

Image Framing of China and BRI in Nepal: Reflections from Domestic Print Media

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Abstract: This paper examines the image of China and BRI reflected in the three Nepalese domestic print media, based on 215 contents published from 14 March 2017 to 16 July 2017 following mixed method approach. The findings are based on content analysis: this paper found that the image of China during the period was positive (39 per cent) with lower percentage of negative tones (28 per cent) reflected in news, editorials, opinions, remarks and interviews. The positive tones were focused on subject areas infrastructure, development and economic prosperity. Informed on media framing theory, the findings show five major aspects: 1) political image is to some 'skeptical but prominent' friend; 2) the economic image of China is constituted as 'friend in weal and woe' for economic prosperity in Nepal; 3) the infrastructure and development image is presented 'foremost for renaissance of Nepal and South Asia'; 4) the strategic aspect is depicted in 'attentive but not aggressive' manner; 5) cultural and miscellaneous is represented as fruitful and bonding in exchange. Finally, due to political parallelism, the image of China and BRI is shaped differently but in similar line in those media outlets.

Keywords: *Image, China, BRI, framing, Nepalese print media*

Introduction

The Nepal-China relationship is important for Nepal's current foreign policies in the context of international politics. Locating between two big powers- China and India- rising today, Nepal has been preserving vivid relations with China in its domestic political stability. Nepal's relation with its neighbors has become important even after the establishment of federal democratic republic of Nepal. After the latest political shift in Nepal, the image of China has been more visible. This study, through a framing perspective, attempts to examine how the image of China is presented in the Nepalese press media. Recent trends of communication tools are virtual and digital forms which are fast and influential in urban people but, print medias are also relevant to make perception

and frame of people in different social, political, economic, cultural as well as scientific developments. Before the formal relation established on 1 August 1955, Nepal and China had deep-rooted cultural values since the pre-written historical and legend friendly relations with each other [1]. In the Shah dynasty, many times, Nepal's position with China, India, US had many ups and downs. When Rana oligarchy came in power the relation with Northern part was in shadow because of British colony and their inclination with them [2].

Because of 'unofficial embargo' by India after new constitution promulgation in 2015, bilateral agreements with China had increased to overcome the condition of using the northern neighbor as a balance card with other countries and to break the unilateral dependence. Essentially, Nepal needs to endorse a 'balance of power' between its two neighbors, but

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to some extent laying on one side or card-playing 'game theory' Nepal is unsuccessful to achieve its substantial development [3]. But, transforming political tensions into physical infrastructures, the Nepalese state has time and again strategically managed and leveraged Cold War and contemporary geopolitics into foreign aid and development funding [4], [5]. In this regard, Nepalese leaders-including the former King Mahendra and more recently multiple leaders of Nepal's (Communist parties and democrats)-have routinely been engaging with Delhi and Beijing off one another to get various road development and infrastructure projects done in different borderland regions.

China is taking various developmental as well as diplomatic initiatives bringing various countries together including Nepal. In 2013, Chinese president Xi postulated as an integrated concept known as OBOR and later it developed as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) [6, p. 463,470]. This grand initiative, comprising various routes by sea and land, is intended to connect China with Southeast and South Asia, Central Asia, Pacific Oceania, Africa and Europe [7]. As a potentially game-changing initiative, BRI has attracted significant attention from policy makers and scholars and countries including Nepal. Early in 2014, Nepal government welcomed China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative [8] with the considerable interest. Nepal has been expressing its willingness to work in close cooperation with China to increase cooperation and relations between nations as well as to promote infrastructure, trade, energy sector and tourism, which will ultimately contribute to regional harmony, peace and development [8]. BRI opened this door through which Nepal is trying not only to strengthen Nepal-China relations but also to improve Nepal's development. This initiative has changed image of China in Nepal and among Nepalese people.

So, regarding the Nepal-China relations and the image of China in Nepal as presented by the Nepali language legacy print media, there has not been much of a systematic study of how China is presented by the Nepalese press, especially at a time when the two countries signed the Belt and Road Initiative on May 2017. What was the inclination of print media on that time frame? How is the image of China portrayed through privately-owned media outlets in Nepal and why? These questions remain adequately addressed. This paper examines these questions through a framing analysis which combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Many scholars and theorists have studied the influence of media on political, economic change and its social and psychological impact in contemporary society [9].

The objective of this paper is thus to find out the reflections of the image of China and BRI in the domestic print media of Nepal focusing on social, economic, political and cultural aspects at national and people's level before and after MoU in BRI on May 2017. Thus, this paper is significant to understand and build opinion in regional landscape and geographical manner which becomes important for public

opinion and to understand China's real image in neighboring countries.

Image of the Country

Image of one individual, group, organization, nation and its people and so on is the conception made by other individual, group, organization, nation and so on. It also differs by individual, group, organization, nation and so on across time and space. In the field of public relations, Kunczik [10] has defined national image as the cognitive representation of what an individual believes about a nation and their people which depends on media's reporting of image of a country or culture aspects are predominated (p. 4). Media has therefore become one of the important mechanisms of creating image of any country and its people including people at individual and group levels. In marketing field, scholars are primarily interested in consumers' cognitive beliefs and brand attitudes toward products. Because of the inability to ascertain the true quality of an unknown product, consumers may turn to image of country to estimate the quality of that product [11].

According to many communication scholars, selection of news in media coverage has been determined by profit [12], [13], commodities [Hawak,1992 cited in 14], state interests [15]. In the context of interdependency, international news and issues have a powerful role to build the perception and opinion of the respective country, where news covered in domestic arena that will play that the media do play a significant role in shaping people's opinion [Lippmann, 1922 cited in 16]. Moreover, according to Perry [17] and Salwen and Matera [18], one nation could be influenced to other nation by the media and their frame of news.

Before 1990, if something became cheap and less durable, people used to say that it was made by China. In Nepali language there was a proverb (*Made in China, Aaja chha bholi chhaina*) i.e., made in China works today but not tomorrow. But now, if you see a new and innovative product in the market, you can definitely hear that it must have been made by China. So, market and commodities which are produced to export to other countries replicate the image of such countries. Therefore, image of country influences product attribute evaluations directly affect consumer attitudes towards country brands rather than indirectly [19], [20]. In the study of South Africa, one of the many important roles of the press is to communicate with its readers how to understand and interpret the world. However, if that interpretation of the world is fundamentally flawed, the media cannot be a mirror of the world, cannot be independent, nor can it be a patron of truth [21].

Studies have found that the media play a significant role in shaping people's perceived image of a foreign country and that perceptions and evaluation largely rely on media coverage when personal experience with that country is lacking [22]. According to Z. He et al. [23] country image is often driven by the inquiry of how such image influences people's attitude toward a particular country in terms of its

politics, culture and history and how such an image affects to policy and decision makers.

Belt and Road Initiative: World and Nepal

Chinese President Xi proposed building a land-based ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ (SREB) and a sea-based ‘21st Century Maritime Silk Road’ (MSR), connecting China to Africa and Europe through the land and sea [6]. Later called BRI, it was carried the fundamental principle of ‘planning together, building together, and benefiting together’[24]. Since 2013, BRI has attracted worldwide attentiveness and massive influence to the human because of its major goals i.e., policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unrestricted trade, financial integration, and people to people relations [cited in 25]. After BRI is shaped in implementation, world scholars and countries are arguing for and against this mega initiative from different perspectives.

BRI claims to be an international initiative itself but it is often implemented through bilateral agreements. However, scholars have been interpreting differently in different areas and aspects. This initiative focuses on mega project base physical infrastructure projects often have geopolitical implications [26], [27]. According to Murton and Lord [28] BRI has been covering in international media outlets as anxieties of peaceful rise of China, ancient orientalist biases and strife for the new global order in new era of world. On the economic aspect, the BRI has been seen as a way for China to boost its economic growth and exports and promote economic development in participating countries [29]. From the perspective of interconnection and cooperation, it is means of world economic development and the grandest connectivity infrastructure project be built in the world [30], [31] as well as initiative of economic development, prosperity, and friendship among partnering countries, and follows it as a national paramount strategy [32]. Not only the Belt and Road Initiative, but any major project, proposal and its implementation naturally have deep social, economic and political reasons carried to it. Teo et al. [33] pointed out that BRI projects are likely to bring significant benefits of improved infrastructure and services without affecting environmental and social protection. According to state council of People Republic of China, It advocates tolerance among citizens, respects the paths and modes of development chosen by different countries, and supports dialogue among different civilizations on the principle of seeking common ground while reducing differences and drawing on each other’s strengths, so that each country can coexist in peace for common prosperity (cited in [34, p. 44]. Thus, BRI is considered as multidimensional mega initiative drawing attention of the world.

Framework of BRI is not only debatable issue among the scholars of different corners of the world, but also major countries of the world have different perceptions and positions regarding BRI and China. Mostly US and India perceive and articulate the geopolitical strategic calculation presenting BRI

as economic interest of China with over lending standard projects [35]. But UK and Australia have given business opportunities driven by geopolitical considerations of China. From the regional perspective, Freeman [36] criticized the BRI as a multidimensional conception of security best examined through a political economy lens and through various trajectories to advance China’s power and influence. Whereas, China itself has been asserting extensive consultation, joint contribution, share benefits two sides and project of the century [24]. Furthermore, Chinese president Xi has portrayed BRI as a concrete project that will support the ‘Asia Dream’ not only China’s dream of promoting win-win cooperation and outcomes with its neighbors in Asia which support to narrow down the infrastructure gap projected by ADB [37]. Thus, BRI is perceived, received and interpreted as the initiative in different ways and also implemented by different countries in their own ways.

Nepal has been a part of BRI for seven years when Nepal had signed the MOU with China on 12 May 2017. Before the MoU, Nepal had signed initial agreement principally in 2014, a later of OBOR was promulgated by Chinese President Xi Jinping [Setopati, 2017 cited in 38, p. 42]. Many Nepali scholars have said that BRI opens immense opportunities and those opportunities shall prioritize in areas like agriculture, livestock, tourism [34]; investment, create job opportunities, transportation and enhance people-to-people exchange [39]; cut down the dependency to India [40]; break India's hegemony on global connectivity of Nepal [41] with challenges of geopolitical complexities. It was announced with great enthusiasm, but the necessary preparation in the latter part has not been sufficient. Furthermore, BRI in Nepal upholds a symbol of ‘economic development, promises of connectivity, consolidation of political power and balance its foreign relations’ [42] in the context of South Asia. Thus, China’s BRI seems to play a vital role in extending Nepal’s economic benefits while symbolically balancing Nepal’s dependence on India. The study of the media materials of different countries, continents and the world has been portraying the image of BRI and China in different ways. But the dilemma of BRI implementation, under developing country and the impact on the appearance of key print media at that time is to be explored and explained yet. This paper is a part of the larger study on China and BRI which focuses on China’s image reflected in major print media of Nepal based on framing perspective during the MoU in BRI on 2017.

Theoretical Approach

The sociologist Goffman [43] introduced the concept of framing, which has given numerous researchers from various disciplines the chance to analyze a wide range of perspectives, demonstrating its significance in social science research [44], [45], [46], [47]. Regarding media studies, the main premise of framing theory is that issues can be viewed from different perspectives and understand which aspects are emphasized to

influence the general public for important values or decisions or to draw attention to matters of public concern.

According to Entman [45] in the political communication, news framing elucidates the certain form of content and event or aspects of reality in an attractive, meaningful, and memorable way to audience. For those, the news media pick and explore only designed content, images, logic and facts of event and an issue with the selection and salience involvement (p. 52). News or media content framing is indeed the people persuasion over the specific issues where it plays a driving role in influencing the targeted publics on their ways [48], [49]. This indicates that news media can play an important role in framing certain type of image and portray any object, individual, state and so on accordingly, which change the attitudes at an aggregate level towards issues, event or initiatives as well. Furthermore, the mass media can strongly influence perceptions about events if an audience has no direct experience of the event and does not share similar cultural values to the protagonists involved [50, p. 30]. So, news framing is the process whereby media outlets and conglomerates outline and create political issues and public debates. According to McQuail [51] framing theory consists the formation and dissemination of frames through diverse outlets and the process of influencing the evaluative orientation to targeted audiences. In the framing theory, one refers to the way in which issue is typically created and formalized by media person and journalists within familiar frame with latent motive and other concerted on the influence on the people or audiences [52, p. 5]. But, according to Van Dijk [53] the news framing in mass media by journalists and news presenter are influenced by the ideology or their political inclination.

Many scholars have defined framing as paradigm [45], a class of media effect [54], theory [45], [55], approach, process [56], analysis [57] and principle [46]. In a sense, framing theory suggests how a subject is presented to an audience and influences people's choices to process that presented information. Frames are notions that work to consolidate the latent meaning of disseminated contents covered in different medias. The media houses and journalists use framing by expressing and assigning specific language and characteristics to people, actions, or ideas [58]. According to Reese [46] the frames are organized to promote their latent meaning rather than specific once with an interpretative way that captures a more dynamic meaning with broader definition of frames. Thus, this research has attempted to scrutinize the framing of the image of China in the three Nepali language legacy press, which is manifested in specific stories but transcends the scope of particular issues and actors.

Methods

In this research, a mixed research method approach has been employed i.e., quantitative and qualitative. In the first, quantitative content analysis has been applied where a sample of news, opinions, remarks, interviews, and editorials of three

major Nepali language legacy newspapers in Nepal was selected to examine the frame tone of China and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in such aspects as political, economic, infrastructure development, strategic, cultural exchange and miscellaneous. The second was an interpretative analysis of frame in different subjects drawn from stories in the content analysis in those six aspects. For the quantitative content analysis, a sample has been drawn from three newspapers between the beginning from 14 March 2017 to 16 July 2017. The time span of four months' limitation of the media content chosen was purposively preferred because the two countries Nepal and China had signed the MOU in BRI on 12 May 2017.

Based on purposive sampling, the three newspapers selected as the subjects of this research were Kantipur National Daily (KND), Naya Patrika National Daily (NPND), and Annapurna Post Daily (APND). These are established newspapers in record and are perceived as representing different angles or lens to observer and represent the Nepal political elites, and considerably read more than any other newspapers [59]. Second, as those three newspapers with the highest circulation rates i.e., KND has 453,000 copies, NPND has 275,000 and APND has around 250,000 copies. Although they do not fully represent the country's newspaper industry, they cover a broad spectrum of the Nepalese press beyond the government-controlled media.

For the coding of these researchable items two external research assistants were taken. For the co-coder reliability test, 10 per cent (215) of the items were coded independently by the assistance of two researchers. In the subject area and framing orientation tone, reliability coefficient was found 0.86 and 0.82 respectively and average coefficient was found 0.84. For the interpretive analysis, the aggregated frames in the specific areas were examined regarding their issue salience, the undertones, the causal relations, and the orientations of explicit and implicit moral perspectives. Exemplars of each of the major aspects were particularly scrutinized to infer the overall images in the broad areas of China and mega project Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in such aspects' political, economic, infrastructure development, strategic, cultural exchange and miscellaneous.

Results, Discussion and Findings

The data from the content analysis shows that Nepali language legacy printing newspaper demoted its coverage of the China and BRI to its political, infrastructure & development, strategic in different categories of items like news, opinions, remarks and editorials (Table 1).

Table 1. Total Newspaper and Categories of Content

N/C	NWS	EDI	OPI	REM/INT
NPND	18 (48.6%)	1 (2.7%)	12 (32.4%)	6 (16.2%)
KND	54 (58.1%)	1 (1.1%)	22 (23.7%)	14 (17.2%)
APND	42 (49.4%)	3 (3.5%)	21 (24.7%)	19 (22.4)
Total	114	5	55	41

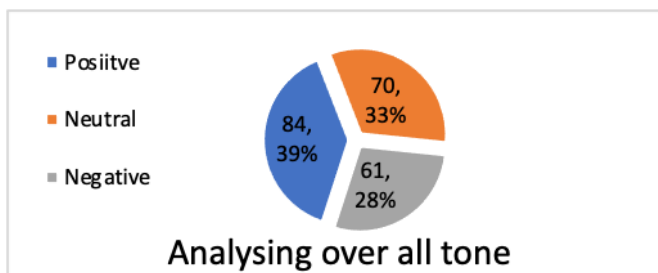
Source: Computed from the contents of the print media, 2023.

On the basis of ‘China’ and ‘OBOR’ or ‘BRI’ key words, KND published the highest volume 43 per cent (93) contents whereas NPND had given significantly the lowest volume 17 per cent (37) and APND had 40 per cent (85) in their print paper during those four months in 2017 before and after May 12 i.e., MOU signed between Nepal and China in BRI. In among three newspapers 53 per cent (114) news contents were published in 215 contents where 26 per cent opinion, 19 per cent leaders, expert, official had given remarks related to China and BRI and 2 per cent published editorial as well

Tone Evaluation of Headlines of Media Contents

On the basis of subject framed by newspaper in headlines of contents, the positive tone was 39 percent which was the highest percentage out of 215 contents, around 5 per cent different among positive, neutral and negative tone. Only 28 per cent negative tone contents had been published in three newspapers (Fig 1). On the basis of [60] headline tone analysis i.e., Net tone=(Positive tone- Negative tone)/Total headlines, where the net tone ranged between -1 to +1 and neutral tone is on 0 . The sets of headlines have positive, neutral, and negative tones if the results of the net tone analysis are between; 0 to +1 to 0, 0, and -1 to 0 respectively. From table 2, net tone for three privately owned domestic media outlets are positive (0 to +1).

Fig. 1 Distribution of overall tone



Source: Computed from the media contents from the print media 2023.

Table 2. Net tone analysis

T/N	NPND No	%	KND No	%	APND No	%
Positive	19	51	35	38	30	35
Neutral	10	27	33	35	27	32
Negative	8	22	25	27	28	33
Total	37		93		85	
Net tone	0.29		0.11		0.02	

Source: Computed from contents gathered and categorized from print media, 2023.

Table 3. Subject area and tone analysis

	Political	%	Economic	%	Inf & Dev	%	Strategic	%	Cultural	%	Misc.	%	Total
Positive	17	32	23	62	28	57	8	16	7	44	1	9	
Neutral	18	34	7	19	12	24	20	41	6	38	7	64	
Negative	18	34	7	19	9	18	21	43	3	19	3	27	
Total	53		37		49		49		16		11		
Net tone	-0.02		0.43		0.39		-0.27		0.25		-0.18		0.10

Source: Computed from contents gathered and categorized from print media, 2023.

However, when the thematic areas were broken down for an examination of the giving space and tone that politically framed contents yield the highest percentage (25 per cent), which is followed by infrastructure & development as well as strategic framed contents by 23 per cent and economic 17 per cent, cultural and other subjects are less than 10 per cent. Those three print media houses had portrayed political (-0.02), strategic (-0.27) and cultural (-0.18) aspects slightly negative whereas remaining aspects are positive. But total subject areas and tones are positive (0.10) (see Table 3).

Table 4. Subject Areas and Tone of Newspaper Contents

SA/NT	NPND	KND	APND	RT	positive	Neutral	Negative	%	Df	χ^2	P-value
Political	10	22	21	53	17	18	18	25	4	5.03	0.29
Economic	8	16	13	37	23	7	7	17	4	4.10	0.39
Inf & Dev.	8	22	19	49	28	12	9	23	4	6.57	0.16
Strategic	7	18	24	49	8	20	21	23	4	7.63	0.11
Cultural	1	10	5	16	7	6	3	7	4	2.71	0.61
Mis.	3	5	3	11	1	7	3	5	4	4.89	0.23
CT	37	93	85	215	84 (39%)	70 (33%)	61 (28%)				

Source: Computed from contents gathered and categorized from print media, 2023.

Based on the news and tones reflected in the print media, the images of China and BRI can be expressed comparatively. The reflection of images can also be discussed in terms of association between various dimensions and types of tones in the print media.

Images of China and BRI: Comparative Analysis

There were distinctive differences among the three Nepali language legacy newspapers in their orientation of the framing of China and BRI. KND had published out 43.3 per cent contents which is the highest frequency among three newspaper dailies whereas APND had 39.5 per cent and NPND had 17.2 per cent only. But, in the Naya Patrika National daily (NPND) (second-largest paper in terms of circulating pieces) constituted more than half percent contents (51 per cent) in positive frame whereas others two had one third (KND=38 per cent, APND=35 per cent) of total frame orientation. One of the reasons for having the least amount of material published, but the most positive orientation in the published material, is the relationship between the editorial

and the publisher. But, APND had composed the highest negative tone (33 per cent) framing in total contents.

According to Schudson [61] studies of news making as a reality constructing activity governed or related on their conglomerates and hierarchy of media institution. Furthermore, NPND constituted political issues (27 per cent) in priority, KND organized infrastructure and development (2 per cent) and political (24 per cent) issues but APND focused on strategic (28 per cent) subjects and frames on her publication. But, those three papers structured and portrayed in almost same percentage in development and infrastructure building issue related to China (Table 5).

Table 5. Comparison of Newspaper Tone in Different Frames

		NPND (%)	KND (%)	APND (%)
Total		17.2% (37)	43.3% (93)	39.5% (85)
Frame	Political	27% (10)	24% (22)	25% (21)
	Economic	22% (8)	17% (16)	15% (13)
	INF&DEV	22% (8)	24% (22)	22% (19)
	Strategic	19% (7)	19% (18)	28% (24)
	Cultural	3% (1)	11% (10)	6% (5)
	Misc.	8% (3)	5% (5)	4% (3)
Tone	Positive	51% (19)	38% (35)	35% (30)
	Neutral	27% (10)	35% (33)	32% (27)
	Negative	22% (8) $X^2 = 2.83$, df= 4, p=0.09	27% (25) $X^2 = 0.13$, df=4, p=0.71	33% (28) $X^2 = 1.14$, df=4, p=0.23

Source: Computed from contents gathered and categorized from print media, 2023.

The numerical data presented in tables and chart deal some micro-level insights into the Nepalese major print media coverage of different issues related to China and BRI as fragmented subject matters of countries' images. In light of those quantitative findings, an interpretive analysis of all narratives has been conducted with focus on the common subject aspects and examples that demonstrated such frames (Table 4 and Table 5).

Political Aspect

The politically framed contents were presented as less positively than the neutral and negative framed contents. Image of China revealed by Nepali newspaper was to some

extent skeptical. In the political contents, China has been framed as a power that has a low understanding of the political system but interested in internal politics of Nepal. China has been seen as a good friendly country, but it is worried about the political stability. Some examples of positively framed political content were China's activities in Nepal and Nepalese Prime-ministers' visits to China where 'after devastating earthquake in 2015, Chinese ambassador of China to Nepal Yu Hong was quoted that 'China will stand with Nepali people in whatever situation in future' in Kantipur Daily in 2017, April 23. Similarly, after returning from China visit the then prime minister of Nepal, Prachanda, said a political statement that in airport that content was framed as 'understanding the level of trust between the two countries and their obstacles' (2017, March 30 NPND). On the negative tone of the political content, the papers were usually open and critical. NPND published an article written by Rajeshwar Acharya about the Prime Minister's visit to China and the commitment to the One China Policy. Nepal should not think only of our neighbors and friendly countries and repeat Nepal's policy towards that country. (2017, March 31, NPND). Thus, these contents portrayed China as the 'skeptical but prominent' friend for Nepal.

Economic Aspect

After 'unofficial embargo' made by the southern neighbor, the majority of stories published were about the economic benefits of BRI, BOAO forum, China's investments in Nepal. Overall, 62 per cent (among 37) economy related contents were about China's economy, poverty alleviation, BRI's economic significance in Nepalese domestic economy with the positive message and connotations. For example, the news published in APND economic page (Ka) on June 20, 2017 said the China-led newly established infrastructure and development bank assured to invest 125 billion in different projects in Nepal for economic sustainability, and in NPND on June 15, 2017 said Chinese investors attracted to hospitality industry and gave commitment to invest more than three billion. While in same NPND on June 21, 2017, an article written by Lawrence Summers in the Washington Post and published in 'China's major economic challenges' heading said the China's economy will not prevail because of their policy formation process. Overall, these newspapers constituted China as 'friend in weal and woe' for economic prosperity to Nepal.

Infrastructure and Development Aspect

Together with the advancement of technology countries are improving their infrastructure and development status. In the context of devastating earthquake in 2015 an infrastructure and development components were becoming more plausible issues in Nepal. During this period, major stories carried on China and BRI by three newspapers had no significantly

different portion; only KND was slightly up than other two. More than 57 percent of all infrastructure and development contents constituted in favor of China and BRI which included BRI, industrial park in Nepal, connectivity between two counties and South Asia with significant positive implication. For example, an article written by Shreenath Raghwan published in NPND on April 8 2017, said not only Nepal, Indian should also participate in BRI. Because Asian economies have undergone massive changes and isolation from the long-term and real impact issues of OBOR has deprived it of opportunities to expand in Asia. Likewise, this paper has made positive remarks of Chinese president XI's remarks regard to BRI as for brotherhood and development (on June 7, 2017, Kantipur). On contrary, some contents were published negatively whereas, one of them written by Geja Sharma Wagle about OBOR is not only economic, development initiative, but it is trade expansion and proactive diplomacy with strategic motive (2017, May 21, KND). In sum, data depicted that the BRI and modern China is 'foremost for renaissance to Nepal and South Asia'.

Strategic Aspect

In the context of today's modern global world, countries frame their own strategic for their survival and existence. China's current strategy is also to the larger extent guided by such strategic plan. Strategic frame to portray China and BRI was one of the most prominent aspects in media coverage, but the contents were constituted in less positive (16 per cent among 49 items) than neutral and negative form. The geographical spatial of Nepal is geostrategic location because the world major powers always have been engaging for different interest. Example of negatively connotated article published in APND on May 2, 2017 in APND, K.P Bhattarai focused out that when a large initiative is run by a single country and structure, there is a possibility that it will spread negative hatred in the future. Contrarily, Homnath Dahal written article published on April 17, 2017 in APND said railway link from China to Lumbini will open an alternative way for Nepal to connect the world, but India doesn't want this plan to be fulfilled due to its mentality of instability. Overall, most of the issues dealt China-India rivalry, China's strategic steps and intention toward world and Nepal revealed the image in 'attentive but not aggressive' manner.

Cultural and Miscellaneous Aspects

Cultural relations and the image of any country with another country are important to understand bilateral and multilateral relations among countries. In the major 6 aspects of China and BRI related contents, the cultural aspect (7.5 per cent) miscellaneous (5 per cent) were the least covered. Overall, the frame was positive in culture aspect but in the miscellaneous content neutrally covered framed was highest. The coverage of cultural subject contents focused mainly on

tourism, digital technology, education, entertainment, sports of China. The article written by Harish Pokharel and published on April 21, 2017 in NPND said, Nepal must learn positively from the preservation of historical cultural and heritage places from China regarding the modernization of society. Moreover, we have to learn from her not only the political and development of China, but also the heterogeneous cultural melting pot (April 8, 2017, Kantipur). But some topics such as 'American Dream of Chinese Youth' (April 9, 2017, Kantipur) have shown that the Chinese in the new generation are more attached to the Western nation than to themselves. This shows that the cultural and miscellaneous image disclosed 'fruitful and bonding in exchange' to each other.

Conclusion and Implications

Historical and cultural relations beyond the diplomatic relation were traversal for centuries ago. Most of the people of Nepal are positive towards China and are optimistic for economic and infrastructure development from China. When Nepal was a part of BRI, it did not find that there were narratives for creating a 'Debt Trap'. But the media and media houses were found worried on the geopolitical constraints of world major powers. They illustrated the formation and understanding of the image of China by three major Nepal's newspapers in the context of the BRI MoU between Nepal and China with the perspective of news framing. Despite the current situation where the progress of BRI implementation in Nepal is sluggish motion, the overall coverage of China and BRI in those papers is relatively positive and favorable.

The image of China is portrayed as mixture of optimism and fear at once by these media outlets. However, there has been difference in frequency of contents carried in those three newspapers. Because, there is no specific news reporter and department to deal with the international actors, domestic political bit reporter handles the news of China which is not in appropriate size. These newspapers focus on the four main aspects of political, economic, infrastructure and development and strategic propaganda. Other frames have appeared less willing to give space to dissemination in the projected country due to their own interests.

There have been working several factors for the portrayal of these aspects of framing. The for and foremost factor is the collaborative historical relation between Nepal and China. All those outlets carried positive tone in the highest percent without extreme criticism. But priorities are in different aspects of content because those three Nepalese print media outlets run by private medias were concentrated on the profit and sustainability. At that period only 5 editorial items were published; and it was found that BRI should be implemented without strategic concern. The news media have been accustomed to its ideological guideline of party which is linked to both liberal and communist philosophy, and media and journalists have direct or indirect connection

with political parties [62]. The next factor is the geographically 'lock to link' of Nepal. After the unofficial embargo in 2015, Nepal had to explore other options to connect with the world. To fulfil that obligation, the contents of those media outlets have become positive in overall to the China and BRI that will help to open northern gate for the whole world. However, these newspapers have presented two faces of image of China: One is impartial, non-interfering and friendly in weal and woe, prominent, amicable in economic, infrastructure development as well as never interested in Nepal's internal politics. And another is rising superpower gradually visible and attentive in domestic affairs. To conclude, due to various doubts and skepticism, the overall tone of the Nepalese side is that such project can be utilized positively in the favor of Nepal and Nepalese society for its holistic development and harmonious relation with peacefully rising China.

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