

NEPAL'S SOFT POWER: INSTRUMENTS AND THEIR ROLES

A Dissertation

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Page
I. Acknowledgements	V
II. Letter of Recommendation	VI
III. Declaration	VII
IV. Approval Sheet	VIII
V. Abstract	IX
VI. List of Tables	X
VII. List of Figures	XI
VIII. Abbreviations	XII
Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 Background Context	1
1.2 Statement of problem	4
1.3 Research questions	5
1.4 Research objectives	5
1.5 Significance of research	6
1.6 Chapter Organization	8
Chapter Two: Review of Literature and Conceptual Framework	9
2.1 The Context of Soft Power	9
2.2 Why Soft Power?	13
2.3 Previous Studies on Nepal's Soft Power	26
2.4 Theoretical Perspective and Conceptual Framework	28
Chapter Three: Research Methodology	30

3.1 Research Design	30
3.2 Research Site	30
3.3 Data Collection Method	30
3.4 Data Analysis Methods	31
3.5 Ethical Concerns	31
3.6 Limitation	31
Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings	33
4.1 Nepal’s Soft Power Instruments: Factors and Mediums	33
4.1.1 Factors of Nepal’s Soft Power	33
I. Nepali Culture	33
II. Nepali Cultural Uniqueness: Kumari, ‘the Living Goddess of Nepal’	35
III. Language	37
IV. Buddhist ideology: the Value of Non-violence and World Peace	39
V. Himalayas: a Lifeline of the Global Ecology	42
VI. The UN Peacekeeping Missions: Nepal’s Commitment to the UN Charter and Value of World peace	44
VII. Gorkha Legacy: History of Bravery and Loyalty	47
4.1.2 Mediums of Nepal’s Soft Power Promotion	49
I. Nepali Diplomatic Missions	49
II. Media: Electronic, Printing, Online and Social	50
III. Nepali Origin Gorkha Community	55
IV. Nepali Diasporas and Migrant Workers	59

V. Nepali Academia	61
VI. International and Regional Forums	62
Chapter Five: Analysis: an Approach for Nepal's Soft Power Promotion	66
Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusion	72
References	i-xvi

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Letter of Recommendation

I certify that this dissertation entitled “Nepal’s Soft Power: Instruments and Their roles” has been prepared by Sahadev Thapa under my supervision. I hereby recommend this dissertation for final examination by the research committee at the Department of International Relation and Diplomacy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University in the fulfillment of the requirements for MIRD 526 Thesis for the Master’s Degree in International Relation and Diplomacy.

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2022 August 11

Declaration

I hereby declare, that the work has been done by myself and no portion of the work contained in this document has been published or submitted in support of any application for any other degree or qualification of this or any other university or institution of learning. In case of other authors' information, idea and arguments, the sources have been duly cited and acknowledged as per the requirements. The copyright of this research work belongs to the author.

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Sahadev Thapa

2022 July 28

Approval Sheet

Abstract

Soft power is a neoliberal concept. Joseph Nye defined it as the ability to make others do things and get what you want. The methods employed in soft power are attractive and persuasive. It is the means to achieve national interest more indirectly. Sovereign people have a powerful influence on their respective governments. So, cultural and public diplomacy are the soft power methods to attract the foreign public more than their governments. Today, soft power has become an important policy instrument for states. In South Asia, countries such as India and China have given more importance to soft power promotion and projection in recent decades by employing culture, ideologies, values, ideas, and achievements as soft power instruments. Their soft power policy influence is increasing in the entire region. Other South Asian countries such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and the Maldives are also in the soft power race. Nepal is politically democratic, economically developing, socio-culturally diverse, and ecologically distinct. She possesses several social, cultural, economic, political, and ecological factors that significantly impact Nepal's soft power aspiration. Nepal also has the potential to achieve its foreign policy objectives by mobilizing soft power instruments. However, Nepal lacks strong engagement and exerts less soft power influence in the region. So, this particular subject requires more study because research is minimal in the Nepalese context. Therefore, this research identifies some factors and mediums of Nepal's soft power, which are referred to as instruments. This study also analyzes their role in achieving Nepal's soft power objectives. On the other hand, this research also attempts to contextualize soft power policy according to Nepal's economic and institutional capacities.

Keywords: soft power, cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, soft power instruments, Nepal

List of Tables

	Title	Page
Table 2.1:	Indicators of Soft Power	13
Table 4.1:	Census of India (2011): Nepali speaking population in India	56

List of Figures

Title	Page
Figure 4.1: Nepal's UN Peace Keeping Missions	46

Abbreviation

APF	Armed Police Force
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectorial Technical and Economic Cooperation
BIPPA	Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
DIRD	Department of International Relations and Diplomacy
DOFE	Department of Foreign Employment
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GNP	Gross National Product
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IR	International Relations
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRN	Non-Resident Nepali
NRNA	Non-Resident Nepali Association
NTIS	Nepal Trade Integration Strategy
OBOR	One Belt One Road
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
UKAID	United Kingdom Agency for International Development
UNCED	United Nation Conference on Environment and Development
UN Charter	United Nations Charter
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background Context

Power has remained an interesting and important subject of study for different philosophers, scholars, academicians, and politicians. Since the centuries and from the ages of Kautilya, Thucydides, and Machiavelli, it has played a central role in every aspect of the state's internal politics, international relations, and diplomacy. However, Joseph S. Nye claims that power is a highly discussed but least understood concept (Nye, 2004, p.1). So, among different types of power, the topic of this research, "Nepal's soft power: Instruments and their roles", is based on the concept of soft power.

Soft power is one of the influential theories of international relations and diplomacy. However, the perspective of power is differently held by the different schools of thought. Robert Dahl (1957) claims that power is a type of situation in which one person exerts control over another when they force someone to act in a way that goes beyond what they would otherwise choose to do (p. 201). He further argues that power is found in the interactions of different people, organizations, jobs, offices, governments, nation-states, and other human elements. It is a social bond between individuals (Dahl, 1957, p. 202). Let's take an example of a patriarchal family. A man as a father holds power and authority over his family's decision-making as a caretaker and patron. Similarly, let's assume he is also a chieftain of his ethnic clan. In this case, his role in the society and relationship with other members offers him power and authority over decisions related to the clan's social, cultural, economic, and political affairs. Here, he also has the ability to enforce his decisions to some extent.

Realism, the influential theory of international relations, also has given high importance to the role of power. Hans J. Morgenthau defines power in terms of national interest. He claims that “think and act in terms of interest defined as power” (as cited in Baldwin, 1993, p.7). Realism and neo-realism explain international politics as power politics itself. The state’s main priorities are national interest, security, military alliances, and power struggle. John Mearsheimer, one of the famous American political scientists who belonged to the neo-realist school of thought, claimed that “calculations about power lie at the core of how states perceive the world around them” (Mearsheimer, 1994, p.12).

In contrast, liberals and neoliberals explain power least in terms of national security, security alliances, and military might. They emphasize the role of power based on relations among the states and non-state actors. For instance, American President Woodrow Wilson outlined his liberal viewpoints as fourteen points on January 8, 1918. In his speech, he emphasized open diplomacy, a decrease in weapons and ammunition, the establishment of an international organization with representation from all states, equality between large and small countries, and cooperation between all governments and people (Esthus et al., 1987).

Realism and liberalism hold different concepts on hard power and soft power. “Hard power is an aggressive way of dealing with other countries that involves using the threat of military force to make them do what you want” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, n.d.). Similarly, E.H Carr argued that the most effective form of power in international relations is military might because it can be used for both means and ends (Carr, 1946, p.109). Niccolo Machiavelli, the statesman and the scholar of Florence who is also considered a classical realist, advised the Prince: the ruler of Florence, that “good arms, makes good laws, good laws, make good arms” (Machiavelli, 1532/2011, p. 48). In this statement, “good arms”

means the hard power the rulers must acquire and accumulate to maintain law and order inside the state territory.

So, national interest and security have always remained at the center of realist school thought. As it was perceived, it is only achieved through the state's military and economic power. In contrast, neoliberal scholar Joseph S. Nye introduced a new type of power in the 1990s, that he coined as soft power. Nye claimed that soft power is an ability to attract others to do what you want; otherwise they do not (Nye, 2004, p.2). The concept of soft power does not rely only on the traditional realist perception of stick and carrot. It is a desirable power that also can alter preferences without the need for coercion or payment to another party (Nye, 2011, p.22). On the other hand, the term "soft", itself defines the soft nature of power. The traditional coercive devices are applied through military might and economic value, but soft power relies on the spread of cultural heritage, political values, ideologies, and legitimacy (Nye, 2004, p.6). Now the term soft power is widely used in the diplomatic field of International relations.

However, soft power is a much-discussed subject concerning big and powerful states/powers such as America, China, and India. In the case of small states/power like Nepal has less attention for study. So, careful study of Nepal's soft power instruments is necessary for effective mobilization of the country's soft power resources through the appropriate policy formulation. Therefore, this research attempts to shed light on Nepal's soft power instruments. This study also analyzes the role of the identified instruments in Nepal's soft power promotion and attempts to find a way to the effective mobilization of those instruments considering Nepal's economic realities and institutional capacities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

During the literature review, it is found that much research has been carried out on soft power, mainly focusing on big and powerful states such as America, China, India etc. In contrast, there has been less study in the context of a small state like Nepal. Sujiv Shakya quotes, “Nepal’s soft power practice in the real world scenario is at the minimum level” (Shakya, 2021, p.92). Consequently, Nepal’s regional soft power influence is significantly less. On the other hand, India and China’s soft power is expanding all over the region and has brought more influence to Nepal. However, it is not a new concept to Nepal’s international relations and diplomacy but requires more study on soft power.

In addition, Nepal’s economic and institutional capacity plays a crucial role in successfully implementing domestic and foreign policies, adequate mobilization of soft power instruments, and producing outcomes. However, it has been found that previous studies have addressed less the role of Nepal’s economic and institutional capacity on soft power promotion. This study particularly attempts to explore Nepal’s economic and institutional realities on soft power. Therefore, here is the literature gap exists, particularly in this area. So, this study aims to fulfill this literature gap by adding one more stone to Nepal’s soft power building process.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the instruments of Nepal's soft power?
2. What role do these instruments play in Nepal's soft power promotion?
3. How these instruments are efficiently mobilized in the context of Nepal?

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To recognize different instruments of Nepal's soft power.
2. To identify the role of instruments in Nepal's soft power policy.
3. To analyze soft power policy on Nepal's context.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The literature review of this study shows that powerful states like the US, China, India, a supranational organization like the EU, and even authoritarian states like Iran have also given high importance to soft power. Many states and IGOs have recognized the vitality of spreading cultural values and ideologies through cultural and public diplomacy to promote national and organizational interests. In the context of Nepal, it lacks strong military and economic power. Nepal's foreign policy recognizes "effective diplomacy" as the best means to achieve its national interests (Lamichhane and Dhakal, 2018, p.5). On the other hand, international practices have also proven that soft power directly or indirectly supports diplomacy.

In the context of Nepal, hard power cannot be justified as a major instrument of Nepal's foreign policy. However, it is a well-established form of power. As will be discussed later in the literature review section of this study, first of all, Nepal does not have sufficient military capabilities. So, it is imperative to promote the alternative source of power. Second, Nepal's foreign policy emphasizes peaceful means such as effective diplomacy. Third, in the global scenario of a liberal world, hard power is not the only source of power and a significant instrument of a state's foreign policy because the concept of soft power occupies more space in international relations. Thus, the significance of soft power in Nepal's foreign policy is vital.

Nepal is comparatively small and less powerful than its two immediate neighbors: India and China, in terms of its economy, military, and institutional capacity. However, Nepal's fifteenth development plan aims to upgrade into a middle-income country by 2030 by achieving sustainable development goals (National Planning Commission, 2015, p.23). In

addition, Nepal has also set a long-term goal to upgrade into a high-income country by 2043 (National Planning Commission, 2015, p.24). It seems a challenging task for Nepal's economic development. However, it is not impossible to achieve if the effort is directed in the right direction with political will.

Economic and other domestic policies cannot be separated from foreign policies because they complement each other. So, wielding soft power is an important aspect of Nepal's foreign policy, because envisioning future ambitions state's power rise and falls, and no state always cannot remain weak and poor. In this context, it is imperative to shed light on soft power envisioning Nepal's future ambitions. It is also necessary to identify potential factors and mediums and their role in Nepal's soft power. In addition, a suitable soft power policy based on Nepal's economic and institutional capacity is also crucial to achieving Nepal's soft power aspiration. Therefore, this study attempts to shed light on this area of Nepal's soft power.

The researcher believes this research will contribute to knowledge production in the field of soft power. It also supports Nepal's foreign policy process. It serves as an asset to politicians, diplomats, researchers, academicians, and the general public who want to study and conduct further research on the field of Nepal's soft power.

1.6 Chapter Organization

Chapter one of this study, begins with the background context of soft power. It also includes research problems in Nepal's soft power and justifies the reasons for carrying out this research. Chapter two gives an overview of the global scenario of soft power and the previous works and studies done by various writers and scholars. It also includes the conceptual framework and the theoretical perspective employed by the researcher. Chapter three is on research methodology. It provides research design, site, data collection methods, limitations, and ethical concerns. Chapter four, the main body of this study, begins with; the assessments of a few factors and the second part provide an overview of some essential mediums of Nepal's soft power. Chapter five attempts to contextualize soft power policy in Nepal's economic and institutional context. Chapter six, the last part, summarizes the overall research findings and provides the policy recommendations in terms of conclusion.

Chapter Two: Review of Literatures

2.1 The Context of Soft Power

Soft power is the established instrument of a state's foreign policy to achieve national interest more indirectly and persuasively. The importance of soft power in international relations can be justified mainly for two reasons: shift of power from sovereign rulers to sovereign people and hard power to soft power. These power shifts establish the public as the most important entity of the state's internal politics and multilateral relations over their governments. This shift also increases the essence of soft power over hard power.

Until the 20th century, most countries were under autocratic political systems of tyranny. The state's power was vested in a tyrannical ruler or tyrant. State sovereignty was in the hand of emperors, kings, queens, princes, princesses, or nobles. For instance, the king of France, Louis the XIV, famously stated, "I am the state" (Lespert et al., 2018). In this kind of system, people's will is hardly executed, and the commoners lose the chance to access state authority. However, in the 21st century, most countries are democratic. Now, the power has shifted from the rulers to the people because people are the real power source in the democratic political system where representatives are elected within and among the people.

American President Abraham Lincoln famously said democracy is of the people, by the people, for the people (Epstein, 2011, p.819). It means governments are formed by the people, representatives represent people and their will in state affairs, and the state is responsible for executing peoples will. In addition, this statement also justifies the true spirit of people's democracy. Abraham Lincoln stated in his 1856 speech in Chicago, "Our government rests in public opinion, whoever can change the public opinion, can change the

government, practically just so much” (Roy, n.d.). In a democratic system, several rights are vested in people. For instance, it has been mentioned in the preamble of Nepal’s constitution 2015 A.D that sovereignty remains on Nepali citizens. In addition, the right to autonomy and self-rule are prominent features of Nepal’s Constitution (Lamichhane and Dhakal, 2018, p. 5).

Since, in a democratic system like Nepal, people are the true source of state power (sovereignty). They can influence and even alter the state’s policies and actions related to both domestic and foreign policies. Moreover, people’s will are expressed through referendums, elections, and by creating pressure through rationally criticizing civil society groups. So, the people’s choices and interests shape the country’s bilateral and multilateral relations and multiple dimensions of diplomacy.

Nepal has also witnessed a democratic power shift in recent decades. Nepal’s Peoples Movement 2062-63 B.S. (2006 A.D.), shifted power from the sovereign monarchy to the sovereign people. In thirteen days, the people’s demonstration formally ended 240 years of monarchy in Nepal and brought several other political transitions, such as the promulgation of a new constitution and federalism declaration (Pyakurel and Adhikari, 2013, p.42). In addition, during the “Arab Spring of 2011”, which started in Tunisia, demonstrations, and protests against their respective governments spread all over the gulf. It brought several social, economic, and political changes in many gulf countries, along with regime changes in some of them (Manhire, 2012, p.VII). On the one hand, Arab spring remarks the power of civilians’ opinions, expressions, views, and perceptions expressed through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, etc.; on the other hand, it also shows the shift of power from sovereign rulers to sovereign people.

Realism and neorealism give more emphasis on hard power over soft power. Neo-realist Kenneth Waltz famously claimed that we all live in the anarchic international system. Hierarchy and anarchy are the two distinct features of international order. In this order, no one is capable of giving the command, and nobody is obliged to obey as well (Waltz, 2000, p.41). This statement emphasizes self-help, where the states are required to defend themselves, and power politics is the feature of self-interested states interacting in the anarchic international system. In contrast, neoliberal institutionalism accept that the international system is anarchic but argue that it can be overcome by creating powerful international institutions like United Nations (Keohane, 1998, p.86). Similarly, neoliberals also argue that complicated interdependencies make war so expensive that states are less inclined to wage it because the cost of trade becomes more significant than the cost of war. So, states choose trade over conflict as a result (Copeland, 1996, pp.5-6).

Hard power employs coercive means. However, only threat and force do not bring a favorable resolution to the problem. For an instance, the Russian movie *Voyna I Mir* is based on Leo Tolstoy's Nobel Peace Prize-winning novel *War and Peace*. It shows that during the Napoleonic Wars, initially, French Army won over Russia from Smolensk, St. Petersburg to Moscow. However, despite having a disciplined, modern, and powerful army, Napoléon Bonaparte returned empty-handed, leaving his several battalions at the mercy of their fate in the cold Russian winter. On the other hand, Russia successfully repelled the French Troops from Russia and neighboring states' territories. However, Russian cities were in ashes, the socio-political and economic system was in chaos, and people were suffering from despair and misery caused by the scourge of war. It indicates that neither France nor Russia achieved peace with the help of their hard power (Bondarchuk, 1967).

Similarly, the consequences of the Vietnam War, the Soviet-Afghan War, and the US invasion of Afghanistan, Iraq, and the ongoing war on Syria indicate that military and economic power alone cannot resolve international conflicts permanently (Hegghammer, 2021, pp. 46-47). For instance, US President George W. Bush launched the “war on terror” in Afghanistan in 2001, which lasted for 20 years until the US troops completely withdrew in 2021. In contrast, neither economic prosperity nor permanent peace is realized in the long run. Afghanistan is now in the pre-war on terror phase, as the Taliban completely controlled it in 2021 (Ackerman, 2021, pp. 66-74). So, these events also support the claim that no long-run peace be achieved only with hard power. That is why “Military capacity, one of the most important international power resources, may produce the outcomes you want in a tank battle, but not on the Internet” (Arendt, 1998). Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru famously stated, “World has to choose either Buddha (Peace) or Yudhha (war)” (Bajracharya, 1996, p.181). So, it has become essential for the states to shift from hard power to soft power under changing world political scenarios.

Similarly, as mentioned in the UN Charter 1945, one of the core objectives of the UN is to find a peaceful resolution of international conflicts as mandated by its articles (UN Charter, 1945). The UN and its agencies emphasize more on peaceful means over military solutions. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated, “The Charter is clear; the use of force by one country against another is wrong, against the UN Charter, and unacceptable” (United Nations, 2022). The state’s actions are now dictated by international law, several treaties, agreements, and conventions to which they are a party, and the evaluation of international institutions and transnational societies. On the other hand, establishing the UN

is a gradual shift of importance from hard to soft power. This increases the essence of soft power as an essential diplomatic tool in international relations.

2.2 Why Soft Power?

According to Joseph S. Nye, soft power relies on the spread of cultural heritage, political values, ideologies, ideas, and legitimacy (Nye, 2011, p.11). So, the country's culture, values, ideologies, and legitimacy are the instruments of soft power.

There are several instruments of soft power that can be identified. Some of these instruments, such as culture, language, heritage, etc., are in-built properties of particular countries. In contrast, some others, such as business, trade, value education, good governance, etc., are developed through efforts. Here are some instruments/indicators of soft power identified by Brand Directory. The purpose of these indicators was to rank countries on a global basis according to their soft power.

Table 2.1: Indicators of Soft Power

Business and Trade	Governance	International Relations	Culture and Heritage
Media and Communications	Education and Science	People and Value	

Note: The indicators of country's soft power identified by the Brand Directory to measure soft power of different countries.

Source: Haigh et al., 2021.

Cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy are two well-known methods of soft power promotion. The state employs these methods to promote soft power abroad. Public diplomacy is related to attractive public appearances, engagements, and relations, whereas cultural diplomacy spreads culture and values in foreign countries.

Cultural diplomacy is the act of promoting a state's culture overseas through the exchange of ideas, information, culture, and the arts. A nation's soft power essentially rests in its culture, which appeals to others (Wastnidge, 2015, pp. 365-366). Cultural Diplomacy is a method of building soft power through the flow of culture internationally. In this method, cultural norms and values are prevailed, transmitted, and advertised in appealing, attractive ways, and directly or indirectly initiated by the states. For instance, China has been promoting its language, art, craft, music, literature, costume and food, and political communist legacy. China promotes the Chinese language through its global network of Confucius Institutes that plays role in foreign people's teaching-learning process (Confucius Institutes [CIS], n.d., p.34). Likewise, countries reserve some seats for international students in their universities. In this higher education process, they not only study the course book but also imprint their mind with the host nation's cultural and political values, which they bring back to their country when they return. Cultural exchange programs are often launched at the state and non-state levels. University, intellectual and technical level exchange program supports wielding soft power process.

Public diplomacy is “diplomacy directed towards the public”. Its goal is to advance national interest by influencing the overseas public through interaction and information (Pramila, 2011, p. 134). Diplomats from the sending state participate in various activities such as discussion, debate, interview, exchanges, and public appearances at fairs, festivals,

feasts, and other programs of public gatherings, and information and culture sharing. These activities are aimed to promote sending state's foreign policy objective of soft power promotion. Pramila (2011) further claims that Propaganda and public diplomacy are challenging to separate. However, the information supplied by democratic nations is examined, contested, and validated by various sources and groups, but it is absent from totalitarian regimes' propaganda (p. 212).

Although soft power is a neoliberal concept, it is essential for both autocratic and democratic states. Promotion and spread of national identity, culture, values, ideas, innovation, and ideologies fall under every type of state's priorities.

Soft power has a significant role in Iranian foreign policy (Wastnidge, 2015, pp.565-566). However, the approach could be different in an authoritarian state than in Nye's democratic state. Wastnidge (2015) further claims that democratic states apply the bottom-up approach, whereas authoritarian states like Iran use a top-down approach. It is state-led in Iran. So, the Iranian case can be generalized to the cases of China, Russia, and other authoritarian states (p.566).

Similarly, India is the largest democracy in the world. India's democratic state has also prioritized soft power promotion. India is significantly promoting soft power by utilizing its soft power resources such as; culture, values and democratic policies (Mullen, 2015, pp.187-188). These instances of Iran and India shows that in either a democratic state like the India or an authoritarian state like Iran, with a different type of political structure all states have given high importance to soft power.

While discussing soft power, it is essential to analyze the soft power policy of some powerful states, such as America, China, and India. Similarly, supranational organizations

like the European Union bring insight as an instance on practices, attempts, and implications of soft power actors, instruments, and strategies of these states.

American foreign policy is influenced by soft power aside from its vast resources and force. Because of its western culture, liberal democratic political beliefs, foreign policy, and extensive global diplomatic networks, America holds the top spot in terms of soft power. The main goal of US soft power is "winning over other countries' hearts and minds" (Melissen, 2005, p.17). The foundations of American soft power date back to the freedom revolution era of George Washington, the democratic principles of Abraham Lincoln, and the liberal values of 20th century American President Woodrow Wilson (Nye, 2011, pp.56-59). It was further strengthened by the victory in WWII and the US initiation in the reconstruction of war-torn Western Europe. Now the American colleges, the educational system, sports, Hollywood movies, scholarship programs are playing vial role in the US soft power (Nye, 2011, pp. 56-60). So, in general, American soft power lies in its political values such as democracy, free market, human rights, rule-based order, etc., and culture: such as western literature, rock music, Hollywood movies, fashion, design, technology, American English languages, food, diplomatic networks, global covering international media such as CNN and American Radio Network, legitimate power of American government and its foreign policies.

In the present context, IGOs, INGO, and NGOs have proven that they serve as a medium to initiate public diplomacy indirectly. As NGO/INGOs such as USAID, UKAID, Norad, JICA, etc., have direct interaction with international societies with their vast network, people-oriented plans, policies, and programs as well as expertise in the specified field and more connection with people's sentiments. Among these INGO's the US Peace corps is the US government-initiated INGO, which sends volunteers to developing and underdeveloped

countries worldwide to assist with many efforts, including AIDS education, business training, and information infrastructure development.

It is a voluntary service provided by the US government for economic and other development support to several countries around the globe, including Nepal. According to the US Embassy Nepal's official Facebook page, the US Peace Corps has served in more than 140 countries since its establishment. It has served several purposes, such as school teachings, promoting friendship between the people of the US and other countries, and community services. Around four thousand US Peace Corps volunteers have served in the rural areas of Nepal since 1961 (U.S Embassy Nepal, 2022). It was started in 1961, by the US President John F. Kennedy. Through this program, volunteers are encouraged to work abroad on various programs related to multiple sectors such as Agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, and youth development, etc., (US Peace Corps, n.d.). On one side, it is assistance to underdeveloped and developing countries; on the other hand, it's a US foreign policy objective to build its positive image by promoting democratic norms and values. Therefore, the US Peace Corps is an instrument of American soft power.

Similarly, China is the second largest economy in the world. It is a rising power with the global economic share, military might and diplomatic influence (Joseph, 2014, pp. 16-17). In October 2007, President Hu Jin Tao stated that the Communist Party of China must enhance culture as part of China's soft power because it has growing significance in the competition for overall national strength. Since then, China has created several Confucius institutes worldwide to teach its language and culture. From 2008-2009, China invested more than \$8.9 billion in external publications (Nye, 2012, p. 154). Beside culture China is also

promoting ideologies. Confucius ideology is the most prominent philosophy that China rejoices. Beside it, the Maoism is an important aspect of China's ideologies (Joseph, 2014, pp. 149-152). In the context of South Asia, China is improving its people-to-people ties with its neighbors through tourism and cultural exchanges (Baskaran and Sivakumar, 2014, p.51). So, the rising economy, the increasing sphere of influence, and assertiveness in global politics, and the Belt and Road Initiative are the features of today's China.

BRI is a multi-billion dream project of modern China. It is also the fusion of the ancient Chinese Silk Road with a modern concept that brings China to the world's economic center (Singh, 2020, p.152). Singh (2020) further argues that BRI is the largest project which is expected to enhance China's soft power across the globe and is one of the Chinese ambitious foreign policy and economic initiatives (p.152). The building of the inland Silk Road Economic Belt, and Maritime Silk Road, collectively referred to as One Belt One Road (OBOR), and also known as the Belt and Road Initiative. Currently, 71 countries are participating in it and are estimated to spend four to eight Trillion Dollars through Chinese state-owned banks and other international financial institutions (Belt and Road Initiative, 2022).

During the belt and road forum opening ceremony in 2017, Beijing, the Chinese President Xi Jin Ping proposed building the Silk Road of Economic Belt in Kazakhstan and Indonesia. He called that the Belt and Road initiative. In addition, he emphasized that over 100 countries worldwide have signed the BRI agreement, and even the UN and the Security Council have passed the resolution on it (Xinhua news, 2019). The New Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Route are two of the BRI's routes. Although China is taking the method of

opening its market to new consumers, its primary goal is to secure regional connectivity projects (Awasthi, 2018, pp. 97-99).

Nepal is also one of the signatories of BRI. During the interview with Global Times, Nepalese President Bidhya Devi Bhandari stated that an agreement on BRI cooperation has been signed between Nepal and China. Nepal has brought different proposals, including Trans-Himalayan Multidimensional Connectivity Network. She also said that “BRI will benefit Nepal and the whole neighborhood” (The global times, 2019). With its numerous connectivity projects, BRI is expected to open opportunities for Nepal to transform its image from being land-locked to a land-linked country. However, it is a long-debated issue in the Nepali political and academic sphere relating it to the Indian reluctance to join BRI and the US reservations.

India is another rising global power which is located in South Asia. It is the largest country in the South Asian region in terms of its geography (1,269,219 square miles), demography (1,380 million in 2020), economy (\$2,667 billion in 2020) and military (World Bank, 2020). It is also a developing country with a rising economy. It holds influence in the South Asian region and the global sphere. Its global assertiveness is increasing with the rise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi (Darda, 2021). The neighbors in the region recognize India's contribution to political and economic stability and connectivity in the region is vital (Jagannathan, 2012, p. 1). So, along with hard power, India has given importance to soft power instruments to achieve its foreign policy aims and objectives.

India seemed more assertive in using hard means during the rule of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. It can be justified by the merger of Sikkim's sovereignty into India in 1975 (Upadya, 2012, pp.101-102). Especially in 1980s and 1990s, Indian foreign policy was

mainly based on hard power. Indian assertiveness during this specific period is reflected by her frequent use of military and economic power on conflicting issues with neighbors such as Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives (Wagner, 2005, p. 13). Wagner further writes that after numerous failures, as in the instance of Sri Lanka, India emphasized cooperative rather than coercive techniques by emphasizing non-interference, regional collaboration, and reciprocity (Wagner, 2005, p. 13). So, since 1990 India has employed more pragmatic approach in dealing with the Asian countries on cultural and other issues (Malone, 2011, p.35).

Shashi Tharoor (2012) argues that Indian minds are shaped by the forces of the Hindu, Islam and the Christian tradition and myths (p.337). He further claims that India can achieve its foreign policy by mobilizing soft power instruments such as the Indian culture, civilization, religious and cultural heritages (Tharoor, 2012, pp. 335-340). In contrast, Jagannathan (2012) argues that in the case of South Asia, aid plays more role than the influence because taking consideration of Sri Lanka, India was distanced in spite its influence from Buddhism, Bollywood and Kollywood movies in the Sri Lankan society (pp. 2-3). The Indian perception of soft power is increasing because of its ability to attract and influence the foreign governments and the global public. So, the Indian cultural heritage, its democratic image and the Bollywood films are contributing in the soft power policy (Mullen, 2015, p.188). Similarly, beside the Indian culture, values and ideologies, the role of the Indian diaspora, migrant workers, tourism and the global popularity of the Cricket games are also playing crucial role in India's soft power (Melone, 2011, pp. 36-38).

Mullen (2015) also claims that the Bollywood film industry is an important instrument of India's soft power because it is the highest producer of movies along with the

top ten Box Office revenue receiver in the world (p.190). In recent decades, the Mumbai-based Bollywood film industry has become popular not only among the Indian diaspora but also with foreign audiences in the West (Ransom, 2014, p.34). It has transformed itself from pure entertainment to the movie of innovation and the voice of the past, present and future (Kolluri and Tse-Hei Lee, 2016, p.104). So, besides the attraction and glamour of the film artists, the Bollywood film industry is also playing a role in spreading India's language, culture, values, ideologies, and ideas not only in the region but also around the globe.

Besides the US and China, the European Union is another global actor with a worldwide presence. It is a regional organization of European states that are also considered supranational because of its pooled sovereignty and structures. It is composed of twenty-seven member states with common foreign and security policies (Smith, 2004, pp. 741–741). The European Union is a role model for other continents in terms of regionalism and supranational sovereignty practices (Reiterer, 2012, p.30).

The EU promotes soft power through its democratic and liberal values all over the world. It is regarded as a civilian power and relies on diplomatic means and soft power instruments for the peaceful resolution of international issues and problems. The European Union's policy limits the use of hard in solving international problems and issues. It mobilizes member states' domestic forces in war and civil war-affected areas for crisis management rather than territorial defense (Tuomioja, 2009, p.4). However, Haine (2004) argues that the EU's adaptation of a common security policy "A Secure Europe in a Better World," in 2003, was the turning point of the EU toward more hard power than soft (pp. 69-70). He further argues that the reasons

behind the adoption of this policy are an awakening sense of powerlessness after the Iraq war (2003) and the entry of the ten new members into the EU (Haine, 2004, p. 69).

However, the EU has been a civilian and soft power ever since the term European Union was coined by Francois Duchene in 1972 (Reiterer, 2012, p.37). This indicates that the European Union, as an international actor, pursues its interests mainly by economic and political means and chooses military action only as a last resort. So, the promotion of human rights, the rule of law, democracy, and humanitarian aid are the instruments of the EU's soft power. Similarly, the credentials of the European Union based on civilian authority uses political and diplomatic measures to address problems through legal means and processes.

Either country is big or small; despite the physical size and other differences, all states peruse soft power. Chong (2010) claims that despite of the small physical size and population Vatican City, Singapore, Iceland, Ireland, Nicaragua, Costa Rika, and UAE are also significantly improving their soft power status (p.385). For example, according to Portland's soft power ranking 2019, many of the top thirty ranked countries are small states (Jonathan, 2019, p.25). This ranking was based on the six sub-indices: culture, government, engagement, education, digital, and enterprises. Furthermore, South Korea, Singapore, and Israel are small states with some exceptions, such as military power and economic development. However, they all fall under the top thirty ranks in the 20th, 21st, and 26th places (Jonathan, 2019, p.25). It indicates that small states also peruse soft power promotion and can achieve a significant position in the soft power ranking. Many developing small states such as UAE, Qatar, Oman, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and the Maldives are significantly promoting their soft power regionally and globally.

In the case of small states/powers, soft power is a tool that offers the chance to make an intangible effect on the global community (Shakya, 2021, p.92). On the other hand, soft power is not necessarily inherited. Instead, it is acquired by the states with a series of efforts (Karki and Dhungana, 2020, p.171). Similarly, Chong (2009) insists that soft power is an instrument of small states to achieve their national interest through foreign policy and diplomacy. So, “soft power is a luxury a small state can afford” (p.79). This argument emphasizes the importance of soft power in small states like Nepal.

However, the term small state is long-debated and ambiguous because different IR scholars have given other arguments, whether to say small states or small power. For example, “Both the conventional and alternative models of foreign policy behavior of small states predict that small states will participate less in foreign affairs than large states” (East, 1973, p. 564). Thus, under the argument formed by the East, it can be claimed that the states which participate less in foreign affairs than large states are called small states.

Nepal is a small state because, according to the World Bank 2016 report, Nepal had a population of 98 million in 2016, its GDP was 0.26% of the world’s total GDP, and Nepali ruler’s psyche, such as King Prithivi Narayan Shah stated Nepal as yam between the boulders and being geographical, economical and militarily smaller than India and China (Adhikari, 2018, p.47). So, taking into consideration of arguments presented by East and Adhikari, Nepal is a small state because it has a smaller population and smaller GDP, and it has less influence and engagement in global political affairs compared to her two big immediate

neighbors: India and China. Additionally, the prevailing psyche established by the prominent Nepali rulers should also be considered. However, writing about Singapore's soft power development, Alan Chong argues, "It must be stressed at the outset that generating soft power is a choice, not an inheritance" (Chong, 2009, p.67). It also indicates that geographical size presents no hurdle in soft power promotion if the vision and policies are clear and concise.

Despite the worldwide implication of soft power in the state's foreign policy, it also holds some constraints and limitations. The different writers, IR scholars, politicians, and diplomats have figured out these constraints.

On European Union's soft power promotion policy, Micheal Reiterer (2012) argues that the EU is adopting a civilian power policy because it does not have sufficient hard power (p.39). Therefore, it is a requirement of the EU, not a choice. On the other hand, considering the realists argue that "Diplomacy is a key mechanism for balancing various national interests but finally, the most important tool available for implementing states' foreign policies is military force", (Baylis et al., 2017). Similarly, American diplomat Henry Kissinger (1957) states that force is the last resort of any sovereign state to maintain justice and protect its vital interests (p.4). It takes a long time to achieve results from soft power, while policymakers and politicians want prompt results. The instruments of soft power are not entirely under the control of the government because culture and values are embedded in civil societies. Therefore, it depends on the government's credibility. Additionally, it is often hard to use, easy to lose, and costly to regain (Nye, 2012).

The soft power-wielding process takes many years, even sometimes many decades. In contrast, some negative issues and events can easily affect a country's gained soft power

reputation. For example, according to the Brand Finance Global Soft Power Index report (2021), the US has fallen from 4th to 6th position with a score of 55.9 out of 100 in the global soft power ranking despite its world's superpower image. The identified causes behind this fall are the controversial election during Trump's presidency and the reluctant response to Covid-19 Pandemic (p.16).

Nye himself seems doubtful that soft power alone can produce the desired outcome. It can be justified by the development of the new term sharp power by him in 2003 (Nye, 2011, p.20). It can be analyzed as an attempt to explain that soft power only cannot produce an effective foreign policy, and a combination of both types of power is required to get better outcomes. In his piece, Al-Mullah writes that the idea of smart power refers to an actor's capacity to combine hard and soft power in a way that both support one another. This notion dispels the myth that soft power alone can achieve effective foreign policy (Al-Mulla, 2017, pp. 87-88).

It helps to create a positive perception of the state when one nation's cultural values, political ideologies, and concepts are appealing to another, and it frequently leads to imitation of those ideologies. But failing ideas and policies are not imitated (Rothman, 2011). For instance, many states copied the cultural beliefs and political policies of both America and the USSR. The popularity of Soviet culture, values, political ideologies, and ideas decreased with the fall of the USSR. In contrast, the US liberal values, culture, ideologies, and innovations gained better heights since the US-led unipolar liberal world order began. Chinese soft power has an attractive influence on the global public and their government. In addition, it is also difficult to measure because of the complexities presented by the vast numbers of soft power instruments and the unavailability of a global standard of

measurement and procedures. However, despite some limitations, soft power is widely practiced in the international sphere to achieve the state's foreign policy objectives.

2.3 Previous Studies on Nepal's Soft Power

In the context of Nepal's soft power, different scholars and practitioners of international relations have given some similar and other arguments and opinions. Amish Raj Mulmi claims that Nepal has been projecting soft power since the 19th century. During the Rana regime, Nepal employed 'Shikar Diplomacy,' which attracted several high-profile visits, including King George the Fifth of England and several other dignitaries from Europe and India to hunt tigers in the Terai region (Mulmi, 2021, pp. 94-95).

Nepal is a naturally beautiful Himalayan nation rich in its diversity of geography, climate, species of birds, animals, flora and fauna, along with varieties of cultures and heritages. Therefore, it holds the potential of a worldwide tourist destination. In this context, Yam Prashad Chaulagain argues that in the context of Asian states, Nepal should focus on its tourism industry (Chaulagain, 2014). Similarly, Nepal's soft power objectives can be achieved by mobilizing the soft power resources such as culture, political and foreign policies (Timilsina, 2020, pp. 39-65).

Sujiv Shakya identifies the Demography of Nepal as an instrument for soft power (Shakya, 2021, p. 92). According to his argument, Nepal's youth and adult populations make up 20.8 percent and 40.68 percent of the total population, respectively. Therefore, Nepal's existing demography has excellent promise for Nepal's objectives for soft power because of the dividend of a significant working population (Shakya, 2021, p. 92).

Sweta Karki and Sarashree Dhungana claim that Small states have their own soft power promotion strategy; some build an environment, while others rely on their institutional capacity and diplomacy. For example, Slovenia and Norway have built a reputation as peace-loving countries, while Singapore's soft power is based on its economic and institutional capabilities (Karki and Dhungana, 2020, pp.169-174). So, Nepal should focus on culture and diplomacy despite its limited resources.

India and China both have influence in Nepal. Recently, it has also been seen in the soft power level. For instance, a report in an Indian newspaper claimed that although Nepal and India have always shared a sacred thread, Chinese delegates are now required to travel to Lumbini to replace it (Ghimire, 2017). It shows that soft power environment in South Asia is very competitive.

So, Nepal should utilize soft power as an instrument of foreign policy to enhance its national image and economic prosperity. Adherence to guiding principles of Nepal's foreign policy, timely implementation of a bilateral, regional and international agreement, and promotion of cultural diversity and tourism offer potential soft power promotion strategy (Baniya, 2021, p. 14). Furthermore, policy and institutional reformation are also vital to achieve Nepal's soft power objectives (Baniya, 2021, p. 14).

2.4 Theoretical Perspective and Conceptual Framework

This research applies the theoretical lens of soft power to study Nepal's context. Soft power is an ability to attract others to do what you want; otherwise, they do not (Nye, 2004, p.2). As discussed in the previous sections of this study, soft power differs from the traditional state-centric hard power. Soft power is generated through persuasion and attraction. It emphasizes the role of state and non-state actors, mainly public opinion. It also believes that people's perceptions can change or alter their state behaviors.

Nye (2011) says that the traditional coercive devices are applied through military might and economic value, but soft power relies on the spread of cultural heritage, political values, ideologies, and legitimacy (p.11). So, the country's culture, values, ideas, ideologies and legitimacy are the instruments of soft power. Cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy are two well-known methods of soft power. Cultural diplomacy is the act of promoting a state's culture overseas through the exchange of ideas, information, culture, and the arts. A nation's soft power essentially rests in its culture, which appeals to others (Wastnidge, 2015, pp. 365-366). Public diplomacy is diplomacy directed towards the public. Its goal is to advance national interest by influencing the overseas public through interaction and information (Pramila, 2011, p. 134).

Conceptually, this research has divided Nepal's soft power instruments into factors and mediums. The factors of soft power are referred to as the soft power resources of Nepal, and the mediums are the channels through which soft power factors are promoted. However, some mediums and factors also play the role of both factors and mediums. For instance, the media can be both a soft power factor and a medium.

This research mainly focuses on four aspects of Nepal's soft power.

a) The factors of Nepal's soft power.

Among many, only a few factors of Nepal's soft power are described with the justification of why the particular factor can be considered an essential factor of Nepal's soft power.

b) The mediums

Among many, only a few mediums are listed with the justification of why the particular medium should be considered as instruments of Nepal's soft power?

c) Role of soft power instruments (factors and mediums) in Nepal's soft power promotion

The role of the identified instruments (factors and medium) have been analyzed and justified based on their significance in Nepal's soft power.

d) Contextualization of soft power policy

This part attempts to contextualize soft power promotion policy in relation to Nepal's economic realities and institutional capacities.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research follows a qualitative research design. So, it is exploratory. It is particularly on the country-based soft power case of Nepal. The study attempts to answer “what” and “how” questions on Nepal’s soft power. So, it attempts to answer the questions such as: what are the instruments of Nepal’s soft power, what roles they play in soft power promotion, and how those instruments should be efficiently mobilized to achieve Nepal’s soft power objectives. During the research, mainly qualitative data has been collected. Data presentation and analysis are also qualitative.

3.2 Research Site

Different physical libraries in Kathmandu are visited to collect secondary data. Similarly, Nepal’s governmental and non-governmental offices, colleges, universities, and research institutes are also serving as the research site for this study.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The only relevant data that are supportive to answer research questions are collected. “Secondary data is reportage based on other’s account that covers wide ground including newsletters, bulletins, catalogs, yearbooks, newspapers, magazines, encyclopedias and other reference books (Guthrie, 2010, p.102).” So, the qualitative data related to soft power has been collected from the sources such as written and spoken documents by various writers and

scholars, images, videos, and texts from books, journal articles, magazines, newspapers, social media, and websites.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

Available texts from the secondary resources have been brought together, separated on a thematic basis, and mixed with the researcher's own idea. The methods of data analysis and presentation of this study are qualitative. Data presentation and analysis are descriptive, analytical, and argumentative.

3.5 Ethical Concerns

Data has been collected only through the permitted source. Data has been collected from reliable sources. Confidentiality will be maintained in case of the data source is persons or organizations. In the case of confidential data, it will be only used for analysis, and no data shall be provided to a third party. The ideas and information taken from other writers and scholars are properly cited.

3.6 Limitations

Although other prominent theories of international relations, such as realism, neo-realism, and constructivism, have different perspectives of power, soft power is the neoliberal concept. So, this research is mainly based on liberal and neoliberal norms and values such as democracy, diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, and reciprocity, the importance of international institutions and transnational civil societies, and soft power.

As discussed in the literature review section of this study, the former American Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye and the US politician Hilary Clinton also argue the importance of smart power. It is a combination of hard and soft power (Wilson, 2008, p.115). However, this research is only focused on soft power.

Organizations and institutions such as Portland Communications, Monocle Magazines, Brand Directory etc., have identified various indicators to measure a country's soft power. However, this research does not aim to measure Nepal's soft power. Instead, it only defines, describes, and analyzes.

Similarly, soft power is a vast theoretical approach in which several actors, instruments, and strategies are involved. So, also in the case of Nepal, many actors and instruments of soft power can be identified. However, this research does not cover all the instruments but attempts to describe only a few of them which have high importance in Nepal's soft power context. Therefore, this research is executed in the micro-level.

In addition, research data is mainly based on readily available secondary data. On the other hand, the scope of this research is constrained by limited individual capacity, limited resources, limited time frame, and the unfavorable environment created by the global pandemic of Covid19.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Nepal's Soft Power Instruments: Factors and Mediums

4.1.1 Factors of Nepal's Soft Power

I. Nepali Culture

We refer to culture as the conditions a person can produce as a part of society, both materially and intangibly (Acharya, 2010, p.56). So, culture is the material and non-material creation of human societies to conduct their way of life. Culture has significance in soft power. In international relations, it is spread through cultural diplomacy.

Nepal is rich in cultural diversity. Nepal itself is a composition of multiple ethnicities, communities, and caste. Each ethnic group has its distinct culture, traditions, norms, and values. Nepal has also developed its kind of civilization, social organizations, social development, various languages, customs, and scripts. Similarly, archaeological discoveries such as fossils, funeral stuff, weapons, temples, houses, manuscripts, funeral stuff, and material explain evolution of Nepali culture and civilization (Ministry of Culture Tourism and Civil Aviation Nepal, 2017). On the other hand, these cultural values and materials have a significant role in nation-building and shaping the national identity. Culture is also associated with the identity of each particular group and community, giving them a sense of belonging.

The traditional slogan "Atithi Devo Bhava", (guests are identical to the Gods) expresses respect, honor, and hospitality toward visitors and guests in Nepali society. It is important to Nepal's tourism and hospitality sectors (Bhattarai and Adhikari, 2016, p. 77).

Similarly, the culture of Nepal also demonstrates love, mercy, generosity, and compassion not only towards the guests but also to the poor, homeless, sick, and orphans. Our ideals promote serving, assisting, and aiding those in need. Our religious and cultural traditions also encourage us to participate in, assist, and support one another at celebrations, funerals, and festivals.

Nepal rejoices many religious and cultural traditions which are called Parampara. The Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains refer to it as a continuum of knowledge, practices, and talents within a particular community and name it Parampara (Pant, 2008, p.48). During feasts, fairs, and festivals in Nepal, homes and the surrounding area are cleaned, painted, and adorned. To celebrate with their families, people come home from the cities and overseas. Feasts and celebrations are open to relatives and neighbors. It is crucial for strengthening intercultural and social ties. The two biggest holidays celebrated in Nepal are Dashain and Tihar. People receive Tika and blessings from elderly citizens and seniors on the tenth day of Dashain. This custom highlights the revered status of the elderly people in Nepali society and culture. The tenth day of the Dashain festival is Vijaya Dashami, which is observed by both Hindus and Buddhists, also highlights religious unity and tolerance in Nepali society. However, Hindus and Buddhists, observe differently.

Crows, dogs, cows, and oxen are worshipped and fed during Tihar. Even Nags (serpents) are venerated on Nag Panchami. This custom demonstrates the importance of peaceful coexistence between people and other living things in Nepali culture. Similar to this, on the fifth day of the Tihar festival, both sisters and brothers presents gifts for each other's. It remarks significance of enhancing family, social and cultural bonds between brothers and sisters.

Similarly, Nepali history also has significance in shaping Nepal's identity. "People maintain and show their allegiance to their nation through memories about the past" (Sharma, 1970, p.210). Nepal has the historical legacy of Kirati, Lichhivi, and Malla tradition, Gorkhali territorial expansion and unification, and democratic freedom movements. So, history is also an integral part of Nepal's culture.

The Nepali poet, Laxmi Prashad Devkota, has shown his devotion to Nepal's culture and values reflected in his poetry and other literary creations. Bal Krishna Sharma writes in the article that, for Devkota culture, tradition, values, beliefs, and topography are the most significant monuments of national heritage (Sharma, 1970, p.209). So, Nepali culture is the source of the national identity at both the national and international levels. Cultural norms, values, social institutions, and beliefs can be promoted through cultural diplomacy.

II. Nepali Cultural Uniqueness: Kumari, 'the living Goddess of Nepal'

In Nepali culture, Kumari is worshipped as a living Goddess. Kumari is considered a reincarnation of the Hindu Goddess Taleju Bhawani. A virgin girl from the local Newar community with some distinct characteristics is chosen as 'Kumari'. After a girl is selected, she abandons her family until the beginning of her menstruation periods and has to live in a temple known as 'Kumari Ghar'. There she has to follow unique sets of norms determined by the ancient Hindu tradition. This old tradition is observed in all three cities inside the Kathmandu valley, including Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur.

Rajkumar Ranabhat writes that among many myths related to Kumari, one legend claims that, during the reign of Malla King Jayapraksh Malla, Goddess Taleju used to come

in the night to play “tripasha” a dice with him. Once, Goddess got angered with the king when the queen saw them together. So, the Goddess informed the king that she would no longer visit and that for him to save his throne; he must locate a virgin girl from the Newari Shakya group (Ranabhat, 2016, p.4).

According to Hindu mythology, Kumari is believed to have the power of curing the sick people especially for those who are with blood disorders. Kumari’s blessing is believed to bring prosperity, love and kindness toward all the living beings and she is also a symbolic figure that establishes a connection between the physical world and divine heaven (National Geographic, 2015).

She is worshipped not only by the Hindus but also by the Buddhists. The tradition of Kumari can be associated with the myth of the Dalai Lama. In Tibetan Buddhist culture, Dalai Lama is considered a reincarnation of the Bodhisattwa “Avalokiteshwora”. The present 15th Dalai Lama “Tenzin Gyatso” is believed as a reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lama. He was born in the rural Tibetan village Taktser, Amdo (Biography, 2017, *para* 2). He was recognized as a reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama because his unique characteristics matched with pre-determined criteria of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Since Dalai Lama has a global reputation as a Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader who represents the belief of the international Buddhist population, in the same manner, Kumari is the imagery of the Hindu religious tradition.

Kumari has a unique attraction for tourists because of her special attire and religious myths. On the other hand, it has great cultural significance in the world because it is the unique tradition followed only in Nepal. However, due to the lack of sufficient publicity, her existence and importance are still unknown to many. On the other hand, this unique Nepali

tradition can be a significant part of Nepalese cultural diplomacy which can be spread as imagery of global Hindu heritage. Similarly, it can also be portrayed as a symbol of religious tolerance and harmony because she represents the faith of both Hindus and Buddhists. Therefore, the systematic promotion of Kumari can play a vital role in Nepal's soft power promotion.

III. Language

Language is more than a medium of communication. It's a system we pick up throughout our socialization, growth, and development. According to the speech act theory proposed by J.L Austin in 1960, language is employed to explain or assert something, such as warning, persuading, convincing, narrating, reporting, judging, stating, telling, proclaiming, and prohibiting, which has actions and effects (Lamichhane, n.d., p.19). Language is also an essential element of culture. Language itself is the production of culture. All the aspects of culture are embodied with language. Lois Tyson claims that "because it is through language that a culture's ideologies are passed on" (Tyson, 2006, p. 255).

Language is the essential medium of passing tradition, culture, and ideologies. For instance, we are well acquainted with American and European history, poetry, music, art, fashion, and movies because we have compulsory English learning in our schooling. For another instance, many Nepalese watch Indian movies, serials, dramas, and other TV shows and read Indian books, magazines, articles, and newspapers because many of us understand Hindi. Similarly, Indian cuisine and fashion are famous in Nepal because we perceive these

through the language we have learned, books we have read, and the movies we have watched. So, language acts as a bridge between the people and culture. Understanding foreign songs, movies, literature, perception, conception, and opinion of foreign public linguistic proficiency is crucial. In addition, language, culture, ideologies, and values are interrelated because they complement understanding each other.

In the context of Nepal, several languages are spoken. Nepal is rich in ethnic diversity. Each ethnic group has its distinct language and culture. According to the 2011 Nepal census, 123 languages are spoken in Nepal, where Nepali is the mother tongue of 11,082,695 (34.6%) people out of the total population (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011, p.4). So, Nepali is the primary communicating language of Nepal followed by Maithili.

Countries promote language as an instrument of soft power. For instance, China is promoting the Chinese language through the worldwide network of its Confucius Institute (Confucius Institutes [CIS], n.d., p.34). Similarly, South Korea is growing its King Sejong Institutes, which were anticipated to reach 150 by 2015, which is in response to the expansion of the Chinese language (Hall and Smith, 2013, p. 5). Similarly, the German language has been promoted by its network of GOTHE Institutes. Students who apply for higher studies in many English-speaking countries such as the United States of America, Australia, and Britain must pass different language courses, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and Graduate Record Exam (GRE), determined by the host countries. Similarly, Han Chinese Language Course (HSK) is necessary to study in China.

Thus, Language is an essential factor to spread culture, ideologies and values. So, the Nepali language is a factor of soft power, through which Nepal can promote culture and ideologies by spreading them in the international sphere.

IV. Buddhist ideology: the Value of Non-violence and World Peace

Buddhist ideology is one of the most potent philosophies in history and the third largest religion in the world (Rana, 2020, p. 30). Buddhism originated in Nepal with the birth of Siddhartha as the son of the king and the queen of Kapilvastu: Suddhodhana and Mayadevi in 563 B.C (Rana, 2020, p. 30). It has spread as a religion worldwide, mainly in Asian countries such as Laos, Mongolia, Thailand, Myanmar, India, Bhutan, Japan, China, Cambodia and Vietnam.

“Buddhism is based on absolute freedom and true equality; it is rational, liberal, objective, concrete, complete, positive, pragmatic and applicable at all levels” (Kandel, 2020, p. 27). Apart from the religious beliefs, traditions and rituals, Buddhist ideologies have significant importance in world peace because of its values and norms, such as Panchasheel (the five conducts of a virtuous life), Astasheel (the eight conducts of disciplined life), Chaturarya Satya (four truths of life), i.e., birth, old age, sickness, and death and non-violence. Rita Rana, in her article, writes that the main objective of the Buddha's teachings is Nirvana (self-enlightenment), which comprises love, compassion, religious tolerance, nonviolence, selflessness, truth, understanding, knowledge, personal freedom, happiness, and peace (Rana, 2020, pp. 32-33). The contemporary world is entangled in the phenomena of

war, civil war, and military interventions and human rights violations: such as crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and genocide. In this context, the importance of Buddhist ideology is increasing because of its discourse on non-violence, human dignity and a moral way of life. There are many reasons for the world's communities to continue to support Buddhist ideology in the days to come and Buddhism continues to be a significant force in religion, culture, and politics (Kandel, 2020, p. 27).

India has also given high priorities to the promotion of Buddhist ideology through its Buddhist Diplomacy. It can be justified by the Indian Prime Minister Modi's speeches and imagery of Lord Buddha and his ideologies during his national and international representation (WION, 2020). During the 2016 BIMSTEC summit, the leaders released a joint statement that included building a Buddhist Circuit within the BIMSTEC region (BIMSTEC, 2016, p.5). The Buddhist tourist circuit is an ambitious plan presented by India which connects various sites, including Lumbini and Tilaurakot in the Kapilvastu district of Nepal (BIMSTEC, 2016, p.5). This mega project was launched not only to promote Buddhist tourism in the region; it is also part of the Indian soft power strategy, which is incorporated as Buddhist Diplomacy.

As the birthplace of Buddha, Nepal has right and duty to spread Buddhist ideologies throughout the world from the religious ground and diplomatic perspective. Nepal's legitimacy to spread Buddhist ideology can be justified with much ground. Firstly, Siddhartha Gautama's birthplace lies in Lumbini in the Kapilbastu district of Nepal. Second, among the four Buddhist religious sites (Char Dharmas): Buddhagaya, India: where Buddha achieved his "Parinirvana" (enlightenment); Saranatha, India: where Buddha gave his first "Dharma Deshana" (discourse) and Kushinagar, India: where Buddha got his

“Mahaparinirvana” (demise). The first “Dhama” where Buddha was born is located in Nepal, making Nepal a holy site for Buddhist pilgrimage worldwide (MoFA, 2018). Besides that, several other Buddhist religious and cultural sites such as Tilaurakot, Ramgram, Soyambhunath temple, and Baudhanath temple are also located inside the Nepalese territory. Thirdly, Buddhism is practiced by the second largest population after Hinduism, and several dialects of Buddhism, such as Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana, are followed in Nepal (Bajracharya, 1996, pp.215-221).

So, promoting Buddhist ideology aids in preserving long-standing ties with Buddhist-majority nations like Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia, as well as their populations. This initiative strengthens relations with these nations and creates chances to improve people-to-people connectivity. Buddhist teachings have also received full attention in Nepal. On the occasion of the 2561st birth and the enlightenment day of Lord Buddha, President of Nepal Bidya Devi Bhandari stated that “the teachings and guidelines of Buddha have remained inspiring and exemplary for us all” (Office of the President of Nepal, 2017).

Like Confucius's ideology in China, Buddhist ideology can play a vital role in Nepal's soft power promotion because of its solid ideological background. Moreover, Buddhist ideology has significance to the whole world. In addition, it is an Eastern Ideology, which brings light to the eastern culture, religion, beliefs, values and discourses. Therefore, it is imperative to spread Buddhist ideology to promote Nepal's image as a peaceful nation and to express our strong belief in harmony, tolerance, non-violence and the value of world peace.

V. Himalayas: the Lifeline of the Global Ecology

The Himalayas are uniquely positioned in Nepal's civilization, culture, economy, environment, and ecology. These are the center of mountain civilization, ecosystem, and attractive tourist destinations (Vaidya, 2019, pp.8-15). It also has geostrategic importance for Nepal's security and the interest of our neighbors: India and China. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who became the Prime Minister of India after independence in 1947, adopted the "Himalayan Frontier Policy." Nehru considered Nepali Himalayas as the natural barrier between India and China that minimizes the risk presented from the Chinese side (Shrestha, 1980, p. 125).

Nepal retains a strong reputation as a Himalayan nation since there are various mountains in the Northern section of Nepal. The world's highest peak Mt. Everest (29,031 feet) is also situated in the Solukhumbu area in Northern Nepal. Since Sir Edmund Hilary, a mountaineer from New Zealand, and Tenzin Norgay Sherpa, a mountaineer from Nepal, first highlighted it on May 29,1953, the world has been aware of it (History.com editors, 2009, *para* 1). Nepal has been promoting the significance of the Himalayas, especially in terms of the greatness of Mt. Everest and its importance as an important tourist destination. However, it's time to change the course of the Himalayas according to the ongoing international discourse on the importance of Mountain ecology concerning global warming and climate change. "High mountain areas are arguably the region most affected by climate change" (Polomo, 2017, pp. 180-182).

Polomo (2017) further argues that the Himalayas are the source of fresh water and ecological diversity but melting glaciers and other consequences of climate change and global warming have had an unfavorable influence on the region's water resources, mountain tourism trends, and mountain peoples' way of life, and food chains (pp. 180-182).

Nepal and other Himalayan nations such as Bhutan and Tibet are the freshwater reserves for South Asia. So, the impact of global warming will affect not only these Himalayan countries but the entire region. Stimson Center (2010) argues that the coastal areas are most vulnerable in the face of climate change. Its effects include sea-level rise, an increase in cyclones and storms, an increase in sea surface temperature, acidification of surface waters, and a threat to the coastal ecology and the way of life for millions of people (p.1). This argument shows a direct connection between the Himalayas and the global ecosystem. So, the Himalayas and the global ecosystem cannot be separated. Any change in the Himalayan glacier can bring a multiplier effect on the coastal areas of the seas. Thus, to preserve the regional and the global ecosystems Himalayas should be kept. Therefore, Nepal is at the center of global climate change actions.

Nepal has launched some programs and campaigns against global warming and climate change. It has helped to draw the world's attention to some extent. For instance, Recently Nepal Army launched a mountain cleaning campaign. During this program total of 27 tons and 671 kg of garbage were collected from six different mountains such as Mt. Everest, Pumori, Dhaulagiri, Lhotse, Makalu, and Amadablam; among those garbage total of 2,505 kg was bio-degradable and 25,166 was of non-biodegradable (Nepal Army, 2021, *para 2*).

Likewise, the Nepali Cabinet meeting was held in the Everest base camp on 4th December 2009 at an elevation of 5,242 meters. On this, 27 Nepali ministers attended the meeting and adopted the ten-point "Everest Declaration" (CNN, 2009). This news was highly covered by the world's leading newspapers such as BBC and CNN. The purpose behind the

meeting was to draw the attention of the world community toward the adverse effect of global warming and climate change on the Himalayas.

In this context, the growing concerns of world communities toward global warming and climate change have brought opportunities for Nepal to draw world attention. Nepal's initiations on global warming and climate change has two benefits: first, it increases the global concern on Himalayan ecology; second, associating the significance of the Himalayas to the global warming and climate change, offers potential to improve Nepal's soft power in the international arena.

VI. The UN peacekeeping missions: Nepal's Commitment to the UN Charter and the Value of World Peace

International peacekeeping missions are essential to maintain global rule and order and cool the heat of conflict. The United Nations is the international governmental organization responsible for maintaining international peace and security as mandated by its Charter: Articles VI and VII (Charter of the United Nations, 1945, pp. 8-11). After the cease-fire, the UN peacekeeping mission is formed between the conflicting parties. It adopts a neutral stance and concentrates on using peaceful measures to resolve conflicts.

International peacekeeping missions started during the 1950–1953 Korean War and continued through the 1956 Suez Crisis and other contested regions under the direction of the UN (Baylis et al., 2017, p.238). Since the beginning of the UN peacekeeping missions, several countries have played a constructive role in international peace-building by sending their peacekeeping force. However, governments around the globe have given high priority

to UN peacekeeping missions because it not only represents the state's commitment toward the norms and values of the world peace but also is an instrument of their soft power promotion.

Nepal adheres to an abiding faith in the Charter of the United Nations and the value of world peace. In the “state's policy article 51,” it has been written “international law and norms of world peace and the United Nations Charter,” which has been mentioned in Nepal's foreign policy's guiding principles number six and seven (MoFA, 2021). It shows that Nepal's foreign policy is guided to play a constructive role in maintaining world peace under the UN leadership. In this context, UN peacekeeping missions are the platform for Nepal to present her commitment to world peace on the practical ground.

Therefore, since the beginning of the UN's peacekeeping and peace-building mission, it has been Nepal's priority and concern. So, to present Nepal's image in the international community, the UN peacekeeping missions are crucial (Bhattarai & Nepali, 2021, p. 141). They also argue that “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” is an Eastern philosophy that views the world as one big family and forms the basis of Nepal's foreign policy (Bhattarai & Nepali, 2021, p.141). This philosophy also encourages brotherhood and world peace.

Nepal's participation in UN peacekeeping missions began in 1958 by sending five military observers, followed by the deployment of the Nepal Army's contingent “Purano Gorakh Battalion” in Egypt in 1978. Till 2019, Nepal Army has supported 43 UN peacekeeping missions on which more than 135,343 army personnel have served as UN peacekeepers (Nepal Army, 2021).

The image in the next page shows the total number of missions and the army staff deployed under UN peacekeeping and peace-building missions.

PARTICIPATION OF NEPALI ARMY IN UN MISSIONS

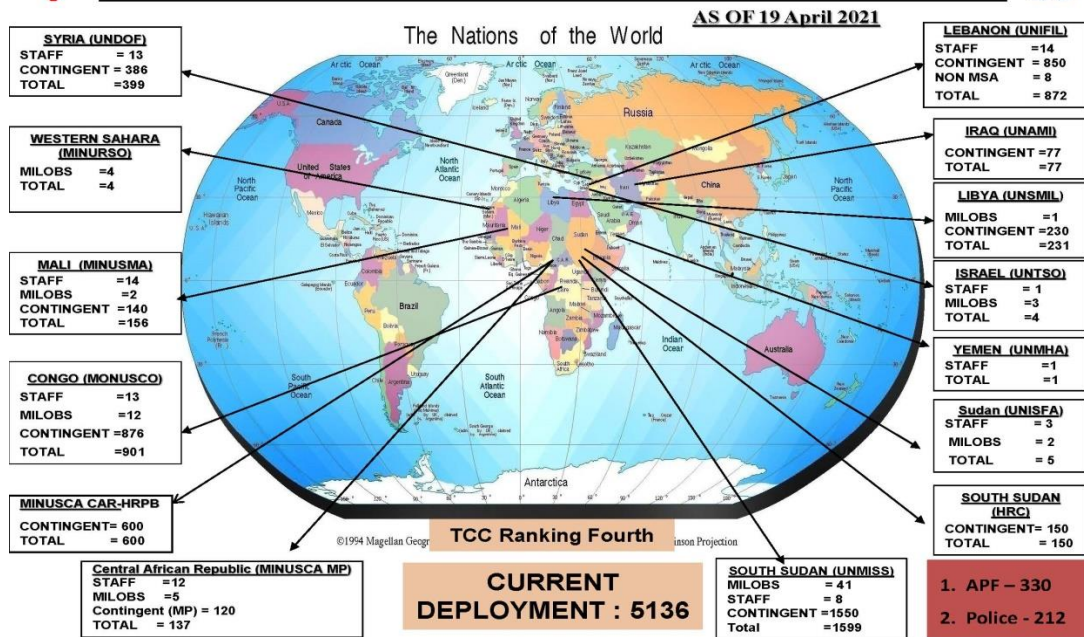


Image 4.1: Nepal’s UN Peace Keeping Missions

Source: Nepal Army Official Website, 2021.

According to the above data as of April 2021, Nepali peacekeeping missions are currently running in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Western Sahara, Libya, Mali, Israel, Congo, Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic. In addition, the data indicates altogether 5,136 personnel from Nepal Army, 330 from APF, and 212 from Nepal police are currently serving in different peacekeeping and peace-building missions worldwide.

Therefore, Nepal’s contribution to the UN peacekeeping and peace-building missions reflects her commitment to the UN Charter 1945 and the value of world peace. These missions also hold significance from the perspective of soft power promotion. However,

although Nepal has been involved in peacekeeping missions since 1958, Nepal's initiation has not reached a more significant portion of the international community in the absence of necessary publicity. So, Nepal has to be focused more on utilizing the UN peacekeeping mission as an essential factor of Nepal's soft power promotion.

VII. Gorkha Legacy: History of Bravery and Loyalty

Age-old Gorkha's legacy of bravery, honesty, and loyalty holds a significant position in the international sphere. Nepal is recognized as the homeland of the Gorkha soldiers. This international fame is vital in establishing Nepal's recognition, reputation, and perception at the international level. "Nepal, the subject of these pages, the mountainous home of a recklessly brave and hardy race known as the Gorkhas, ranks as the most powerful and favored of India's frontier tribe" (Balentine, 1895, p.6). This extract from the book of Henry Balentine, the Consul to Bombay, describes the fame of the Gorkhali people in terms of their bravery.

During the Nepalese unification era, Nepal fought a war with the British East India Company from 1814-1816 (Bajracharya, 1992, p.276). Although the Anglo-Nepal war culminated in an asymmetric treaty of Sugauli (1816), Gorkhali's bravery strongly influenced British India. So, Nepali Gorkha's recruitment began in India with a treaty between the Sikh Punjab government and Nepal. They are called "Lahure" since they started to serve in Lahore, the capital of the Punjab government (Nath, 2010, p.22). Although Nepal was against Gurkha recruitment, she could not resist the pressure from the British and continued for ages.

Nath (2010) further writes that during WWI (1914-1918), about 243,000 Nepali Gorkha fought from the British side and an additional number of 160,000 were recruited in WWII (p.23). He further writes that Nepali Gorkha soldiers fought in the different frontiers of South Asia, South East Asia, and Europe from the British side (Nath, 2010, p.23). Still, many Nepalese Gorkha soldiers are serving in Indian and British Gorkha regiments and represent the symbols of the past legacy of Gorkha bravery. The Times of India mentions that the seven Gorkha Rifle Regiments of the Indian Army each include roughly 32,000 Gorkha soldiers are serving in India (The Times of India, 2017, *para 2*). Thus, the contribution of Gorkha soldiers to the safety and security of the Indian and the British national interests is noteworthy. During their service, some of the Gorkha soldiers have been decorated with the highest-ranking medals of the Indian and the British Army such as the Victoria Cross and Param Vir Chakra, while many of them have lost their lives on the battlefields of the Falkland War, Iraq and Afghanistan war, Kargil war, etc.

Anglo Nepal war, WWI, and WWII established Gorkhali as daring soldiers of Nepal. The acquired fame of Gorkha soldiers who fought different frontiers of the world is known as the Gorkha Legacy. The Gorkha soldiers have a significant role in establishment of Nepal's identity in the international arena. Therefore the glorious legacy of Gorkha can play an essential role in promoting Nepal's soft power. But, first, it requires preserving and spreading the Gorkha legacy abroad with appropriate plans and policies.

4.1.2 Mediums of Nepal's Soft Power Promotion

I. Nepali Diplomatic missions

Diplomatic missions in the foreign states and diplomats working on it are responsible for protecting their sending state's national interest. Diplomatic missions are established in the form of Embassy, Non-resident Missions, Consulate General, Embassy on Disguise, etc. Diplomatic missions include Ambassador, Charge d' Affair, Consulate General, and other staffs. The Foreign Ministry assigns them duties and responsibilities. Apart from their regular duties, diplomats also play a vital role in promoting soft power through public diplomacy.

Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the coordinating authority for all government departments, foreign embassies, and INGOs. It carries out bilateral and multilateral relations and projects and promotes Nepal's image and national interest in the international arena. In addition, it supports economic diplomacy and protects the rights of Nepalese citizens who live and work abroad. It also has the responsibility of developing and implementing Nepal's foreign policy. According to MoFA, as of 2021, Nepal has 39 diplomatic posts, including 30 embassies, three permanent missions, and six consulate generals (MoFA, n.d.).

American diplomat Henry Kissinger stresses the value of fostering and growing relationships. Beyond the formal channels, Kissinger maintained a broad and diverse network that included journalists, press, television stars, and cultural luminaries (Sabenius et al., 2018). This instance indicates the importance of nurturing relations with different political leaders, bureaucrats, and civil societies in the receiving state. A diplomat must establish and use both formal and informal channels to connect with the foreign public and their

government. It is a duty and responsibility of a diplomat and also a method of public diplomacy.

Diplomatic missions and diplomats represent the sending states. They play a crucial role in defending sending state's national interests. They are also responsible for executing sending states' economic, cultural, and public diplomacy (Barston, 2019, pp 25-26). Their gestures, speech, and communication with a foreign government, political leaders, diplomats, bureaucrats, media, and civil society have significance in positive image building of the sending state in the receiving states. Therefore, adequate mobilization of Nepali diplomatic missions and diplomats can serve as a medium for Nepal's soft power promotion.

II. Media: Electronic, Printing, Online and Social

Developed nations like the USA, UK, France, Germany, Korea, Japan, and China have international Television networks and other international channels. BBC UK, CNN America, and Xinhua China are on the front line. Recently other developing nations have also entered this race. For example, Aljazeera promotes the Middle East's political values as the leading Arabian news agency that represents the Muslim world (Plunkett and Halliday, 2010, pp. 286). Besides these, other forms of media such as printed media, online websites, and social media also play a crucial role in soft power promotion. In Nepal, a total of 221 television networks, 1,143 radio services, 7,605 newspapers, and 2,839 online media are in operation as of June 29, 2021 (Airi, 2021, p.231). This data consists of both media operating in the public and private sectors of Nepal.

Electronic and Printing Media

Electronic media supports to spread of culture, ideologies, and political values through TV shows, serials, sequels, advertisements, documentaries, interviews, dance, music, movies, etc. Indian medias Zee TV Network, Republic News, Star TV Network and the Indian franchise of Animal Planet, National Geographic, and Discovery, the Chinese media such as Xinhua News, CGTN News, and News China, CGTN Documentary, British channels BBC News, and Planet Earth, American channel CNN News, Russian news channel RT News, etc., are playing a significant role in spreading the host country's political stand and cultures. In Nepal, some televisions have entered into satellite transmission. Nepal television can be viewed in 142 countries around the world. However, insufficient financial resources, sustainability, human resources, technology, quality, digital platform, and ethical issues are the challenges of Nepali televisions (Airi, 2021, pp. 132-139).

Movies are another influential source of electronic media. Movies are based on different contents and contexts such as entertainment, science fiction, fiction, history, tradition, social taboos, and problems. It also promotes language, music, dance, literature, political and religious ideologies, consumption, food, lifestyle, etc. For instance, Hollywood movies have global audiences. Therefore, it has significantly promoted American and western language, culture, and political values. Another example: the film *The Last Emperor*, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci and written by Edward Samuel gives an overview of the feudal system of imperial China, the rise of Chinese nationalism, the end of the Qing dynasty, Japanese aggression on China in WWII and the socio-cultural, economic, ideological and political changes during the communist era (Samuel, 1987).

Printing media are the oldest form of information source. It is available in the form of books, magazines, journals, newspapers, leaflets, brochures, etc. Printed media have global importance for spreading news, views, knowledge, and ideas. In Nepal, daily newspapers, periodic magazines, journals, and books play a vital role in sharing information and creating public opinion on various issues and agendas. For instance, the Kantipur, the Himalayan Times, the Annapurna, DIRD Journal, Bodhi: an Interdisciplinary Journal, etc.

Both domestic and international printing media have a significant role in information sharing. However, international printing media plays a better position than domestic because of its wide range of coverage and reputation. For instance, international newspapers and magazines such as The New York Times, the Economics, the Diplomat, etc., have more excellent global readers and reputations and broader reach than Nepalese newspapers and magazines. So, the reputed international media holds a much more critical instrument of soft power through which interviews and speeches of the political leaders, news, views, and reviews of countries are covered. However, national media should be promoted systematically in the international sphere. So, the electronic and printing media can be used to share information about a country, its history, language, culture, and ideologies at the domestic, regional, and global levels.

Online Portals, Websites, and Social Media

According to Kshetri (2002), Bharatiya Janata Party was the first group in South Asia to set up a website for the 1998 Indian elections. The first news portal to acquire a web domain in Nepal was called "Himal South Asian" in 1997, which ran as www.himalmag.com (p. 260).

Since then, along with other South Asian countries, Nepal is also a pioneer in hosting several websites covering various sectors such as news, entertainment, tourism, business, culture, literature, academics, etc. Kshetri (2002) further writes that, with their simple accessibility, the primary power of online websites and portals can be appreciated (p.262). Nepal government, government institutions, and public and private sectors are also using websites to communicate. For instance: Nepal's foreign policy-related materials are mainly posted through the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs www.mofa.gov.np

In recent decades, social media has become a popular medium for states to convey messages to persuade the foreign public. Therefore, it can be an essential medium of public and cultural diplomacy. In addition, not only the diplomatic missions abroad but many of the international political, diplomatic, and bureaucratic figures and their political institutions utilize social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, etc. These social media best serve to spread their opinion, idea, perception, culture, political ideologies, norms, values, and beliefs of the country to which they belong.

In June 2021, in a post on the Embassy of China in Nepal's Facebook page, a video was posted. This video has highlighted 800,000 Covid19 vaccines granted by the central government of China as humanitarian aid for Nepal to cope with the pandemic (The Embassy of China Nepal, 2021). This is just an example; if we go through the Facebook page of the Embassy of China in Nepal, hundreds of posts represent Chinese culture, ideology, norms, and values. But on the other hand, these posts are very appealing and persuasive and many posts easily influence the opinion of the Nepalese public because of their attractive and compelling way of presentation. Similarly, if we go through the Facebook page of the Embassy of India in Nepal, on June 2021, an invitation has been posted. It has requested

Nepali citizens to participate in the “be with yoga, be at home” program. On which participants are asked to post their videos with different “yoga asana” (Embassy of India in Nepal, 2021). This invitation has been posted to promote the program launched by the Ayush Ministry of India. Furthermore, it can be analyzed as a part of India’s soft power promotion strategy because it helps spread Indian culture through yoga.

On April 3rd, 2019, the US Ambassador to Nepal Randy Berry tweeted, “The US is the largest bilateral donor to Nepal, and all our projects are grants, not loans.” He highly emphasized, “Not Loan” (Berry, 2019). Nepalese diplomats and political leaders defined “Loan” means a Chinese loan that is part of the BRI project. The hidden aspect of this tweet is to alarm the Nepalese Government to rethink seriously about the Chinese loans and BRI project that is believed to be countering USA's “Indo-Pacific Strategy” indirectly. On the other hand, if we analyze most of Berry’s tweets, they reflect his intentions to win Nepalese hearts and minds. Most of these tweets are in Nepali, and he often uploads photos of celebrating Nepali feasts, festivals, and ceremonies. For example, recently, he tweeted on the occasion of Nepal’s mother’s day festival.

In the contemporary world, a wide array of social media has become the most appropriate instrument for the countries’ soft power promotion campaigns because these platforms have global reach and are easily accessed by people worldwide. For instance, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted, “India has been emerging as a new ray of light for the global attempts to cope with the adverse effects of climate change” (Modi, 2021). This tweet expresses PM Modi’s opinions on climate change and reflects the objective of India’s foreign policy of soft power promotion. Moreover, this tweet indirectly persuades

other states, stakeholders, and the global public of Indian commitment and ongoing initiation on the issue of climate change and global warming.

Therefore, social media can be the appropriate medium for Nepali politicians, diplomats, bureaucrats, academicians, and civil societies to spread Nepal's social, cultural, economic, political, historical, environmental, and ecological values, beliefs, and ideologies. Furthermore, it can be the most appropriate medium to promote soft power for two main reasons: firstly, it is easy to reach the global public, and secondly, it is less costly compared to other mediums of public and cultural diplomacy.

III. Nepali Origin Gorkha Community

Nepali-speaking people live in different parts of the world. Mostly they are known as Gorkha Communities. They migrated during different historical eras. Some migrated during the unification era led by the Gorkha king Prithivi Narayan Shah and his heirs. Others shifted as workers, laborers, and some as soldiers during the Indian British era. However, at present, they belong to different national identities, such as Indian Gorkha, Bhutanese Nepali, and Myanmar Gorkha communities, but they share biological, historical, and cultural links with Nepal. These Nepali nationalities beyond the borders can be utilized as a medium of Nepal's soft power.

Nepal has a unique cultural attachment with the Indian Nepali-speaking population. Commonly they are known as the Indian Gorkha community, and their connecting language is Nepali. Nepali language-speaking Indian Gorkha community is located in India from Punjab to Nagaland. Nepal shares unique cultural, ideological, historical, and linguistic

connections with this community. Although the borders separate them, the shared history, culture, and language between Nepal and these communities bring them closer to Nepal in terms of nationality. Nationalism is a consciousness of one's (possible or actual) belonging to a nation and a desire to uphold that nation's integrity, identity, and prosperity (Enloe and Rejai, 1969, p.145). So, according to this definition, the Indian Gorkha community has the potential to fall under Nepali nationalism because of the shared language, culture, history, and language. During British India, for Nepali migrant workers who worked mainly in the British tea plantation sites in British North Indian hill stations, Northern border regions like Kumaon, Garhwal, Uttar Pradesh, Darjeeling, North Bengal, and Sikkim were important destinations (Nath, 2010, pp. 18-20).

However, some Nepali origin population lived in those areas before the British unification of India, and some Nepali settlers began settling in different parts of India since the beginning of Gorkhali expansion. Similarly, later, Gorkha migrant workers and British Indian Gorkha soldiers and their families also began settling, forming a big Gorkha community in the different parts of India. The below-mentioned data from the Census of India 2011 shows the data of Nepali-speaking Gorkha communities living in the different parts of the Indian states.

Table 4.1: Census of India 2011, Nepali speaking population in India

S.N.	Indian States	Total number of Nepali Speaking Populations
1	West Bengal	1,155,375

“Table 4.1 Continued”, Table 4.1: Census of India 2011, Nepali speaking population in India

2	Assam	596,210
3	Uttarakhand	106,399
4	Sikkim	382,200
5	Arunachal Pradesh	98,137
6	Himanchal Pradesh	89,508
7	Maharashtra	75,683
8	Meghalaya	54,716
9	Manipur	63,756
10	Nagaland	43,481
11	Mizoram	8,994
	Additional Indigenous Nepali language speakers	
1	Limbu	40,805
2	Rai	15,644
3	Sherpa	16,012
4	Tamang	20,154
	Total Number of Gorkha language	3,018,813

Source: Census Bureau of statistics India, 2011, p. 27.

According to the Census of India 2011, the total number of Indian citizens with Nepali mother tongue is 2,926,168 (Census of India, 2011, p. 7). However, this number is excluded from other Nepali indigenous languages such as Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Magar etc. So, including Limbu, Rai, Sherpa and Tamang, the total Nepali-speaking Indian Gorkha population is 3,018,813 (Census of India, 2011, p. 7). Indian Gorkha community has contributed to preserving the Nepali language and culture. In the past, many scholars, singers, actors, philosophers and poets such as Musician Ambar Gurung, Poetess Bishnu Kumari Waiba (Parijat), Film Director Tulshi Ghimire, Actor Denny Dozongpa, Novelist Indra Bahadur Rai etc. have played a vital role in the upliftment of Nepali language and nationalism. For an instance, Parasmani Praddhan (1898-1986) who was educated in Kalimpong and Darjeeling wrote numerous Nepali plays, articles, biographies, textbooks, grammars, and dictionaries (Gellner, 2018, p.6). So, the Indian Gorkha community can be the instrument of Nepali soft power promotion in the days to come.

Bhutan is home to more than 650,000 Nepali-Bhutanese people, or ‘Lhotshampa.’ Since 1,600 A.D., laborers of Nepali descent have been migrating to Bhutan and living (The Diplomat, 2016). Bhutanese Nepali shares cultural and linguistic bonds with Nepal. Ramji Timalsina (2020) claims that Diaspora and migration are linked to issues of material life on an equal footing with cultural issues (pp. 43-57). He goes on to say that it was tough for 19th-century Nepali immigrants to Bhutan to maintain the Nepali culture to which they were accustomed. Following the 1989 expulsion of 100,000 Lhotshampa, the situation for Bhutanese of Nepali descent deteriorated (Ramji Timilsina, 2020, pp. 43-57).

More than 500,000 Burmese-Nepali live in Myanmar, most of them are the descendants of the former British Gorkha army. In Myanmar, three waves of the Gorkha population arrived: the first wave was transported there by the British East India Company between 1818 and 1824; the second wave came from Nepal and Northern India; and the third wave arrived as British soldiers, security guards, children, and farmers, after 1952 (Gurung, 2017). Similarly, many Nepali emigrants are living in Hong Kong as well. More than ten thousand Gorkha soldiers and their families live in Hong Kong (Nath, 2017, p. 25).

Nepal should play a constructive role in generating a sense of belonging to Gorkha communities living in different countries as a common community, connected by the shared language and culture. The Panchayat government made some attempts in Nepal under the nationalist vision of the late King Mahendra. However, the historical and cultural ties between Nepal and the Gorkha communities are getting weak at present because of the ineffective policies in Nepal.

IV. Nepali Diasporas and Migrant Workers

It is not always necessary that only the state and its politicians and diplomats have to promote soft power abroad because the various non-state actors also play a role in it. In this case, the migrant diaspora can also play a vital role in indirectly promoting their country's national interest because they are always guided by their origin country's inherited cultural and political values. For instance, the Indian diaspora, especially Sikhs, have access to the Canadian politics and because of their effort, bilateral relations and economic trade is rising between India and Canada (Vapei, 2007, pp.59-62).

When people migrate from one country to another, they carry their physical materials and the intangible materials of their identity, cultures, and values. For instance, Chinese people establish big or small China towns wherever they migrate, either in New York or New Delhi. They promote their language, food, customs, traditions, costumes, music, literature, arts and crafts, and skills they bring from their origin (Ang, 2019, pp.1-22). Nepal has a wide array of Nepalese immigrants and migrant workers living and working in different countries around the globe. Nepalese migrants and their international associations and organizations work to preserve their rights. For instance, Non-resident Nepali Associations (NRNA) is a global association of Nepali Diasporas, which was established in 2003 with the objective of binding and uniting Nepali Diasporas globally. It has National Coordinating councils in 69 countries to coordinate the Nepali diaspora and represent their concerns, interests, and challenges (NRNA, n.d.). Similarly, to promote understanding between Americans and Nepalese, the America Nepal Society, a non-profit organization founded in the USA, hosts seminars and workshops on social, economic, political, cultural, and human rights issues (American Nepal Society, n.d.). These are only a few examples. Many other organizations and associations are working in the different countries to connect Nepal and the Nepali Diasporas.

Similarly, millions of Nepali migrant workers are working in different countries. Especially, Gulf countries are the primary destination of Nepalese workers. According to the data from “Nepal labor migration report 2020”, the Nepal government, the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE), issued only 3,605 labor approval in 1993/94. However, 236,238 approvals were issued in 2018/19 (Nepal Labor Migration Report, 2020, p. XV).

This data indicates that the number of Nepali migrant workers has increased unprecedentedly in recent decades.

Nepal can benefit from the knowledge, skill, and ideas of the Nepali migrant workers have received from the host countries. This has importance in Nepal's economic development. So, Sujeev Shakya (2021) argues that the Nepali diaspora living around the globe should be used as a soft power instrument (p.97). Similarly, their associations and organizations can be mobilized to promote Nepali culture, ideologies, and values internationally. Their network of friends, connections, interactions, and activities with the foreign public helps spread Nepali culture and ideologies abroad. However, to connect them with Nepal's national interest, plans and policies should generate a sense of belonging inside the heart of the Nepali Diasporas as a single community united as a nation beyond the borders.

V. Nepali Academia

Academia is an instrument of soft power that articulates the state's stands and perception in the international sphere. It also plays a role in defending the state's position on international affairs with academic arguments, claims, analyses, and assessments. Their idea, perception, opinion and ideologies are reflected through scholarly articles, journals, presentations, interviews, speeches, books, magazines and newspapers. State's soft power depends on the substantial participation of academia in international debates. Alan Chong argues that "the articulators of soft power had to possess a good turn of phrase, intellectual

charisma, and willingness to debate within academic and current affairs forums with global exposure” (Chong, 2009, p.71).

Nepali academia represents universities, scholars, experts, think tanks, writers, researchers, theorists and social scientists. They participate in international debates and highlight the emerging issues of burning problems. They also critically analyze and assess the internal and external issues. They organize and participate in cultural exchanges. Similarly, they also exchange views, establish networks with foreign academia, indicate the policy gap, and conduct research to overcome problems. These academic activities of the academic sector strengthen the state’s soft power. Therefore, the role of academia should be promoted as a bridge between Nepal and international communities is vital to promoting Nepal’s soft power.

VI. International and Regional Forums

The resources of small states such as Nepal do not support the expenses of establishing multiple embassies, consulate generals, or Liaison offices. However, international and regional organizations offer platforms for the states to cooperate for mutual benefit and raise their voice on the issues and agendas of mutual and global interests. It also operates as a medium of multilateral diplomacy. For instance, the Paris Climate Change Conference of 2015 offered as a global platform for the states to discuss and address the burning issues of global warming and climate change (Barston, 2019, p.497).

In 1955, Nepal became a member of the UN. In 1956, Rishikesh Shaha was appointed as Nepal's first permanent representative to the UN (Rai, n.d.). It was a step toward the proliferation of Nepal's diplomatic relations with other states and non-state actors. Since then, Nepal has become a member of several International Governmental and Non-governmental Organizations such as SAARC, BIMSTEC, World Bank, IMF, ILO, SCO, WTO, etc. Several bilateral, regional, and multilateral treaties and agreements have been signed between Nepal and other states. Nepal has become a member of the ambitious Chinese project: BRI (Ministry of Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2018, pp. 1-16). Most recently Nepalese parliament has also ratified Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in 2022 (MCC Nepal, 2017). Nepal is also the signatory of several conferences and conventions such as the Universal Convention on Genocide (1948), United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1955), Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (1968), United Nations Conventions of Law of Seas (1988), Montreal Convention and Anti Land Mine Ban Treaty (1997), Arms Trade Treaty (2013), etc. (Ministry of Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2018, pp. 1-16).

Nepal often participates in and organizes meetings, seminars, conventions, and summits associated with these treaties, conventions, agreements, and membership in the IGOs and INGOs. These international forums present opportunities to express Nepal's interests, priorities, and concerns. Indian diplomat Chandrashekhar Dasgupta recalls his memory of Rio the Janeiro UN Climate Change Convention. He states that the convention was adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 under the initiation of Malta (Rajan, 2012). This instance shows the importance of international forums. Although Malta is a small East European state, her diplomatic effort

and initiation appeared successful. For another example: BIMSTEC conferences have prioritized regional historical linkages and cultural heritage as the factors of deeper regional cooperation and integration (Of et al., 2018). So, BMISTEC offers its members a platform for discussions and expressions of their history, culture, and other crucial soft power factors. So, international forums can be claimed as the appropriate medium for expressing Nepal's culture, values, ideologies, commitment, and other issues among the global communities.

Similarly, Nepalese NGOs, INGOs, government institutions, public and private organizations, think tanks, and civil societies frequently organize and participate in different seminars, forums, and programs. These programs are scheduled at domestic, regional, and global levels. Several bilateral and multilateral issues and agendas are discussed, analyzed, and presented on these platforms. These international forums also serve as a platform for Nepalese interest groups, civil societies, NGOs, INGOs, and individuals to express their views, opinions, concerns, interests, and priorities. It also brings opportunities to promote Nepal's culture and ideological values directly or indirectly.

In addition, Nepal's culture, values, and ideologies can be discussed and shared with the counterparts, political leaders, and participants of other states not only in the formal meetings, speeches, and presentations but also in the side talks during the retreat, refreshment, and leisure of bilateral and multilateral meetings and conferences. To do so, Nepalese political leaders, diplomats, and participants should aim to promote Nepal's soft power interests. Similarly, they can be briefed, reminded, and even directed on presenting themselves in front of other participants and fulfilling the objectives of the cultural and ideological promotion before the program's opening. This may also include Nepalese participants' costumes, attires, gestures, and a way of expression. Similarly, guests can be

encouraged to participate in cultural and natural sight scenes, cultural shows, and festivals if the host is from Nepal. Again, souvenirs and gifts that reflect the historical, traditional, and cultural significance of Nepal's identity can be presented. For instance: A book on Buddha's discourse can be given to promote Buddhist ideology, Dhaka Topi can be offered to encourage Nepali costume, and Khukuri can be provided to represent the glorious past of Nepalese history.

Chapter Five: Analysis: An Approach to Nepal's Soft Power Policy

Until 2019, Nepal has completed fourteen development plans under the leadership of the National planning commission, but Nepal has been ranked on 47th position among the least developed countries (Limbu, 2019, p.66). Insufficient political will, lack of good plans and policies, limitation of required skilled workforce, technical knowledge and specialization, and unavailability of necessary modern technologies have also played role in Nepal's unsteady development. Bajracharya and Manandhar (2019) argue that the administrative capabilities of Nepal have remained poor and traditional. On the other hand, bureaucracy, rent-seeking political behavior, and corruption are further reasons why Nepal's progress is slower than that of other South Asian nations (p.243). Arguably, many academicians, economists, and politicians indicate geographic complexity and economic scarcity are the causes of Nepal's underdevelopment. It is an undeniable fact that Nepal is a landlocked country, and resources are limited. As a result, Nepal's GDP, GNP, GNI, and Per capita income are very low compared to other developed and developing countries (National Planning Commission, 2020, p.7).

Nepal's influence in the international arena cannot be matched the powerful countries like India and China. Similarly, its institutional capacity is also weak in comparison to powerful states. Nepal also lacks a similar international presence and diplomatic capacity as India, and China do. For instance, in 2014, there were overall 165 Chinese embassies in different countries and 121 foreign embassies were received in Beijing. Similar to this, there were 161 Indian embassies abroad in 2014, with 152 were received in New Delhi (Rana, 2013, pp.13-18). In contrast, there were only 30 Nepalese embassies worldwide as of 2021 (MoFA, n.d.). On the one hand, Nepal lacks sufficient resources to meet the expenses of soft

power promotion; On the other hand, it is imperative to accumulate soft power according to the changing context of the international environment.

Although Nepal possesses limited resources and capacities, it has the potential to produce a successful outcome in terms of soft power because only having sufficient resources always does not produce the desired result. For instance: Despite having abundant resources, America nevertheless lost the Vietnam War. As a result, developing the intended outcome depends on a leader's leadership skills and a planned soft power strategy (Nye, 2004, p.3). So, capable, visionary leadership and effective mobilization of available resources are also crucial for soft power aspirations.

Sweta Karki and Sarashree Dhungana claim, "Each small state has to then play to their strengths to construct an environment" (Karki and Dhungana, 2021, p.171). This statement considers that small states must construct their soft power environment with available resources and capacities to achieve soft power success. It has been discussed in the literature review that some states, such as Hungary, Costa Rica, etc., gained a soft power progress through their strength. Therefore, they constructed their environment for soft power. Similarly, despite colonial occupation until 1965, Singapore made its environment for soft power (Chong, 2009, pp.66). Chong (2009) further claims that the export of the Singapore model of development, the articulation of foreign aid, humanitarian aid, the attraction of FDI, good governance, cohesive organization of foreign policy, welcoming the world as a single nation, economic exchanges with the region, leadership charisma, and willingness to engage in academic debate are all examples of Singapore's soft power (pp. 65-80). Thus, Singapore acquired soft power height with its efforts.

It is easier to say than done that Nepal also must build its soft power image using available resources, which can introduce her to a unique soft power identity and attributes in the international arena. For instance: Switzerland as a peaceful neutral state, Vatican City as a religious center of Christianity, Egypt as an origin of world civilization, etc. However, constructing a unique identity is challenging. On one hand, Nepal lacks sufficient economic and institutional capacities. On the other hand, the international scenario of soft power is very competitive similar to the trade environment. Today, every state is competing with distinct soft power strategies and approaches. In the context of South Asia, Ian and Hall (2013) claim that struggle for soft power is more intense. India, Taiwan, Japan, Vietnam, and other China's neighbors are responding to PRC's soft power rise in the form of "soft power balance" (pp. 3-5).

Culture is a significant instrument of soft power. Nepal and every state, including powerful countries such as India, China, and the USA, are promoting their culture. In this scenario, the first challenge is how Nepal will promote its culture despite its limited resources, institutional capacity, and sphere of influence. The second challenge is that even if Nepal can promote its culture, will it be of the same intensity as the powerful states like India, China, and the USA? So, the main challenge is achieving success in the competitive environment despite limited resources and capacities.

So, to overcome these soft power promotion goals' complexities, Nepal's soft power policies can be associated with the economic principle of absolute advantage. The absolute advantage means "Production of a commodity with the same amount of real resources as another producer but at a lower absolute unit cost" (Todaro & Smith, 2012, p.576). This principle stresses that state's production and trade should focus on specific sectors or

products with high competitiveness and minimum cost. For instance, thousands of products are exported from Nepal to several countries, but only a few products/services have produced desired profit. As a result, Nepal has been experiencing a trade deficit with many countries in its international trade (Ministry of Commerce, 2016, pp.10-16).

So, to reduce the trade deficit, Nepal Trade Integration Strategy (NTIS) 2016 has identified eight products and three services: products like tea, cardamom, medicinal and aromatic plants, textiles, and services like information technology, IT engineering, tourism, etc., which have comparative and absolute advantages in favor of Nepal. The policy has done a SWOT analysis of each product and service to meet competition in bilateral and multilateral trade (Ministry of Commerce, 2016, pp.18-29). Nepal Trade Integration Strategy (2019) promotes an economical approach of absolute and comparative advantage. This trade strategy attempts to specialize and focus the country's limited resources in areas that can produce better results rather than equally covering the entire field.

Similarly, taking an example from NTIS (2016), Nepal's resources and capacities cannot cover all the instruments of soft power like economically powerful and institutionally strong states such as India and China. Therefore, the proportional distribution of Nepal's limited resources and capacities into all the aspects of soft power in an attempt to cover entire instruments cannot be justified as a rational strategy/policy. For instance, culture is an essential factor of Nepal's soft power. However, culture covers many elements such as language, literature, art, craft, music, dance, food, costumes, traditions, rituals, heritage, etc. If Nepal attempts to cover entire elements of culture proportionally, limited resource is dispersed, and none can generate effective results. However, there is no doubt that the whole culture is important. Still, policies have to be focused mainly on some aspects of culture that

can produce high results with low cost, less time, and minimum effort. Similarly, the same strategy can be adopted in the case of soft power mediums. For instance, media plays a vital role in spreading Buddhist ideology. However, inside the media, social media and online website are less costly than printed media and also assures easy access to the global population.

This concept can be further associated with Qatar. Qatar is a tiny sovereign nation with a land area of 114,372 kilometers. Oil, natural gas, and related industries are the key sources of wealth in this export-oriented nation, which exports 90 percent of its total output (United Nations Commission on Sustainable report, 1997). Similarly, according to the World Bank, the total population of Qatar was 2,832,067 in 2019, and 80% of its total population lives in urban areas (World Bank, 2019). Kamrava (2017) writes that “Qatar as a small, brand new state struggling to craft its course out of the dominant shadow of Saudi Arabia” (p.170). It is a small state situated in the geostrategic location of the Middle East where a power struggle is intense among the big powers such as the USA, EU, China, and Russia and middle power such as Iran and neighboring states like UAE and Saudi Arabia. By utilizing instruments of its foreign policy, Qatar has fought to preserve its sovereignty, geographical integrity, and political independence since the beginning.

Although Qatar has many alternatives to soft power instruments such as language, culture, industrial development, technology, innovations etc., it has focused mainly on sports diplomacy and communication media as the instruments of its soft power strategy. Qatar has been chosen by the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) to host the football world cup 2022 in Doha, the capital of Qatar. Since then, Qatar has been spending billions of dollars to transform infrastructure, sports facilities, and transportation systems for

the 2022 football world cup (Koch, 2018, p.2012). It is an opportunity for Qatar to show its presence in the international arena.

Aljazeera television is the international television network invested and promoted by Qatar as the instrument of soft power strategy. It has significant implications in the international arena. The Qatari soft power instruments enable Qatar to assure its presence on the global platform. Aljazeera's global access to a wide array of telecommunication networks enables Qatar to express its opinion, views, and perception. It is also an essential instrument for Qatar to defend its political and ideological stands in the international arena. Brannagan and Guilianotti (2018) further claim that Aljazeera International Television Network and the Qatar Investment Authority are intended to be the two main instruments of Qatari soft power (p.1143). It is the constructed identity of Qatar. In recent decades, Qatar has shown its presence in the international arena by effectively mobilizing soft power resources. Investment in international communication and sports and sports diplomacy are the instruments of Qatar's soft power strategy (Hamidau, 2018).

Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusion

Soft power has become prominent in the contemporary world politics and international relations mainly for four reasons: the transfer of sovereignty from absolute rulers to sovereign people, an increasing number of democratic countries, and dominance of liberal world order after the Cold War and the utility of soft power over hard power.

Centuries of people's struggle for democracy have established that the real source of power is not the ruler but the people themselves. People form the government, which the people's representatives run, and execute the people's will. The public opinion has important place and play crucial role in a state's domestic and foreign policy. So, soft power is applied to influence mainly foreign public and their governments.

Liberalism and realism both are the prominent discourses in international relations. Realism believes that the international system is anarchic and state relation is hierarchic, where military capability is the real source of the state's power. In contrast, liberalism believes that anarchy can be overcome by strong international institutions such as the United Nations. In addition, cooperation, complex interdependence among the states, and the rise of international civil societies reduce the importance of hard power.

This gives birth to the concept of a new type of power that is more persuasive and attractive. It's a fact that both hard and soft powers are important tools of a state's foreign policy. However, hard power is a coercive tool that cannot bring permanent solutions alone. It is also not an appropriate to win people's hearts and minds. In contrast, soft power fulfills the necessity for more persuasive power. So the concept of soft power was developed by the neoliberal scholar Joseph Nye in the 1980s. Over the decades, it has become essential to

every state's foreign policy. So, whether countries are democratic or autocratic, geographically big or small, economically prosperous and poor, militarily powerful or weak, soft power has become vital to achieving their foreign policy aims and objectives.

Nepal is a democratic country. Nepal's foreign policy is committed to an abiding faith in the United Nations Charter, neutrality, non-alignment, peaceful coexistence, mutual cooperation, and the value of world peace. In addition, Nepal believes in effective diplomacy as a major instrument of her foreign policy over hard power. In this context, soft power can be a more promising tool for promoting Nepal's dignity in the international arena. So, various scholars and writers have identified many soft power instruments such as demography, a surplus of the youth population, tourism, environment, hydropower generation capacity, peace process, Nepali diaspora, media, etc.

The instruments of soft power can be divided into factors and mediums. Factors are the elements of countries' soft power, such as language, culture, values, good governance, etc. Therefore, factors must be promoted with mediums to enhance soft power. On the other hand, mediums are the means or channels through which soft power factors are promoted. However, sometimes some soft power instruments act as both factor and medium. For instance, media can be identified as a medium, but at the same time, the media such as Al-Jazeera can be a factor of soft power. Among many factors of Nepal's soft power, this research discusses the Nepali language, culture and tradition, Buddhist ideologies, Gorkha legacy, Himalayan ecology, and the UN peacekeeping mission.

Language itself is a product of culture. Culture is embodied in language. So, language is essential to pass on culture and tradition from generation to generation. On the other hand, people understand foreign cultures through the language they learn. For instance, English

enables us to learn and understand Western culture. Culture is understood as a whole that includes language, history, music, literature, art, craft, and the way of life of a particular community or a country. A unique culture is a country's identity that makes them distinct from others. Nepal is also a culturally diverse country with its own unique culture and traditions. For instance, the tradition of Kumari is uniquely practiced in Nepal. So, from the perspective of soft power, culture and tradition hold great importance in the state's foreign policy. Thus, spreading culture to a foreign public is a goal of cultural diplomacy.

Ideology is also an important factor of soft power. Countries hold distinct social, cultural, religious, and political ideologies. Buddhist teaching is one of the strongest religious ideologies. Since the birth of Siddhartha Gautama, Buddhism has influenced the world. It is a powerful philosophy accepted and practiced as a religion in many countries. Nepal holds importance in Buddhism and Buddhist ideologies because Siddhartha Gautama's birthplace is located in Lumbini, Nepal. So, the promotion of Buddhist ideologies such as Chaturarya Satya (four truths of human life) and Panchasheel (five rules of self-conduct) provides Nepal an opportunity to introduce itself as a peace-loving country to the world because Buddha's teaching is considered a "path to peace".

Nepal is a Himalayan country with a long range of mountains, including the world's tallest peak, in the Northern parts. The Himalayas has particular importance in Nepal's ecology, environment, history, culture, and politics. The Himalayas are also recognized as the world's freshwater reserves and the source of alternative energy: i.e., hydroelectricity. Himalayas and seas are naturally interconnected and cannot be separated because changes in the mountains bring change in the coastal areas. For instance, increasing global temperature decreases snow in the mountains and increases the sea levels in the coastal regions.

Currently, the world's attention is on global warming and climate change. Nepali Himalayas are associated mainly with the tourism industry and hydropower. However, this time is to change the course because growing global concern on global warming and climate change has brought an opportunity for Nepal to attract world attention to the Himalayas from a soft power perspective. So, Nepal's initiation of the world's common good can support its cause of protecting Himalayan ecology, and at the same time, it also helps to achieve soft power objectives.

The history of Gorkha's legacy dates back centuries since Gorkhali rulers, King Prithvi Narayan Shah, Regent Bahadur Shah and Rajendra Laxmi. Gorkhali soldier's bravery in the Anglo-Nepal war (1814-1816), and engagement on different battlefields around the world in World War I (1914-1917) and World War II (1939-1945) from the British side, has established the reputation of Nepal as a home to Gorkha soldiers. This legacy is continued by the Indian and British Army Gorkha Regiments. So, it is an essential factor of Nepal's soft power known to the foreign public to some extent.

Similarly, Nepal has been a member of the UN since 1955. As a responsible member of the UN, Nepal has been contributing to several UN-led peacekeeping and peace-building missions in many wars and civil war-affected countries with a large number of peacekeepers from the Nepal Army, Nepal Police, and Armed Police Force. This shows Nepal's faith in the UN, the UN Charter, and the value of world peace. Therefore, to enhance Nepal's reputation as a peace-loving nation, the UN Peace Keeping Missions play a role as Nepal's soft power factor. So, it must be prioritized and promoted more in the coming days.

This research discusses Nepali diplomatic missions, media, Nepali diaspora, international forums, and academia as the mediums of Nepal's soft power. Soft power factors are promoted through the mediums.

Nepal has bilateral diplomatic relations with many countries. It also has multilateral cooperation with many international governmental and non-governmental organizations, including the UN. Nepali diplomatic missions are represented and operated by the duty-assigned diplomats such as Ambassadors; Charge the Affairs, Cultural Attaché, Military Attaché, Labor Attaché, and other staffs. They interact with receiving state's politicians, government officials, and the general public. They are also responsible for executing the state's cultural and public diplomacy aims and objectives determined by Nepal's foreign policy. So, the diplomatic missions, resources, and connections should be used at an optimum level to promote Nepal's soft power in the host countries.

Media is a powerful instrument that enables states to interact directly with the foreign public. It offers a platform to present a state's culture, ideologies, and political and social stands, which directly or indirectly helps to persuade foreign public and governments on specific agendas. Therefore, printing, electronic audio-visual and social media play a crucial role in promoting Nepal's soft power factors. However, among many media types, online portals and websites are the cheapest means of communication. Similarly, social media is a popular medium for transmitting information globally, offering easy access to the global public.

Nepalese migration to different parts of India dates back to the Gorkhali unification campaign led by king Prithivi Narayan Shah. Further, it increased with the recruitment of the Gorkhali soldiers in British India. Gorkhali communities spread to Bhutan, Hong Kong,

Myanmar, and several other countries after WWI and WWII. The Gorkha communities of Nepali origin also share a unique linguistic and cultural bond with Nepal. They hold the identity of different countries such as Indian Gorkha, Bhutanese Nepali, Hong Kong Gorkha, etc. However, they share a historical linkage with Nepal because their forefather reached those countries in different eras of the historical past. So, arguably the cultural attachment, linguistic bond, and historical connection of Gorkha communities give them a sense of belonging to Nepal. Therefore, Nepal's policy should be directed toward strengthening the ties with these Gorkha communities. At the same time, they should be used as a medium for Nepal's soft power promotion.

A large number of Nepalese have acquired citizenship and permanent resident permission in many countries while seeking higher studies and better career opportunities. These communities are known as Non-resident Nepali, which the Non-resident Nepali Associations unite. Similarly, millions of Nepali skilled, semi-skilled, and non-skilled workers are temporarily migrated worldwide in foreign employment. In the migration process, people bring their language and culture to the host country along with their skills and knowledge. Linguistic bonds and cultural attachment give a sense of belonging to the country of origin. Therefore, Millions of people from Non-resident Nepali and migrant workers living, working, and studying around the world can be the mediums of soft power promotion through which Nepali language, culture, and ideologies are channeled and transmitted. However, it requires a solid commitment to unite them with a sense of belonging with appropriate policies from the government of Nepal. Therefore, the government should utilize the Nepali diaspora and their associations as a medium to promote soft power.

Participation in international meetings, seminars, conferences, conventions, and other international forums offers a platform for participants and representatives to interact and exchange ideas, stands, views, and perceptions with their counterparts. It also works as a medium for promoting a country's language, culture, and ideologies. During the meetings, seminars, and conferences, participants' and representatives' gestures, posture, attire, and speech play a vital role in conveying a direct or indirect message to the international communities. Thus, Nepali policy should be able to utilize international forums as a medium of favorable soft power promotion.

Academia consists of schools, colleges, universities, research institutes, scholars, and writers. They are considered a reliable source of information because their voices are heard through debates, and discourses are read through scholarly articles, research papers, journals, and books. Moreover, academia is vital in building mass perception on various issues and agendas at home and abroad. So, state policy initiation should encourage and utilize academia as an instrument of Nepal's soft power.

Foreign policy is a blueprint for soft power promotion that contains aims, objectives, guidelines, working plans, and procedures. However, good policy alone cannot produce good results because sufficient economic resources, human capital, and institutional capacities are the pre-requisites of successful implementation. Moreover, countries are not equal in terms of their economy and other capabilities. So, a successful policy in one country does not guarantee the same result in other. For example, Nepal and China have different economic realities and institutional capacities. So, the policies associated with cultural and public diplomacy adopted by China can have other implications in the context of Nepal.

So, considering the economic realities and other capabilities, Nepal does not possess sufficient resources to promote entire factors of soft power. There is no doubt that all the factors of soft power are essential. However, the distribution of limited resources and effort on each instrument equitably is impossible in Nepal's context. On the other hand, the dispersion of limited resources on all the instruments cannot produce results in the required intensity and volume.

From the economic perspective, the international sphere can be illustrated as a big market where every state sells soft power products to their full potential. So, the international soft power environment is very competitive. For instance, Nepal and India are naturally beautiful with many magnificent tourist destinations; both have Buddhist sites of religious and cultural importance, a unique history, culture, and tradition, and both countries enjoy the demographic surplus of the youth population. In this scenario, the question is how Nepal's soft power policies produce good results with limited resources while the biggest competitors such as India, China, the USA, and other powerful countries are present?

So, to overcome this complexity, the economic principle of absolute advantage can be applied as an approach in Nepal's soft power policy. According to this principle, among many export-oriented goods and services, countries give importance to some over others. These prioritized products give countries leverage in international trade because of their absolute and comparative advantage. These products are selected by analyzing cost-effectiveness, production capacity, market scope, and other necessary attributes. For instance, Nepal Trade Integration Policy (NTIS), 2016, has given high priorities to some goods and services that can offer an absolute and comparative advantage to Nepal's bilateral and multilateral trade.

Similarly, in the context of soft power factors, while choosing some among many soft power factors, each must be analyzed and evaluated based on its strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat. For instance: there are millions of followers of Buddhism all over the world. Like Nepal, many Buddhist countries such as Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Mongolia, and Thailand promote Buddhism and Buddhist ideologies. However, the birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama is located in Nepal. It is the first and the most important Buddhist religious site among three others: Bodhgaya, Saranatha, and Kushinagara. On the other hand, Nepal is a country where Buddhism and Buddhist ideologies originated. This gives soft power leverage to Nepal over other Buddhist countries. So, among many social, religious, and political ideologies of Nepal, if the Buddhist ideologies are promoted with a high priority and with an effective plan, Lumbini has high potential to be like a Muslim religious site: “Mecca,” where each Muslim must visit once in his lifetime.

Similarly, while choosing a few among many mediums of Nepal’s soft power, their cost-effectiveness, international influence, reputation, and easy accessibility to the foreign public should be considered. For instance, international media is important for advertising Nepali tourist destinations. However, advertising in New York Times has different implications than the Hindustan Times because of their distinct level of reputation and global reach. Likewise, among many media, social media and websites are more compatible with Nepal’s economic realities because of their cost-effectiveness, worldwide reach, and easy access to the foreign public.

Therefore, the global significance of soft power has brought opportunities for small states like Nepal. However, the policies that address the role of Nepal’s economic and institutional capacities are crucial for the systematic promotion of soft power instruments.

So, the rational mobilization of available scarce resources only can assure desired soft power outcomes. In the case of Nepal, this research recommends focused and prioritized investment and promotion of a few soft power instruments that can offer better results in the global soft power environment. This research also opens door for further study on other possible strategies that can overcome Nepal's economic and institutional hurdles in soft power promotion.

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