



Media as a dark horse in determination of nepalese foreign policy

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Abstract

Nepal is a small landlocked country situated in South Asia with India and China as its immediate neighbours. The foreign policy of Nepal has been shaped by its geography, history, and strategic interests. The media in Nepal has played an important role in shaping public opinion and influencing the foreign policy decisions of the government.

The media in Nepal has been instrumental in shaping the public perception of Nepal's relationship with its immediate neighbours. The media has highlighted issues such as border disputes, trade agreements, and aid packages from foreign countries. Nepalese media has been critical of India and China at times for their interference in Nepal's internal affairs. The media has also highlighted Nepal's efforts to balance its relationships with India and China.

In recent years, the media in Nepal has played an important role in highlighting Nepal's increasing engagement with other countries such as the United States, Japan, and European Union. The media has highlighted Nepal's efforts to diversify its foreign policy and reduce its dependence on India and China. This paper tries to see the media in Nepal plays an important role in shaping public opinion and influencing the foreign policy decisions of the government. The media has highlighted Nepal's efforts to balance its relationships with India and China, as well as its increasing engagement with other countries.

Keywords: media, Nepal, foreign policy, diplomatic relations, policy of non-alignment, cold war, accountability, transparency, geopolitical, public opinion

Introduction

Media plays a significant role in shaping the foreign policy of Nepal. Foreign policy is the set of principles, strategies, and goals that a country follows in its relations with other countries. The media has the power to influence public opinion and policymakers, and this can affect the country's foreign policy decisions. In Nepal, the media is an important tool for shaping public opinion and awareness about foreign policy issues. Media outlets, such as newspapers, television, and social media, provide information on foreign policy issues, including trade, security, and diplomatic relations. One way that media influences foreign policy in Nepal is by providing a platform for policymakers to communicate with the public. Through interviews and press releases, policymakers can explain their foreign policy decisions and justify their actions to the public. This can help to build support for their policies and improve the country's image on the international stage. Media can also help to raise awareness about issues that are important to Nepal's foreign policy. For example, media coverage of environmental issues can lead to increased public pressure on policymakers to take action to protect Nepal's natural resources. Similarly, coverage of human rights abuses in neighbouring countries can increase public support for Nepal's stance on these issues and help to build alliances with other countries that share similar concerns. Another way that media can shape Nepal's foreign policy is by providing information and analysis on global events and trends. This can help policymakers to make informed decisions about how to respond to changes in the international environment, such as shifts in trade patterns, emerging security threats, or political instability in neighbouring countries. In conclusion, the media plays a crucial role in shaping Nepal's foreign policy. By providing information, analysis, and a platform for public discussion, media can influence public opinion

and policymakers, and help to shape the country's relations with other countries.

Historical context: the evolution of Nepal's foreign policy

Nepal's foreign policy has evolved significantly since its inception as a modern nation-state in the mid-18th century. In the early years, Nepal remained a largely isolated kingdom, with limited interactions with other countries. However, as the world became more connected in the 20th century, Nepal's foreign policy began to evolve in response to changing geopolitical realities.

During the Cold War, Nepal adopted a policy of non-alignment, seeking to maintain neutrality and avoid aligning with either the United States or the Soviet Union. This policy was driven by a desire to maintain Nepal's independence and sovereignty in the face of great power rivalries.

In the post-Cold War era, Nepal's foreign policy shifted towards greater engagement with the international community. Nepal sought to strengthen ties with its South Asian neighbours, including India and Pakistan, while also pursuing closer relations with China. Nepal also sought to increase its engagement with the United Nations and other international organizations.

In recent years, Nepal's foreign policy has been shaped by several factors, including its ongoing political transition, the rise of China as a global power, and its relationship with India. Nepal has sought to balance its relationships with its two powerful neighbours, while also pursuing closer ties with other countries in the region, such as Japan and South Korea. Overall, Nepal's foreign policy has evolved significantly over the years, reflecting the changing geopolitical realities of the region and the world. While the country has faced many challenges along the way, it has

remained committed to maintaining its independence and sovereignty, while also engaging with the international community and pursuing its national interests.

Objective

1. To understand the role of media in shaping the foreign policy of Nepal
2. To understand the challenges of media in shaping the foreign policy of Nepal
3. To understand the Future of media and foreign policy in Nepal

Literature Review

Pramod Mishra's (2005) ^[9] article titled "Nepalese Media and Foreign Policy: The Case of India and China" explores the role of media in shaping Nepal's foreign policy, particularly concerning its neighbours India and China. He argues that the Nepalese media has a significant impact on the country's foreign policy by shaping public opinion and influencing government decision-making. He notes that the media often portrays India as a dominant and interfering neighbour, while China is portrayed as a more distant and less threatening power. He also discusses the different approaches of the Nepalese media towards India and China. He argues that the media is more critical of India due to historical and political factors, while it tends to be more positive towards China, which is seen as a potential source of investment and economic development. Overall, Mishra's article highlights the importance of understanding the role of media in shaping foreign policy in countries like Nepal, where public opinion and media narratives can have a significant impact on government decision-making.

"Media and Foreign Policy in Nepal" is a research paper written by Kishor Nepal (2014), which explores the relationship between media and foreign policy in Nepal. The paper aims to analyse the role of media in shaping foreign policy and influencing public opinion on foreign policy issues. The paper argues that media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing the decision-making process of foreign policy in Nepal. Media coverage of foreign policy issues can impact public perceptions of foreign policy decisions and influence the government's foreign policy priorities. Additionally, the media can serve as a tool for the government to communicate its foreign policy goals and objectives to the public. The paper also discusses the challenges faced by the media in Nepal, including political interference, censorship, and lack of resources. These challenges can limit the media's ability to provide accurate and impartial coverage of foreign policy issues. Overall, "Media and Foreign Policy in Nepal" provides valuable insight into the relationship between media and foreign policy in Nepal and highlights the importance of a free and independent media in shaping public opinion and influencing foreign policy decisions.

Tara Kanel's article titled "Media and Foreign Policy of Nepal" was published in the *Journal of International Affairs* in (2012). The article discusses the role of the media in shaping foreign policy in Nepal. Kanel argues that the media in Nepal has played an important role in shaping the foreign policy of the country. According to Kanel, the media has been instrumental in shaping public opinion on foreign policy issues and has often been the catalyst for policy changes. Kanel further argues that the media in Nepal has been effective in creating awareness among the public about

the importance of foreign policy issues. The media has also been successful in highlighting the role of Nepal in the international arena, and in promoting Nepal's interests abroad. However, Kanel also notes that the media in Nepal has faced several challenges in its efforts to shape foreign policy. These challenges include political interference, limited resources, and a lack of training and expertise among journalists. Overall, Kanel's article provides an insightful analysis of the role of the media in shaping foreign policy in Nepal and highlights the challenges that the media faces in this endeavour.

Manju Ghimire's (2018) article titled "Media and Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Nepal's Foreign Policy Discourse" examines the role of media in shaping Nepal's foreign policy discourse. The author argues that media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion on foreign policy issues, which in turn influences the policy decisions of the government. Ghimire argues that the Nepalese media's coverage of foreign policy issues tends to be reactive rather than proactive. This means that the media tends to report on foreign policy issues only after they have become significant, rather than actively pursuing stories and raising awareness of issues that could become important in the future. The author also notes that the Nepalese media's coverage of foreign policy tends to be influenced by political biases and agendas. The article goes on to discuss the relationship between media and foreign policy decision-making in Nepal. Ghimire argues that while the media can influence public opinion on foreign policy issues, it is not a major factor in the actual decision-making process. The author suggests that policymakers in Nepal tend to rely on their knowledge and expertise when making foreign policy decisions, rather than taking cues from the media or public opinion. Overall, Ghimire's article provides a valuable perspective on the role of media in shaping foreign policy discourse in Nepal. The author's analysis highlights the need for more proactive and unbiased media coverage of foreign policy issues to ensure that policymakers are well-informed and public opinion is properly represented.

The media landscape in Nepal: an overview

Nepal has a diverse media landscape, with various forms of traditional and modern media outlets operating in the country. The media in Nepal plays an important role in shaping public opinion, facilitating dialogue, and promoting transparency and accountability. Print media has a long history in Nepal, with the first newspaper, *Gorkhapatra*, launched in 1901 during the Rana regime. Today, there are more than 500 newspapers, magazines, and journals published in Nepali and other languages. Major Nepali newspapers include *Kantipur*, *Nagarik*, *Annapurna Post*, and *Himal Khabar Patrika*. Radio is also an important medium in Nepal, particularly in rural areas where access to other forms of media is limited. There are over 400 radio stations in Nepal, with the state-run *Radio Nepal* being the oldest and largest. Other popular radio stations include *Ujyalo FM*, *Image FM*, and *Radio Sagarmatha*. Television broadcasting in Nepal began in 1985 with the establishment of *Nepal Television*, the state-run broadcaster. Today, there are more than 20 private television channels in Nepal, including *Kantipur Television*, *Nepal Television HD*, and *Image Channel*. Cable and satellite television are also widely available in urban areas. Online media is an emerging and rapidly growing sector in Nepal. With increasing access to

the internet and mobile phones, more Nepalis are turning to online news sources and social media platforms for information. Major online news portals in Nepal include Setopati, Online Khabar, and My Republica. Despite the diversity of media outlets in Nepal, the media sector faces several challenges. These include a lack of professional training and resources, political interference, and financial pressures. In recent years, there have been concerns about increasing censorship and restrictions on press freedom, particularly with the passage of new media laws in 2018.

An Analysis of the Role of Media in Shaping Nepalese foreign policy

The media in Nepal has a significant impact on shaping the public's perception of foreign policy issues. The media's role in shaping foreign policy is primarily through framing issues, setting the agenda, and providing information and analysis. The media has the power to highlight certain issues and ignore others, which can influence public opinion and ultimately shape government policy.

One of the most significant events that shaped Nepalese foreign policy in recent times was the 2015 Nepal earthquake. The earthquake brought international attention to Nepal, and the media played a crucial role in highlighting the country's plight and mobilizing international aid. The media's coverage of the earthquake also highlighted Nepal's vulnerabilities and the need for a more robust foreign policy that could address these issues. Another example of the media's impact on Nepalese foreign policy is the coverage of Nepal's relations with China and India. The media has played a critical role in highlighting Nepal's dependence on its two neighbours and the need for a balanced foreign policy. The media's coverage of Nepal's relations with China and India has also highlighted the challenges and opportunities that come with having two giant neighborhood powers. The media has a significant role in shaping Nepalese foreign policy. The media's ability to frame issues, set the agenda, and provide information and analysis influences public opinion and ultimately shapes government policy. As Nepal continues to navigate its complex geopolitical environment, the media's role in shaping foreign policy will only become more critical.

The challenge for the Nepalese media in the context of shaping the foreign policy of Nepal

One of the major challenges for the Nepalese media in shaping Nepal's foreign policy is the lack of access to reliable and accurate information. The media often relies on second-hand sources, and information is not always shared transparently by the government or diplomatic channels. This makes it difficult for journalists to provide objective reporting and analysis on foreign policy issues.

Another challenge is the lack of diversity in perspectives and opinions within Nepalese media. This can result in a narrow range of views being presented to the public, limiting critical thinking and debate on foreign policy matters. Furthermore, the Nepalese media faces limitations in terms of resources, infrastructure, and training, which can affect their ability to conduct in-depth research and analysis on complex foreign policy issues. This can result in oversimplified or incomplete coverage of foreign policy issues, leading to a lack of understanding and engagement from the public. To address these challenges, the Nepalese media should prioritize investing in the training and

development of journalists in the area of foreign policy reporting. This will help to improve the quality and accuracy of reporting and increase the diversity of perspectives presented. Additionally, the government should work to promote transparency and open communication channels with the media, providing access to reliable and accurate information on foreign policy matters. This will enable journalists to provide objective reporting and analysis, leading to more informed public debate and engagement on foreign policy issues.

Limitations for the Nepalese Media in Shaping Foreign Policy of Nepal

There are several limitations that the Nepalese media faces when it comes to shaping the foreign policy of Nepal. Some of the major limitations are Lack of resources and capacity: The Nepalese media, particularly the smaller outlets, lack the resources and capacity to effectively cover foreign policy issues. This limits their ability to provide in-depth analysis and nuanced perspectives on foreign policy matters. Limited access to information: The Nepalese government is often not transparent when it comes to sharing information about its foreign policy decisions and negotiations. This limits the media's ability to accurately report on foreign policy issues and hold the government accountable for its actions. Political influence: Nepalese media is often influenced by political parties and their agendas, which can affect their coverage of foreign policy issues. This can lead to biased reporting and a lack of critical analysis. Limited international exposure: Nepalese media has limited exposure to international events and perspectives, which can limit their ability to provide comprehensive coverage of foreign policy issues. Language barriers: Many foreign policy issues require knowledge of foreign languages, which can be a barrier for Nepalese media outlets that lack the resources to hire translators or correspondents who are fluent in other languages. Overall, these limitations make it challenging for the Nepalese media to shape foreign policy in Nepal. However, by investing in resources and capacity building, improving transparency and access to information, and encouraging diversity in perspectives, the media can play a more significant role in shaping foreign policy in the country.

The future of media and foreign policy of Nepal

The role of media in shaping foreign policy is significant as it can influence public opinion and bring attention to important issues. In the case of Nepal, the media has been playing an important role in highlighting the country's foreign policy issues and challenges.

Nepal's geographical location and its relations with neighbouring countries like India and China have always been important for its foreign policy. In recent years, Nepal has been trying to diversify its foreign relations beyond its traditional partners and has been exploring new partnerships with other countries. In this context, the role of media in shaping public opinion about Nepal's foreign policy and its relations with other countries is crucial. Nepalese media can highlight the benefits and challenges of such foreign policy initiatives and create awareness among the public about the potential opportunities and risks involved. Furthermore, the media can also provide a platform for informed and constructive debates on foreign policy issues, which can help policymakers make more informed decisions. In

conclusion, Nepalese media has a significant opportunity to shape the country's foreign policy by highlighting key issues, promoting informed discussions, and creating awareness among the public. However, it will depend on the media's independence, impartiality, and commitment to responsible journalism.

Conclusion

The media plays a crucial role in shaping the foreign policy of Nepal, as it is through the media that the Nepalese people become aware of the country's foreign policy issues and developments. The media's role in shaping foreign policy is particularly significant in a country like Nepal, where there is a vibrant media landscape and a highly politically conscious population. Nepal's media has historically played an important role in shaping foreign policy, especially during times of political upheaval or significant events. For instance, the media played a crucial role in reporting on the 2015 Nepal earthquake and its aftermath, which resulted in an outpouring of international aid and support. Similarly, the media also played a significant role in shaping Nepal's foreign policy towards India and China during the country's political transition in the 1990s. The media's role in shaping foreign policy is not limited to reporting on events but also includes opinion pieces and analysis, which can influence public opinion and policy decisions. The media can act as a watchdog, holding the government accountable for its foreign policy decisions and providing critical analysis of policy options.

In conclusion, the media's role in shaping foreign policy in Nepal cannot be underestimated. As a highly politically conscious society, Nepalese people are closely attuned to foreign policy issues, and the media serves as an important source of information and analysis on these issues. The media can play a significant role in influencing public opinion and policy decisions, and as such, policymakers must engage with the media and take their opinions and analysis into account when formulating foreign policy.

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