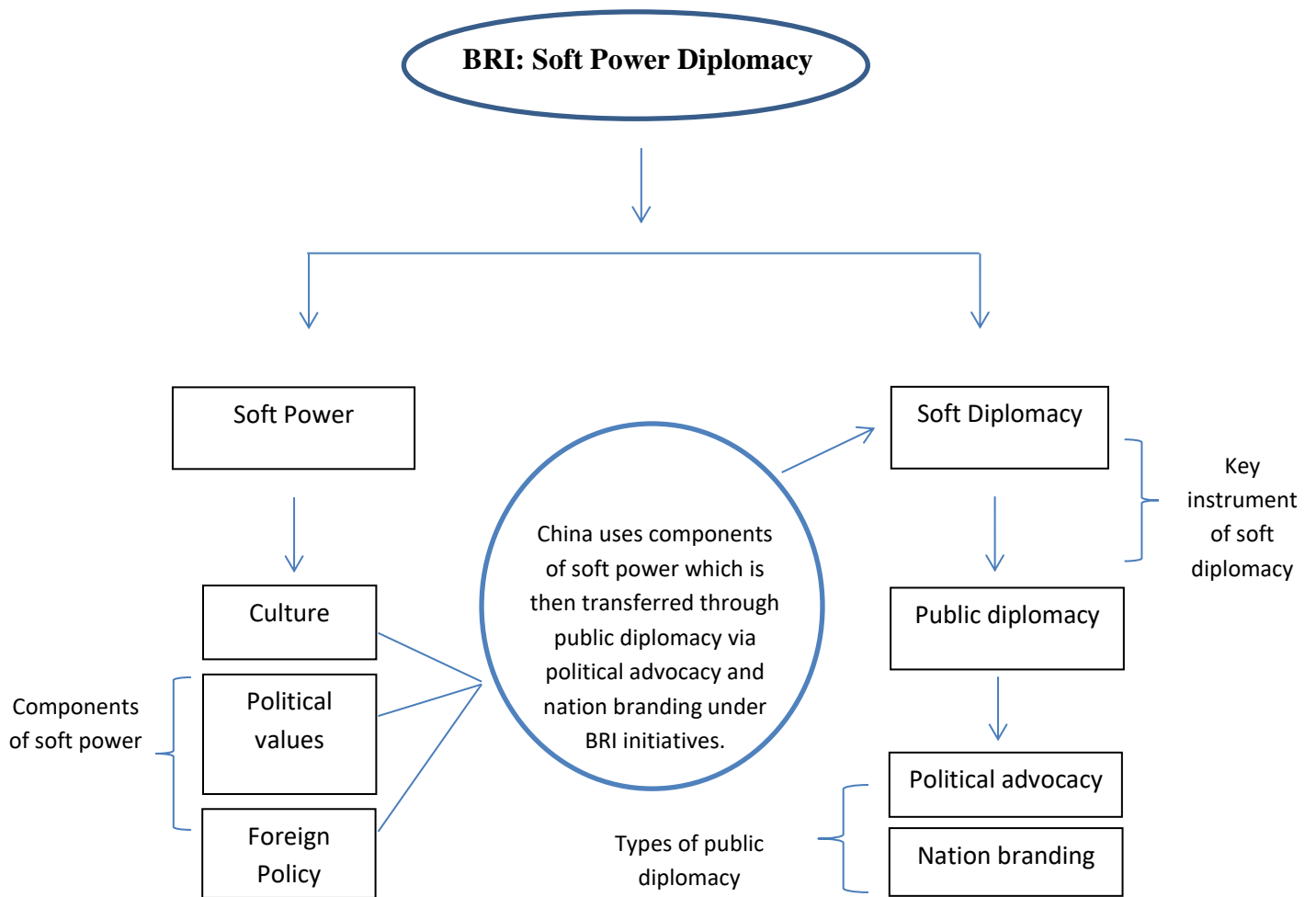


Figure 5: Soft Power Diplomacy and BRI

❖ Culture

Culture lies at the heart of China’s soft power diplomacy under BRI. Chinese culture and food has received wide acceptance globally. In relation to Nepal nations share an age old relation in terms of cultural exchange through art, architecture, spirituality and religion. Both nations have rich cultures and share a common affinity for Buddhism. Nepal is meeting ground of the cultural streams from the North and the South where Hinduism and Buddhism blend beautifully, resulting in a distinct culture which finds expression in temples and chaityas, homes and palaces, social ceremonies, religious festivals and fairs, customs and manners, and dancing and singing

(Shakya, 1954, p.23). BRI is revival of old silk route and attempts to institutionalize the age old cultural exchange.

The Confucius institute program was launched by PRC Ministry of Education in 2004 to promote Chinese language and culture, support local Chinese teaching internationally, and cultural exchanges. It is the key institute committed to promote Chinese culture. There are 500 Confucius institutes in 125 countries. At the premises of the Kathmandu University on 13 June 2007 at the joint collaboration of the Kathmandu University and Hebei University of Economics & Business Confucius Institute was inaugurated. Various shows and activities have been organized in each other's territories to enhance cultural relations.

List of programs under BRI

- China is regularly organizing cultural fairs in Kathmandu since 2003.
- Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu organized China Festival in Kathmandu in 2005 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.
- A Confucius Institute was inaugurated at the premises of the Kathmandu University on 13 June 2007 at the joint collaboration of the Kathmandu University and Hebei University of Economics & Business.
- Nepal China Expo 2018 event to promote trade and culture between two nations which is organised by Araniko Culture & Business Promotion Society in support of Arniko Society and China Nepal Culture Exchange Centre.
- Hundreds of students and academics received scholarship under BRI.
- Seminar on silk route : enhancing Nepal - china connectivity; celebrating 60th year of the establishment of diplomatic relation between Nepal and china, - Kathmandu : 23rd March, 2015.

Sangroula writes concentrated efforts have been made by China to establish various institutions purely to promoted cultural exchange (2016, p. 5). Under BRI Chinese government has established cultural centers, confusions centers, conducted cultural exchange programs at students and other academicians, held conferences all contributing to wider spreading knowledge of Chinese culture.

Foreign policy

Regarding foreign policy, Baral writes, a nation's foreign policy is conditioned by various factors like geographical and strategic conditions, political obligations, economic necessities and historical ties (of race, region and culture) (2018, p.19). Soft power occupies major focus of Chinese foreign policy. The Economist writes, "A decade ago the Communist Party declared a new goal: to build "soft power", as a complement to its rapidly growing economic and military strength.

China has allocated enormous funds in its soft power expansion. It spends some \$10bn a year on the project, according to David Shambaugh of George Washington University—one of the most extravagant programs of state-sponsored image-building the world has ever seen" (The subtleties of soft power, 2017). China has placed a tremendous amount of effort for its "charm offensive" approach with an estimated US\$10 billion spending every year on its global soft power presence (Kurlantzick, 2017).

Under the project, China has placed initiatives in approaching for regional connectivity in the South Asia region. As an extension of this policy China has adopted initiatives to extend its soft power in Nepal under BRI. Nepal has shown unwavering attraction to BRI. Likewise Nepal at the receiving end has also responded well to create a conducive environment. Nepal's foreign policy is largely dominated by its size and geographic positioning. A small sized country, locked by India on East, West and South and China on North enthusiastically announced its participation in BRI with a hope of transcending its overly dependent relations with India through wider connectivity. Sangroula writes "Nepal is gearing up to ensure creation of feasible environment for the exchange to bloom" (2016, p. 9).

Nepal Communist Party (NCP) led government of KP Sharma Oli is slowly but gradually taking steps to benefit economically from China. Two Significant developments in NEPAL China BRI partnership include, signing of a protocol related to the Transit and Transport Treaty signed back in 2016 in the previous tenure of the Oli government. The signing of the protocol allows Nepal to use China's sea and road infrastructure for third country trade. Second development is Nepal-China Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network, including the Nepal-China cross-border railway, an ambitious connectivity project which is drawing international attention. China wants to develop this railway line as a gateway to South Asia.

However the unstable geo-politics and security threats in the region poses Beijing with a lot to consider before it can preach about the peaceful connectivity. Most significant of all, the problems in the region will be with India as it has openly expressed its dissatisfaction towards BRI.

Political values

Now reflecting on the third component of Nye's soft power; political values, China's is largely a communist nation and although Nepal's politics is fused with has many political ideologies with its recent election it has received communist party as its ruling party by an overwhelming two third majority win. Therefore at present both the nation's leading powers at central level share the same ideology.

Nepal shares borders with India (South, East and West) and China (North) and since the northern side is mountainous and rocky Nepal practically depends on India for all the trade and connectivity. This overly dependent geographical relationship dominates every aspect of Nepal; political, economic, socio cultural or in other words Nepal's both soft and hard power is in total

grip of India. Nepal's willingness to participate in BRI largely lies in the struggle it has endured as a land locked country Nepal has struggled with its age old dependency over India.

Therefore all the three aspects of Nye are soft power: culture, foreign policy and political values of both the nations seem to be working harmoniously or at least with minimal friction and thus creating a suitable environment to blossoming of Chinese soft power in Nepal.

However although the bilateral relations and soft power diplomacy of China is blossoming it is vital that Nepal balances its relations with other world powers too. Every scenario has its own peculiarity comprising of both opportunity and challenges which needs to be comprehended fully in order to devise strategies to produce results to one's benefit. It is important to understand that every relation; bilateral or multilateral is born out of need. There is always a point of "exchange" which allows for mutual benefit. It falls on our shoulder to identify that "point of exchange" and accordingly lay out our diplomatic framework.

India and China converge on few areas with regard to West. Having suffered from colonization both does not receive western influence well. China's investment to promote Buddhism, Confucianism and Chinese cultural around the globe and BJP's open adherence of Hinduism both are somewhat directed towards curbing the western influence in Asian regions. Nepal realizing the importance of its geography should gradually move in the direction of policy of relative equidistance by settling its past intricacies with India and extending relations with China and other world powers on the principle of mutual cooperation which might ultimately also contribute for greater Asian solidarity.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

China's growing use of soft power diplomacy in Nepal has received much attention globally and has been one of the most talked about phenomena in Nepal. The kind of infrastructure the project aims to build it is expected to influence various dimension of world affair. Therefore realizing the kind of implication the project is expected to have China has received many critical views but China's unwavering commitment to the project has yielded significant progress. China although assertive but attempts to avoid direct confrontation or competition with the major West powers as it does not want to be drawn into any rifts that will hurt its economy.

Through BRI it aims to fulfill its search for new markets for trade and creating a new image for itself by rising above the past and establish itself as a global power. After 25 years of remarkable economic growth, China has elevated its capacity to influence world affairs. Nations much-noted economic progress has been accompanied by a steady expansion in its cultural and diplomatic influence globally, especially in the developing world (Pan, 2006, pp.1).

China hopes that, through soft power, it can achieve its most important goals, which are, at a regional and global level, to mitigate the 'China threat theory', earn the understanding of the international community, and garner support for China's peaceful development. However China's expansion of global power has received mixed opinions worldwide. It is viewed critically by the West while findings is that developing countries have a significantly more positive view of China's rising influence than developed countries suggesting that China's soft power strategy in Africa, Asia, Latin America are yielding results.

It is also to be noted that China's global movement has been viewed has hegemonic by nations it shares tension at the borders. China's soft power expansion is its grand design for global

dominance. There is also a view that China's "charm offensive" is a part of a grand strategy aimed at challenging the world's remaining super power.

Amidst of these contradicting views on China's intention and implication about its soft power expansion it is vital that Nepal concentrates its effort in analyzing the implication of entering into the BRI soft power diplomacy zone. China soft power diplomacy under BRI will exert implication at many levels but most importantly it will influence two key areas:-

1. soft power implication
2. geo-political implication

China and Nepal governments have to remain committed to make more amenable policies to encourage deeper affinity between the two. China is gradually building up its soft power skills as it tries to increase its global presence with Confucius Institutes worldwide. Promoting Chinese culture and language, these centers have been a great success. Even the ubiquitous Chinatowns that can be found in big cities across the world play an important role as they introduce Chinese food, festivals and culture. Perceptibly, the main hurdle standing in China's way has been language. Mandarin is not as widely spoken internationally as English and the latter is also the favored medium of instruction in educational institutions and most frequently used for educational curricula and syllabi.

The fundamental critics of China's soft power diplomacy as per Nye are

- China's illiberal political values will fringe its soft power appeal
- China's state funded and constructed soft power diplomacy will not succeed as soft need to grow from civil society and media

He elaborates that nation soft power growth should be natural and lead by its civil societies and media rather than it being constructed by the state and for this to happen nations should adhere to liberal values. China although has adopted liberal reforms economically but still largely centrally controlled state in political fronts. Therefore its soft power growth has been viewed negatively and concluded that unless it makes significant changes in reforming its illiberal values its soft power growth will not yield desired results.

Nye comparison of China's soft power against of US soft power and stating that China's state lead soft power diplomacy will not yield result and made recommendation to follow US model which he stated was formed by civil societies and media is not all true. In 1953 the US government created the United States Information Agency to oversee American public diplomacy, and USIA oversaw a radio broadcasting effort, Voice of America, which helped sway foreign opinion, building support for American policies.

Linking it with Public diplomacy and nation branding which are also evaluated as instruments of soft power. It can be simply explained as "direct communication with foreign people was carried out through media with the aim of affecting their thinking, and ultimately, that of their governments. Growth of American soft power assisted in the promotion of US policies after Cold war and made it easy for it to work with leaders of other nations.

Further tracing back the history of popularity of America, 1940's is regarded as the milestone year. It was during this decade that the idea of "American Dream" – a good life image gained much momentum. Hollywood, pop music, denim, fast food, and media collectively nurtured the image and gradually the whole world fell for the dream. Everyone was drawn to the American in pursuit of the "American dream". Later it was realized that the dream was only true for a very

Americas and a large populations lived far below the American Dream. Therefore soft power plays on the grey area between “projection” and “reality”. All of what is projected may not or cannot be real it is vital to draw a line between what is projected and what is real.

Further, adhering to principle of constructivism which gives priority to the “context” and emphasizes the need for social scientist to study things in totality rather in isolation, it becomes necessary to understand each nation in its totality. Each nation has a peculiar conditioning which is influenced by its culture, social composition, political history etc which contributes to its overall personality and conduct. Notion of soft power is vague and since different countries have their own set of strengths and weakness it becomes difficult to apply one size fit all theory.

Until two decades ago, China was an austere communist country standing contrary to democracy and international liberal order but in recent times China has increasingly established itself as capitalist, modern nations championing globalization truly. It global movement comes with a realization of the importance of expanding nation’s soft power together with economic prosperity. Adhering to this realization BRI was designed.

It is true that the central values of China do not champion liberal values as America or other western countries and the nation’s core values still reflect communist ideology does however this does not make China and its values any less or incapable of harnessing global acceptance. Many developing nations are looking to China and its strong state system, as an alternative to the economic liberalization of ‘the West’. China’s soft power growth has a sense of authenticity. Its economic growth and ambition further growth has been welcomed by many. Also that rejecting values which doesn’t not comply with western philosophy is not just bias but a confirmation of hegemonic attitude of the West.

China's internal discourse on soft power although takes inferences from Nye but Chinese scholars moved beyond the Nye's framework of soft power and are attempting to establish "soft power with Chinese characteristics". China has yet to develop a comprehensive, coherent national soft power strategy; although there are many policies on it nation's soft power remains largely ad hoc. It seems quite likely that China will attempt to maintain the legalistic international economic system, while refraining from pursuit of its political counterpart.

Nepal China BRI partnership was announced with great enthusiasm however the needed homework in the later part has not been adequate. China's soft power growth will only yield results if there the initiative delivers projects in economic and infrastructural fronts. Initially 35 projects were listed to develop under the initiative; it had brought interest in China's funding in Nepal to a pitch fever. But with sluggish progress in negotiations in the following months, the Chinese side insisted that Nepal bring down the number of projects under Beijing's flagship foreign policy initiative to the single digit.

Soft power grows out of culture and policies. From media, higher education, civil society does play a vital role. Early Hollywood movies played a significant role in introducing the United States to the world, and entire generations of children grew up idolizing cowboy heroes and the 'American Dream'. Even the English language has been a useful vehicle in furthering the American phenomenon, as it is the second-most widely spoken language after Mandarin and is considered the world's 'lingua franca'. Consequently, the US is not a superpower just because it is rich and powerful, it is the soft power giant of the world.

Second and crucial aspect of BRI is the geopolitical implication. One of the driving forces for Nepal to enter in this partnership is that it will break the overbearing influence of India over

Nepal. This is. Therefore BRI holds special significance for Nepal. China holds a significant position in the global politics, and therefore, any move by it is ought to be observed and responded accordingly by the US, the global power and India the regional giant.

Playing the role of an intermediary between the Indian sub-continent and Central Asia has exerted a powerful influence on Nepal granting it a powerful bargaining point. Every scenario has its own peculiarity comprising of both opportunity and challenges which needs to be comprehended fully in order to device strategies and produce results to one's benefit. It is important to understand that every relation in politics; bilateral or multilateral is born out of need. There is always a point of 'exchange' which allows for mutual benefit. It falls on our shoulder to identify that 'point of exchange' with our neighbors and other global powers lay out our diplomatic framework.

India and China are regional powers and converge on few areas with regard to West. Having suffered from colonization, both do not receive western influence well. China's investment to promote Buddhism, Confucianism and Chinese cultural around the globe and Indian Prime Minister Modi's open adherence of Hinduism, both are somewhat directed towards curbing the western influence in Asian regions. Hence, Nepal needs to strike a balance between both the regional and the global power. Therefore, it is crucial that Nepal to find the common grounds with India and China in such a way that it addresses their core concerns while allowing room for Nepal to exercise its independent foreign policy with other great powers.

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