

Research Article

Contours of Nepal-China Relations: A People-Centered Perspective

Sudip Adhikari* 

Central Department of History, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

Abstract

China's rise has sparked intense debate around the world, particularly over its growing influence in neighboring countries such as Nepal. As a Himalayan country interspersed between two major powers, Nepal's relationship with China is strategic and multifaceted. While existing literature focuses primarily on China's increased aid and investment in Nepal, more research is needed to determine how China's presence affects Nepali citizens' daily lives. This study takes an ontological approach, viewing the reality of Nepal-China relations as a dynamic and evolving process influenced by historical, geographical, cultural, economic, linguistic variables. The research is epistemologically based on constructivism, with an emphasis on Nepali people's subjective experiences and perceptions of Chinese influences. The axiological perspective acknowledges the value-laden nature of this inquiry, as well as the potential biases and ethical considerations that come with studying cross-cultural interactions. The study's goal is to investigate the impact of Chinese food, language, economy, and culture in Nepal, providing a comprehensive understanding of what China means to Nepal today. This study not only adds to the academic discourse on Nepal-China relations, but it also sheds light on the broader implications of China's rise for smaller countries in the region. Methodologically, this study takes a qualitative data collection techniques to provide a thorough analysis.

Keywords

Chinese Food, Language, Culture, Economy, Negotiation

1. Introduction

The relationship between Nepal and China is ancient, tracing their connections even back to pre-historic era. The story of Chinese monk Manjushree, who supposedly traveled to Nepal and assisted in establishing human settlement in Kathmandu Valley, is the first record of China-Nepali ties. China and Nepal have been linked for a long time. In myth studies and fables, the legend of Manjushree's arrival in Kathmandu and the passage of water that allowed human settlement to begin there is well-known [54].

However, a closer examination of the long-standing rela-

tionship between Nepal and China reveals that trade played a critical role in its inception. Nepal thrived as a result of its trade activities, which involved the exchange of a variety of goods ranging from salt and gold. Nepal also imported wool from Mongolia, China, and Tibet, which were all free nations at the time. The presence of temples in Kathmandu with gold-plated roofs indicates a significant influx of wealth to Nepal from these countries. While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact origin date of this relationship, the limited available evidence suggests that it dates back more than 2000 years.

*Corresponding author: sudipadhikari.tuedu.np@gmail.com (Sudip Adhikari)

Received: 9 January 2025; **Accepted:** 23 January 2025; **Published:** 21 February 2025



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2025. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Nepal became known as the Tea and Horse Route during the Silk Road era, and the two countries enjoyed close social, economic, and religious ties [6].

Despite its centrality to the Tibetan saga and China-India's geostrategic rivalry, Nepal has received little attention in recent studies in either field. The aging and unavoidable death of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, the radicalization of the Tibetan diaspora, and the fervor of the international campaign to free Tibet will keep the Himalayan dispute on the world's front pages as Tibetans and Chinese seek to determine a legitimate successor in the future. India, which has provided refuge to the Dalai Lama and tens of thousands of his followers for more than a half-century, is increasingly viewing Tibet as a bargaining chip with China in its overall bilateral relationship. Nepal, which has a 1,415-kilometer border with China and one of 1,751-kilometers with India, is home to approximately 20,000 Tibetan refugees. Wedged between rising and assertive Asian giants, Nepal is likely to become an even more important news peg, owing to its chronic political turmoil, which has been exacerbated by elements of the Sino-Indian rivalry [61].

It is easy to dismiss China's rise in Nepal as the result of India's "unofficial" embargo in 2015, but this is far from the truth. Nepal has traditionally viewed China as a viable alternative to India's frequently oppressive influence over the country's politics and economy, but Chinese infrastructure restrictions in Tibet and the Himalaya have previously prevented this from occurring. However, as the Qinghai-Tibet Railway (QTR) expanded into Lhasa and Shigatse in the twenty-first century, Nepal's ambitions were rekindled. It appears Kathmandu has found a willing partner in Beijing to counteract Delhi's overt political (mis)management of the post-conflict transition period [42].

Regardless of Nepal's claim to non-alignment, there is a link between PM Oli's anti-Indian nationalism and China's ambitions in South Asia. In the absence of a larger national strategy, Nepal's China policy, if it exists, is held hostage by partisan interests. However, while Beijing has secured its larger interests in Nepal, Kathmandu has failed to look beyond the China card. It has not improved its ability to negotiate better deals, nor has it established nonpartisan institutions that promote national interests. Above all, Nepal has not been able to break free from the aid-beneficiary mentality and come up with a strategy that can take advantage of China's economic and infrastructure progress on its own terms [44].

Chinese leadership in economic diplomacy may have been demonstrated by two initiatives launched in 2014. The Asian Infrastructure Development Bank (AIIB) was established, as was the encouragement of increased Chinese investment and commerce with nations along the so-called "New Silk Road" and "Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road." On October 21, 2014, China added 20 more nations as founding members of the AIIB. China established the AIIB, and its main office is in Beijing. It began its operations in late 2015 with an approved capital of \$100 billion. According to Asian Develop-

ment Bank (ADB) studies, between 2010 and 2020, national infrastructure improvements in developing Asian countries alone will cost US\$8 trillion, or US\$800 billion per year [16].

Nevertheless, Chinese expansionism does not follow the British model: it does not conquer the Raj or send Chinese people to run foreign countries. And, unlike the American model, China does not have a large number of formal alliance relationships. Rather, Chinese expansionism is based on economic bonds and assumptions about economic leverage. It is truly about global supply chains and securing its own supply chains [30].

China's resurgence as a great power should have come as no surprise. Before 1820, the two largest economies were China and India. Their return to great power status was completely natural. However, China's return has occurred at an unusually rapid pace. It had an incredible rate of return. In 1980, its purchasing power parity (PPP) economy was one-tenth the size of America's. By 2014, it had grown larger [41].

Following a successful state visit to Nepal in October 2019, President Xi Jinping announced that China and Nepal had upgraded their relationship to a "Strategic Partnership of Cooperation Featuring Ever-lasting Friendship for Development and Prosperity." In 2021, Nepal and China celebrated the 66th anniversary of their diplomatic ties in all spheres—political, economic, people-to-people exchange, and others—highlighting the friendship's tremendous progress over the years [51].

Nepal and China have agreed to issue five-year entry and exit passes to people living in 15 districts of northern Nepal that border China. Following Chinese feedback, the Department of Immigration, which is part of the Ministry of Home Affairs, recently redesigned the entry/exit pass and developed an operating procedure, which was approved by the ministry on June 19. The new arrangement, which is consistent with the bilateral agreement and immigration regulations, will allow Nepali citizens living near the Chinese border to enter and exit China's Autonomous Region, Tibet, according to one of the government's operating procedures [24].

Today, the vast majority of experts on China-Nepal relations agree that China's non-interference policy has helped Beijing win over Nepalese hearts and minds while also promoting Nepal's economic growth. In contrast, India, Nepal's largest trading partner and source of aid since diplomatic relations began in 1947, is losing Nepalese trust as a result of its ineffective policy toward the country and the harmful interference of American and European powers in Nepalese affairs. India is unable to change its policy due to its traditional suzerain mentality and pressure from American and European lobbyists. After decades of India-centric policy, PM Oli had the audacity to promise that "we will ensure that our land is not used to harm the sovereign rights of our neighbors" [53]. That is the most explicit declaration of Nepal's intention to pursue an independent and impartial foreign policy that a Nepali leader has made to date.

2. Research Methodology

This study focus on a qualitative approach to explore the impact of China's influence on various aspects of life in Nepal, using qualitative data collection techniques. Guided by an ontological perspective that views Nepal-China relations as dynamic and influenced by historical, geographical, cultural, economic, and linguistic factors, the research is grounded in constructivism, emphasizing the subjective experiences and perceptions of Nepali citizens. Data collection involves document analysis of historical records, government reports, media articles, and academic literature, as well as the analysis of economic and demographic data related to trade, investment, employment, and migration patterns.

3. Food: Chinese Food in Nepal

Food plays an important role in international relations by bringing people together. It is about culture, civilization, taste, and the economy. Food preferences differ between Nepal and China. Chinese people eat rice, noodles, and buns every day, whereas Nepalese eat dal, bhat, and curry. Food reflects one's class. In China, the Communist Party appears to have popularized the food. Food represents taste, culture, civilization, and the market economy.

The authors of the book *'Social History of Nepal'*, (1993), Tulasi Ram Vaidya, Tri Ratna Manandhar, and Shankar Lal Joshi, describe how people who drink alcohol and eat buffalo meat were looked down upon by supposedly higher castes. Because of this culture, some Newas who were close to Ranas and held high positions publicly abstained from drinking alcohol and eating buff, despite the fact that these customs were observed while worshipping ancestral deities. They believed that by opposing those customs in public, they were elevating their social status. In a society already stratified by class, high caste individuals have not only dominated social norms but also food culture. As much as food has brought us together, it has also been used to exclude people in the past. What you eat has traditionally defined your class, and vice versa [29].

When people interact with each other, the connections between the two countries become more transparent and strong. Diplomatic connections are only formal if there is a lack of strong interpersonal relationships. The two countries' relationship is governed by the interests of their ruling classes. As a result, in public relations, the confusion between "nail cutter" and "beef rice" only adds to the suspicion and doubt [8]. The writer has expressed his personal experience as a Chinese flight serving beef rice too many Nepali nationals shows the lack of understanding about Nepalese, the confusion that occurred while carrying a nail cutter on the plane, and the circumstances he had to deal with. China hasn't understood the importance of Cow in Nepal as it is regarded as national animal and worshipped in Tihar festival.

Historically, many ethnic communities in Nepal, including

Dalits, ate beef. However, the Hindu Shah Kings outlawed cow slaughter nationwide in 1805. The state issued a public notice throughout the country, warning that anyone who slaughters a cow would face the death penalty and have their property confiscated. The 1854 Muluki Ain reduced the death penalty to life imprisonment for intentional killing and a fine for negligent killing [29].

Discussions about food now recognize how intertwined it is with a wide range of people and organizations. This is a revolutionary shift. Development professionals and humanitarians are increasingly working together to create a sustainable food environment in the aftermath of disasters. The private sector is involved, using economic strategies and impact investments to help solve global value chains, while military strategists are collaborating on conflict exports to prevent further instability in war-torn countries. Chefs and food critics are looking for ways to use their culinary expertise to benefit the community. These initiatives frequently aim to reduce world hunger by increasing production and assisting farmers in reaching larger markets [17].

Beginning in the fifth century, itinerant Buddhist monks such as China's Fa Xian and Nepal's Buddhahadra brought the two cultures together. According to Nepalese historian VK Manandhar, Nepal's kings gave the Tang dynasty's court "a bitter leaf vegetable' resembling lettuce...and an aromatic 'Western celery'" in the seventh century. According to several sources, Kathmandu's first independent, authentic Chinese restaurant opened in the late 1980s or early 1990s, though a few Chinese eateries in upscale hotels served what is now known as Indian-Chinese food at the time [43].

Chinese cuisine is becoming an important part of China's international image and cultural diplomacy. Chinese cuisine has grown in popularity over the last few decades, as China's economic and political influence has grown. With over 50,000 Chinese restaurants in more than 180 countries, Chinese cuisine has surpassed other cuisines as the most popular globally [64].

Chinese restaurants are mushrooming in Nepal's cities, particularly Kathmandu and Pokhara. In 2016, Thamel in Kathmandu was packed with Chinese restaurants. Despite the presence of numerous Chinese restaurants with glittering lights and colorful lanterns, there were few visitors [42]. Szechwan or Szechuan cuisine is the most popular form of mainland Chinese cuisine in Nepal, and it is available anywhere that advertises "Chinese" food. The cuisine, which originated in the southern Chinese province of Sichuan, has gained popularity in Nepal due to its use of noodles, hot chili peppers, and lots of garlic in almost every dish. The vegetarian and Buddhist sub-styles of Szechwan cuisine predominate in Nepal's regions outside of Kathmandu, whereas the meatier Chengdu and Zigong sub-styles are more common in the Kathmandu Valley, where a large number of visitors gather [49].

According to the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China asserts that Chinese politicians,

who are aware of the impact food can have on how the world perceives China, have taken note of the situation. Chinese cuisine is an important component of China's soft power and is critical to advancing bilateral cultural exchange and cooperation [32].

4. Chinese Culture and Nepal's Responses

Confucius was born in 550 BC, making him a contemporary of Gautama Buddha (born 560 BC) and Mahavira, the father of Jainism. Confucius was an excellent teacher and philosopher, but not a religious leader. He talked about heaven, but there were no gods or goddesses there. In China, people did not believe in God, but they did have faith in heaven. The Confucian moral code, combined with rationalism, contributed to the formation of a well-ordered society. Even at the start of the Christian era, it was claimed that 'there were no murders, robberies or heinous crimes'. There was a high level of respect for customs, ancestors, parents, and state laws. Several studies have found that the Confucian model is still prevalent in China today. Joseph Needham was a "red scientist" and a deeply religious man. He preferred Chinese civilization based on morality rather than supernaturalism, a great culture that was not founded on the doctrine of original sin, and a country where no priesthood ever dominated [45].

When attempting to explain Chinese behavior, Confucian concepts and principles remain extremely important. Confucius (c. 600-500 BC) envisioned a government that prioritized proper social interactions. The Emperor was the supreme monarch at the top of society's pyramid, with various other authorities managing the country in the middle and families at the bottom. If everyone behaved properly, the government would be stable, society would run smoothly, there would be universal harmony, and the country would be prosperous and peaceful appropriately toward each other [11].

The Yellow Emperor is remembered as a founding hero; however, in the founding myth, he is reestablishing an empire rather than creating one. China existed before him; it enters history as an established state that only needs to be restored, not created. This paradox of Chinese history recurs with the ancient sage Confucius: once again, he is regarded as the "founder" of a culture, despite the fact that he stressed that he had invented nothing and was simply attempting to revive the principles of harmony that existed in the golden age but had been lost in Confucius' own era of political chaos [32].

Nepal, located between two culturally rich countries, India and China, benefitted from borrowing art, architecture, sculpture, and literature from both. The artists traveled to those countries and learned new techniques, which they incorporated into a new pattern tailored to the country. Many people from Tibet and India were invited and permitted to settle in Nepal. The priests of Pashupatinath Temple were appointed from South India's Bhatta Brahmins. Nepal's courts

had learned from various parts of India. Similarly, Buddhist learned scholars from Tibet received equal recognition in Nepal. At the same time, Chinese sculptures such as winged lions, horses, and ferocious demons were placed in temples. Tantrism, which flourished widely in Tibet, had its greatest impact in the 17th century Kathmandu valley [63].

Nepal's cultural and spiritual influence in Tibet was significant, particularly through Bhrikuti Devi's marriage to King Srong-tsen Gampo. Nepali craftsmen, such as masons and artists, made contributions to Tibetan architecture and religious art. For example, Bhrikuti Devi's wishes influenced the early construction of the Potala Palace, and Nepali artisans played important roles in the creation of revered statues such as Thugji Chen-po. The collaboration of Nepali and Tibetan craftsmen enriched Tibetan art, which still values Nepali designs (Bhal-zo) for their superior quality and originality [60].

The Mani Rimdu festival takes place in Sherpa and Tibetan monasteries in Nepal's Solu-Khumbu District, near Mount Everest. These institutions, like nearly all of Nepal's monasteries outside of the Kathmandu Valley, follow the Nyingma order of Tibetan Buddhism. Among Nepal's ethnic groups, the Sherpas are perhaps best known for their mountaineering exploits. Nepal, however, is not their ancestral home. The first Sherpas arrived from Khams, Tibet's eastern province, around 1533. According to Christoph von Fiirer-Haimendorf, the pioneer of Sherpa ethnography, the Sherpa's religious beliefs are "basically those of Tibetan Buddhism". It would be difficult to distinguish between ethnic beliefs and practices in Mani Rimdu. Indeed, the festival in Chiwong is organized by Sherpas and Tibetans working together [33].

Festivals are both national and local in nature. The many local celebrations are diverse; national festivals, while fewer, are characterized by a sense of unity and lavishness. The first day of the first month of the Tibetan calendar (February or March on the Gregorian calendar) is marked by New Year (Losar) celebrations throughout Tibet. At dawn, pilgrims visit monasteries, temples, stupas (outdoor shrines), and home chapels, making offerings before statues and relics of deities and saints. Every household prepares a special fried cookie known as *kha-zas*. The offerings are adorned with either a real or artificial horned sheep's head. All visitors are given a colourful container filled with barley flour and wheat grain, as well as another container of chang, and are asked to take a pinch of the contents and throw it in the air as an offering to the deities [46].

Chinese New Year and other Chinese festivals are celebrated in Nepal, highlighting the two countries' diverse cultures and historical ties. These ceremonies are particularly common in areas with a large Chinese population, such as the Kathmandu Valley. The Sino-Nepalese community, Nepal's Chinese community, observes Chinese holidays with enthusiasm and respect. The Sino-Nepalese community in Nepal observes Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival or Lunar New Year, through a variety of rituals and cele-

brations. Families hold reunion banquets, exchange red money envelopes as a lucky charm, and set off firecrackers to ward off evil spirits and bring prosperity. Asan and Thamel, two of Kathmandu's main thoroughfares, are decorated with red lanterns and other red-themed items, creating a vibrant and joyful atmosphere [51].

Aside from Chinese New Year, other notable Chinese holidays celebrated in Nepal include the Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and Lantern Festival. The Dragon Boat Festival, also known as the Duanwu Festival in China, is remembered through dragon boat races on rivers or lakes, as well as the preparation and consumption of zongzi (sticky rice dumplings) [15]. The Moon Festival, also known as the Mid-Autumn Festival, is celebrated by lighting colorful lanterns, exchanging mooncakes, and honoring the moon. The Lunar New Year celebrations conclude with the Lantern Festival, which features the release of sky lanterns into the night sky, a display of beautiful lanterns, and lion dances [39].

In 2018 more than 150,000 Chinese visitors visited Nepal. Similarly, more than 6,000 Nepalis worked or studied in China in the same year. The Confucius Institute in Kathmandu is currently teaching Chinese to approximately 600 Nepali students. Cultural affinities between China and Nepal are clearly growing [54]. Tourism was identified based on low-investment and guaranteed high-profit principles, as Chinese investors expected a surge in Chinese tourists in the future. For the first time in 2013, Chinese tourists arrived in Nepal in excess of 100,000. Prior to the Covid-19 restrictions, Nepal aimed to attract 2 million foreign tourists, including 350,000 Chinese visitors, through the Visit Nepal Year 2020 campaign [40].

5. Economy: Investment, Trade and Tourism

In Nepal, China happens to be the largest source of FDI. Chinese FDI in Nepal include projects like Hongshi Shivam Cement, Pokhara International Airport, Upper Trishuli hydropower project, and West Seti Dam. Several small shops have also been opened by Chinese investors in major tourist hubs in Nepal, including Thamel in Kathmandu and Pokhara to attract Chinese tourists. Recently, Nepal signed two memorandum of understanding (MoU) with this country on the occasion of the Third Investment Summit of Nepal (28-29 April). The first MoU was signed between Next-Gen Management Solutions Pvt Ltd of Nepal with MABC Investment Pvt Ltd of China; while the second MoU was signed between the Federation of Nepalese Industry and Commerce (FNIC) of Nepal and the Dongguan Jingliang Lighting Product Company Ltd. of China [26].

China and India have experienced consistent, rapid economic growth over the last two decades as a result of liberalizing their internal economic policies, foreign investment, and trade. According to the Organization for Economic Coopera-

tion and Development (OECD), China's GDP has grown at a rate of nearly 10% per year for over 20 years, making it the world's fourth largest. China is emerging as a first or second choice for foreign investment and a major supplier of manufactured goods, particularly high-tech products. The average income of Chinese citizens has steadily risen, while the country's poverty rate has significantly decreased [42]. As per 2024, China is the second largest economy of the world which could be huge opportunity for Nepal to reap economic benefits.

Chinese investment commitments in the Nepali market have steadily increased since 2012-2013, with a decrease expected in fiscal year 2022-2023. The fiscal years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 saw the peak of Chinese investment commitments, accounting for more than 70% of Nepal's total FDI during that time. According to Nepalese DoI officials, Chinese investments were initially focused on small restaurants before diversifying into hydropower and other sectors. The tourism sector received the most Chinese FDI commitments, totaling \$125 million as of July 2021, followed by other services and the information technology sector [40].

In Nepal, the debate over the initiative has two aspects: First, it is concerned with the effectiveness of Sino-Nepal cooperation under the BRI, including perceptions of the characteristics of individual large-scale infrastructure projects. Second, it is concerned with how large-scale BRI projects will be financed, particularly any geopolitical intentions behind the financing. Unfortunately, the debate is framed and the conclusions drawn through the lens of information asymmetry. People appear to believe in conspiracy theories, and some obvious deviations and misinformation have been repeated. It's as if questioning and criticizing the BRI has become the new form of political correctness. As a prerequisite for the future development of bilateral relations, both governments and the general public in both countries must immediately align their understanding of the BRI [37].

Nepal, which is surrounded by snow-capped mountains, has many rivers with significant water level differences and an 83,000 MW hydroelectric energy reserve. Nepal's low level of infrastructure and development of hydropower resources has resulted in a growing conflict between supply and demand for hydropower. In line with this proposal, Nepal's energy sector has announced a hydropower plan that aims to increase the country's power generation capacity to 25,000 MW by 2030. Based on this situation, Nepal has been active in international investment and cooperation, with China among its partners. The Chinese government is actively pursuing the "going out" strategy and promoting the construction of power projects in countries along the "Belt and Road", and it has increased its investment in Nepal. For example, China Hydropower International has invested in the construction of the Upper Tamakoshi Hydropower Plant, with a total installed capacity of 456 MW, which has a significant impact on Nepal's power supply and energy supply, relieving pressure on Nepal's power supply [22]. In recent years, discussions about Nepal's growth tra-

jectory have increasingly focused on Chinese aid and participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). New types of infrastructure-focused Chinese aid, the development of public-private partnerships involving Chinese companies, and the escalation of trans-Himalayan trade—popularly and diplomatically referred to as "a handshake across the Himalayas"—have all contributed to the strengthening of geopolitical and developmental ties between Beijing and Kathmandu [19].

The North East Asia Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2019) reports that China is Nepal's second largest trading partner. In 2017/18, total exports to China exceeded US\$ 23 million. During the same period, imports from China exceeded US\$ 1.5 billion. Nepal's trade deficit with China has been steadily increasing. Although China has granted zero tariff entry to over 8,000 Nepali products since 2009, Nepal has not been able to reduce its trade deficit. Nepal regularly attends various trade fairs and exhibitions held in China. Nepal-China's Tibet Economic and Trade Fair is a biannual event hosted alternately by either side to improve business interaction and promote economic cooperation between Nepal and Tibet, China. Nepal participated in the China International Import Expo, which took place in Shanghai in November 2018. The 16th Nepal-China Tibet Economic and Trade Fair was held in Lhasa from October 24 to 29 [58].

Levine asserts in his research on Humla found that people were actively involved in the Tibet-Nepal trade, and it was customary for them to set up trade markets near the border during certain seasons. Tibetan nomads would bring salt, wool, and surplus animals to these markets, and lower valley Nepali speakers would do the same. The lower-valley Nepali speakers would then bring back surplus items. The Humla people served as crucial intermediaries, assisting with translation, facilitating trade, and bridging communication gaps. They charged a fee of five to ten percent of the commodities exchanged on one side while receiving gifts on the other. The trade and mediation process was their primary source of income. They had little time or need for agriculture and, in any case, had chosen their locations for easy access to trade marts rather than for agricultural purposes. Their locations are chosen for easy access to trade marts, not for agricultural purposes. When the Chinese took control of Tibet, trade marts were closed, causing severe economic disruptions and possibly influencing the rate or outcome of ethnic change China's trade and investment [36].

In recent years, Nepal's tourism industry has grown thanks to the two countries' close bilateral relations. China has emerged as a significant investor in Nepal, investing in a variety of industries such as hydropower, tourism, infrastructure, and manufacturing. With the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Nepal Trans-Himalayan Multi-Dimensional Connectivity Network, Chinese investment in Nepal is expected to increase further. China is also Nepal's second-largest trading partner after India, with an estimated \$1.27 billion in bilateral trade in 2020. With

approximately 169,543 Chinese visitors to Nepal in 2019, China has also emerged as one of the country's top tourism destinations. Chinese investment in Nepal has increased significantly, according to Xinhua News Agency, resulting in improved infrastructure and job growth. According to the estimates, China account for more than 60% of all foreign investments in Nepal during the fiscal year 2020-21, making it the largest outside investor [12, 13].

According to The Himalayan Times, the Nepal-China FTA went into effect in October 2019 with the goal of increasing trade between the two countries. The FTA will gradually eliminate tariffs on over 8,000 categories, including agricultural and industrial goods [58].

Nepal has seen the most recent change in its bilateral relations with China among Smaller South Asian States, after taking steps to strengthen ties following an Indian border closure in 2015-2016, which had a significant negative impact on the Nepalese economy and highlighted the dangers of Nepal's reliance on New Delhi. Xi Jinping visited Kathmandu in October 2019 to dedicate brand-new train and road connections. The two countries established a fiber-optic link the previous year, breaking India's monopoly on Nepal's internet access. As of mid-2020, Nepal's relations with India have deteriorated due to an unresolved border conflict, which some Indian officials blame on China. This has further polarised Nepalese public opinion against India. According to reports, Chinese diplomats are now taking a more active role in Nepal's domestic affairs than India has in the past [62].

China has already praised the three neighbors for their trilateral cooperation. However, India has been hesitant to make a firm declaration because it is concerned that doing so will jeopardize its sole interest in maintaining "special relations" with Nepal. Mandarin in charge of Indian foreign policy are prone to questioning any audacious action taken by Nepal. After visiting China and meeting with President Xi Jinping, Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal took the initiative on this issue. Moving from "equi distance" to "equi proximity" in order to provide wealth to Nepal and the Himalayan region is a creative idea [48].

Given Beijing's inability to establish diplomatic relations with Thimphu and China's ease of access to South Asia through Nepali territory, Chinese academics and policymakers have recently begun to recognize Nepal's geographical location as a strategic gateway for China to enter South Asia [7].

6. History: Nepal-China Relation

Nepal did not achieve nationhood until the 18th century, when the King of Gorkha unified the country's numerous princely states and tribes into a single Gurkha kingdom of Nepal over a period of two decades. Although a multi-ethnic nation had emerged, Tibetans had gradually infiltrated the mountainous northern region [21].

Historically, Nepalis frequently traveled to Tibet, known as

Bhot, for employment, as it was a more attractive destination than India, which was plagued by malaria. Nepal engaged in trade with Tibet, importing goods like salt, wool, and gold, while exporting food products. Interestingly, despite once being an exporter of edibles, Nepal now imports them from China and India. Tibetan salt imports persisted until India began producing salt from seawater. This shift in trade reflects broader changes in regional economic dynamics over time. During Pratap Malla's illustrious regime, Nepali businessmen were permitted to open 32 trading shops. Nepali businesspeople paid no taxes, and the offspring of a Nepali and a local lady became Nepali citizens [60].

Stiller brings into light, Leo Rose's excellent book, *Nepal: Strategy for Survival* (1971), which attempts to bring the Nepal-China affair of 1816 into focus. He accepts the thesis that Nepal's traditional foreign policy was aimed at balancing India and China. In this context, he sees the Nepal-China conflict as a final Nepali effort to gain Chinese support and assistance in achieving two basic goals: the removal of the British Resident in Kathmandu and the restoration of some or all of the territory lost in the Sagauli Treaty. In this light, he concludes that the effort 'could have only happened because of Calcutta's reluctance to take positive action, rather than any real balance of power between Nepal's southern and northern neighbours. Rose sees the Nepal-China affair of 1816 as a gambit in Nepal's perennial problem of living and surviving with two powerful neighbors [38].

China and Nepal have the oldest known historical relationship. However, its beginnings were overshadowed by the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-1816, in which China failed to provide the Nepalese government with the requested military assistance. The Treaty of Betrawoti of 1792, specifically Article 4, stated that China would provide military assistance in the event of an external threat to Nepalese sovereignty. However, after thirty years since the war, the Rana rulers established an exclusive diplomatic relationship with the British, leaving the Sino-Nepal relationship largely ignored until 1955. As a result, trade, transit, pilgrimage, and interpersonal interactions were hampered, and Sino-Nepal diplomatic relations suffered from a significant communication breakdown. Nepal is now working to restore and expand trade and transit flows on a larger scale, as well as increase the number of Chinese tourists visiting Nepal. The Chinese Silk Road period, which lasted until the nineteenth century, made a significant contribution to our economic development. Nepal is currently a participant in China's Belt and Road Initiative. However, uncertainty about its implementation and potential consequences stems from both internal and external conflicts. Nepal must be cautious in determining its stance on the BRI while protecting its own sovereignty. The historical Nepal-China relationship should flourish through a variety of means, including trade, culture, tourism, pilgrimages, and education [6].

A balanced neighborly policy is one of the features, despite the maintenance of all previous structural arrangements.

Although Nepal's relations with its neighbors, India and China, have not changed significantly, the same "yam between the boulders" policy put forth by King Prithvi Narayan Shah is being carried out with deftness and a higher level of civility [5]. The historical relations between China and Nepal stem from the old Silk Road trade routes that linked the two countries. Economic and cultural contacts between the populations of China and Nepal occurred during the Silk Road era, as evidenced by historical records. These interactions served as the foundation for future bilateral relations [2]. The Treaty of Thapathali, signed in 1856 following the Third Nepal-Bhot War (1855-1856) by Nepali side and China's Qing Dynasty, marked a watershed moment in their relations. This agreement increased trade between the two countries and cultivated cordial diplomatic relations [29, 55].

Nepal remained isolated in the Himalayas, communicating only with India, Tibet, and, on occasion, China, until the violent collapse of the Rana autocracy in 1950. She was the ideal buffer state between her more ambitious neighbors, the Chinese and the British, due to her location, lack of natural resources, and medieval level of development [35]. After ascending to the throne in March 1955, King Mahendra expanded Nepal's international relations. He also quickly reopened negotiations with the Chinese, which Kathmandu had previously rejected in 1951. As a result of India's formal acceptance of China's annexation of Tibet in 1954, Nepal was no longer pressured to delay recognizing the new relationship. King Mahendra promptly negotiated the "Five Principles" and a treaty establishing diplomatic ties with China in 1955 [10].

The China-Nepal Border Agreement, signed in 1960, resolved the border issue between China and Nepal. By clearly defining their shared border, these two countries' bilateral relations were strengthened, and various forms of collaboration were promoted [25]. The Nepalese government presented the Chinese government with a pair of rhinos as a symbol of its desire to maintain and strengthen friendly relations with its northern neighbor. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli believes that the gift strengthens Nepal's longstanding ties with China. The two countries are currently engaged in more intense discussions about border crossings, train connections, energy, tourism, and other issues [47].

7. Geography-Neighbors

States balance in two ways: through coalition formation and internal mobilization. For King Prithvi Narayan Shah external balancing went hand in hand with internal balancing, which meant strengthening the military dimension of power. PN Shah's primary focus has always been military affairs. However, as he patiently accumulated military power and incorporated other petty states into his domain, he was careful not to inadvertently provoke the two powerful neighbors, because a single decisive defeat could have jeopardized the infant state's very existence. PN Shah thus recognized his limitations, chose his wars carefully, and fought battles only

as a last resort. His willingness to negotiate, his ability to cooperate when it was clearly advantageous to do so, and his ability to deflect requests he deemed harmful to his kingdom without flatly refusing them all indicate a strong sense of national self-preservation [56]. Before China annexed Tibet, Nepal as a state enjoyed many privileges in Tibet, and Nepalese had a high level of connectivity with civilizations beyond the Himalayas thanks to increased trade and people-to-people movement. The borders were open and free. However, this situation gradually came to an end as the Himalayas became politicized. That began primarily with the establishment of communist China's direct rule in Tibet, which meant that Nepal could no longer benefit from the same connections that had existed for years, if not centuries. The harmonious relationship between Nepal and Tibet established by the Nepal-Tibet Treaty of 1856 came to an end when Nepal recognized China's sovereignty over Tibet in 1955, effectively nullifying all previous treaties with the once-independent Tibet [20].

The tendency to link geopolitics to every aspect of internal and external politics exemplifies how fear-based thinking shapes our perception of international relations. This psychology is characterized by feelings of insecurity, sovereignty issues, and historical fears of extinction. Leo E. Rose, an American political scientist, and historian Father Ludwig F. Stiller established what our epistemology has adopted, accepted, and replicated while recounting Nepal's state-building process [9].

Historically, Nepal perceived India as a more significant threat compared to China. This perception was largely due to India's substantial influence over various facets of Nepalese life, while China's perceived threat was mitigated by its greater physical and cultural distance. Consequently, Nepal often leveraged its tributary relationship with China as a strategic measure to counteract the encroachments of British India. While maintaining a cautious distance from India—despite its closer ties—Nepal fostered a more visible, albeit less impactful, relationship with China. To support this strategy, Nepal undertook measures such as dispatching tributary missions to China [4].

However, this does not imply that Nepal's connectivity with China has been frozen ever since. It is quite the opposite. The advancement of technology has made trans-Himalayan access more feasible. Both countries have improved their connectivity in trade, transportation, investment, cultural exchange, party-to-party relations, and people-to-people movements. The opening of the China-Nepal highway in 1967 signalled the start of this modern phenomenon. Nonetheless, despite modern connectivity, the Himalayas' physical space, including the Nepali Himalayas, has become more militarized than ever before. There are more security personnel and military installations along the various borders of the Himalayas than at any time in history [20]. This has also affected the China-Nepal border. Cross-border movements have grown in complexity, restriction, foreignness, and hostility over time,

even for those who live along them.

In the late 1940s, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru expressed Nepal's political importance to India, aiming to shield Nepal from external exploitation and foster mutual development. This led to the signing of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship on July 31, 1950, which underscored mutual recognition and respect for each nation's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence. Despite this, the treaty faced criticism in Nepal as an encroachment on its sovereignty due to perceived undue Indian influence. The geopolitical landscape shifted significantly with the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950–51, which heightened Nepal's vulnerability following its signing of the 1954 Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between India's Tibet Region and China, which acknowledged Tibet as part of China. Subsequently, India accused King Mahendra of breaching the India-Nepal Treaty by seeking Chinese assistance for Nepal's security. This period marked a phase of heightened geopolitical tension, with China challenging India's influence in Nepal and India, in turn, opening its borders to external actors, including China, thereby creating a "security dilemma" for New Delhi [31].

Until the 1950s, China maintained an interest in Nepal. The Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1950 heightened Nepal's strategic importance to China. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1955, the friendship and collaboration between China and Nepal have strengthened considerably. The foundational framework for this relationship is embodied in the Panchasheel, or Five Principles, which stipulate that China will abstain from interfering in Nepal's domestic affairs while Nepal will uphold Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity with respect to Tibet and Taiwan. Nepal has also consistently endorsed the "One China Policy." Additionally, the geopolitical context of the Cold War played a role in shaping China's interest in Nepal. Given Nepal's proximity to China, the notable presence of Western diplomats and aid organizations in the country was perceived by China as a potential threat [1].

On April 21, 2006, thousands of protesters defied curfew regulations by marching along Kathmandu's Chinese-built Ring Road. Army columns stationed to enforce curfew orders simply withdrew into the city when they noticed beligerent protesters shouting slogans against the government and the royal family in various locations, including Ekanatakuna on the Ring Road. Violent fights in the brand-new villages of Gongabu and Kalanki along the Ring Road had previously claimed lives. After recognizing the gravity of the situation, the king announced that evening that he was returning the administrative powers he had seized fifteen months earlier. This proved to be too late and too little. The enraged SPA declined his offer, recognizing that the king's position was deteriorating. Instead, the opposition announced that two million people would gather on April 25 along the 27-kilometer Ring Road. King Gyanendra, unable to face the enormous challenge, delivered a second public

address to the country on the evening of April 24, in which he granted all of the SPA's requests. This new declaration represented complete capitulation. The parties quickly formed a coalition government, and the newly restored parliament unanimously passed a resolution stripping the monarchy of all legal, symbolic, and traditional power [52].

Sino-Nepalese relations have traditionally been viewed as purely academic. Certain developments in the middle of the twenty-first century resulted in them gaining critical importance for India and the rest of Asia. Historically, with the exception of age-old cultural contacts, relations between Nepal and China have been extremely limited. Furthermore, China's relations with Nepal were always indirect, via Tibet, with whom Nepal had ancient and intimate ties. Two wars between Nepal and Tibet have disrupted this relationship's normalcy over the last two centuries. Towards the middle of the current century, pressure of events outside and inside Nepal led to the development of an active 'international personality' of Nepal and forced her to revise her external relations [34]. Tibet became an important part of China after the Communist revolution and China's 'liberation' of the region. For the first time, Nepal had direct communication with a powerful, united China. The Rana regime in Nepal was deposed, bringing an end to the country's political isolation and allowing institutions and ideas to flow freely into Nepal [18, 28].

Since the launch of China's Belt and Road Initiative, Chinese investment has continued to pour into Nepal. These investments include the Budhigandaki and West Seti hydro-power projects, as well as train services from Lanzhou to Shigatse, Shigatse to Kerung, and Kerung to Rasuwagadhi, totaling 2431 kilometers. The scholarly community questioned Nepal's political basis for embracing or rejecting China's BRI because, prior to 2015, the Nepalese government's geopolitical posture and political perception of China's vast BRI enterprises were unknown. In May 2017, just a few days after Kathmandu joined the Belt and Road Initiative, Nepal's deputy prime minister led his country's delegation to China for the Belt and Road Forum. China outperformed all other foreign direct investors in Nepal between 2015 and 2017. Similar to this, military cooperation between China and Nepal is becoming stronger [3].

Chinese influence has finally reached food, culture, and language. However, it has received less attention than Indian culture. People's thoughts and behaviors differ significantly from reality. Chinese culture is less familiar to Nepalese than to Indians.

8. Language: Is It the Key Factor

As a result, the importance of this vast country—its language, literature, history, faiths, manners, and customs—in all aspects of human life is obvious. However, China and her concerns are only now receiving widespread attention. There is no denying the importance of Mandarin, or "official lan-

guage" as the Chinese call it. It serves as a means of oral communication between judges and prisoners, authorities and their servants, and all Chinese officials, even those who hail from the same region of the nation and speak the same patois [23].

Alastair Lain Johnston, a Harvard University professor of international relations, believes that learning Chinese is essential for understanding China's behavior in the international system. "Chinese language mastery is essential for understanding China's past, present, and future behavior in the international system," according to the author [27]. It is unavoidable to be corrected by the outside world without knowledge of language. The major stumbling block between Nepal and China is language, not the Himalayas. The Confucius Institute at Kathmandu University is a high-level Chinese language and culture institution co-founded by Hebei University of Economics and Business and Kathmandu University, with the approval of the Office of Chinese Language Council International. Additionally, it is Nepal's first Confucius institute. On June 13, 2007, Kathmandu University hosted the Confucius Institute Unveiling Ceremony. Confucius Institute has 17 Chinese or volunteer teachers, a 300-square-meter office, classrooms, a library, a computer room, a chamber for cultural experiences, a website, and other hardware facilities. With its high-quality teaching and a variety of academic and cultural activities, CIKU has attracted an increasing number of Nepalese to study Chinese. It has won widespread recognition, popularity, and praise from Nepali society [14].

The Confucius Institute at Tribhuvan University, Nepal's second Confucius Institute, was established in 2019, but the institute took a two-year hiatus from 2020 to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Liu Yueming, the Chinese director of the institute. Addressing the inauguration ceremony via video link, Nepali Minister for Education, Science, and Technology Devendra Poudel stated that the Nepali government has recognized the importance of the Chinese language and has designated it as an optional course for students in grades nine through twelve beginning this year. According to Paudel, learning languages and cultures can help strengthen the relationship between the two countries. He expressed hope that the Confucius Institute will benefit language teaching, cultural exchanges, bilateral cooperation, and mutual understanding. According to Hou Yanqi, the Chinese ambassador to Nepal, over 30,000 students have registered at the Confucius institutes in Kathmandu and Tribhuvan University, bringing new talent to Nepal's tourism, infrastructure, business, and trade sectors in particular. Addressing the inauguration ceremony via video link, Hou expressed his hope that the two institutes would become a window for showcasing Chinese culture, a bridge to promote cultural exchanges, and a bond for China-Nepal friendship [59, 65].

China's new emphasis on developing relations with Nepal's youth is most visible in government and private scholarships to Chinese universities and cultural institutes such as the

Confucius Institute, as well as increased language interactions with Nepalese. Although India remains one of Nepal's primary educational destinations, at least 6,400 Nepalese have received Chinese scholarships and are now studying in China. It is not only young Nepalese students who travel to China to study. China provides several scholarships for Nepalese professionals, including government officials and journalists, as well as training programmes in Nepal. More than 850 Nepali bureaucrats will study in China under a new programme, a significant increase from the twenty seats available in 2004. Furthermore, although the exact number of journalists who have visited China on exchange and training programs could not be confirmed, the Nepal Journalist' Association has led delegations to China since 1980 [44].

Furthermore, there is now a focus on expanding Chinese language training programmes through other language institutes in Nepal. According to a report in Record Nepal, several private Nepali schools now make Chinese language classes a mandatory subject, with teachers funded by the Chinese embassy. During Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's September 2019 visit to Nepal, a memorandum was exchanged to expand the 'Volunteer Chinese Teachers' Program. China Radio International's Nepali service broadcasts regular Chinese language classes. Although the Confucius Institute was established by other powers, such as the American Center or the British Council, there has been a new focus on them because of their rising numbers around the world, and the US has alleged that the Confucius Institute is a proxy for the Chinese government [42].

Thus, language is the most powerful negotiating tool. We cannot have fruitful relations with China unless we prioritize English over Chinese. Nepal-China relations cannot reach new heights unless we understand each other's cuisine, cultures, and interpersonal dynamics.

9. Conclusion

Finally, the contours of Nepal-China relations are shaped by a complex interaction of historical ties, geographical proximity, and cultural exchanges. China's influence on Nepal is profound, affecting many aspects of Nepali life, including the economy, food culture, and linguistic interactions. Historically, the Silk Road and ancient trade routes facilitated early connections, resulting in a strong cultural and economic bond that still exists today. Geographically, Nepal's strategic location between two superpowers, India and China, makes it an important partner in China's regional ambitions. Economically, China's investments and infrastructure projects in Nepal have greatly aided development, but they have also raised concerns about dependency and sovereignty. Meanwhile, the influence of Chinese cuisine in Nepal demonstrates the soft power dynamics at work, as Chinese elements are subtly incorporated into the fabric of Nepali society. However language comes as a key factor which is yet to flourish in people to people context. Chinese classes are being runned by school

and high school level but Nepali hasn't been enough to understand China well as it has greater sphere of influence in Hindi. As Nepal navigates its relationship with China, it must weigh these opportunities against the challenges of preserving its sovereignty and cultural identity.

Abbreviations

QTR	Qinghai-Tibet Railway
PM	Prime-Minister
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Development Bank
ADB	Asian Development Bank
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
FNIC	Federation of Nepalese Industry and Commerce
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
MW	Mega-Watt

Author Contributions

Sudip Adhikari is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Adhikari, M. (2012). Between the dragon and the elephant: Nepal's neutrality conundrum. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 25, 83–97. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41950522.pdf>
- [2] Ancient Nepal-China relations. (1970). *Nepal-China Journal*, 1(1), 13–15.
- [3] Aryal, S. K. (2022). Post-2015 India-Nepal relations and China factor in South Asia. *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, 76, 285–303. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/27142009.pdf>
- [4] Atique, F. (1983). Nepal's foreign policy. *Pakistan Horizon*, 36(4), 94–108. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41394204>
- [5] Baral, L. R. (1992). India-Nepal relations: Continuity and change. *Asian Survey*, 32(9), 815–829. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2645073>
- [6] Basnyat, L. (2023). Nepal-China relation: Tea horse road to Belt and Road Initiative. *Historical Journal*, 14(1).
- [7] Bhattarai, G. (2022). *Nepal between China and India*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- [8] Bhattarai, G. (2023, October 4). Nepal-China relations are going on without knowing each other. <https://www.himalkhabar.com/news/138091> Himal Khabar.
- [9] Bhattarai, G. (2023, May 17). “Bhurajñiti ko Bhaya Srijit Vhasya”. Himal Khabar. <https://www.himalkhabar.com/news/135583>
- [10] Brown, M. (1971). The diplomatic development of Nepal. *Asian Survey*, 11(7), 661–676. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2642973>
- [11] Bucknall, K. B. (1999). *Chinese business etiquette and culture*. Boson Books.
- [12] China's food industry: Opportunities and challenges for foreign investors. (2011, April). <http://www.scio.gov.cn/xwfbh/xwfbh/wqfbh/33840/35364/Document/1350331/1350331.html>
- [13] Chinese investment in Nepal surges, boosting infrastructure, job creation. (2021, August 25). Xinhua News Agency.
- [14] Confucius Institute at Kathmandu University. (2022). Welcome to Confucius Institute at KU. <https://ci.ku.edu.np/index.php?go=home>
- [15] China Radio International. (2019, June 6). Nepal celebrates Dragon Boat Festival. <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0606/c90000-9580276.html>
- [16] Daojiong, Z. (2015). Chinese economic diplomacy: New initiatives. S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep05851>
- [17] Forman, J. M. (2016, October 5). Foreign policy in the kitchen. *E-International Relations*. <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/66045>
- [18] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal. (2019, February). Nepal-China relations. <https://mofa.gov.np/nepal-china-relations/>
- [19] Murton, G., & Lord, A. (2022). Trans-Himalayan power corridors: Infrastructural politics and China's Belt and Road Initiative in Nepal. *Political Geography*, 77, 102134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.102134>
- [20] Gurung, S. (2023, September 21). Fortified Himalayas: Why Nepal can't shake its dependence on India. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/fortified-himalayas-why-nepal-cant-shake-its-dependence-on-india/>
- [21] Harrison, P. (2011). *Fortress monasteries of the Himalayas*. Osprey Publishing.
- [22] He, Q. (2023). Investment in Nepal's electricity market and cooperation. *Asian Affairs*, 54(3), 359–376.
- [23] Gilles, H. A. (1902). *China and the Chinese*. The Columbia University Press.
- [24] Giri, A. (2024, August 29). Nepal, China to issue five-year passes for Himalayan districts. *The Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2024/08/29/nepal-china-to-issue-five-year-passes-for-himalayan-districts>
- [25] Government of Nepal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (1960). Treaty of peace and friendship between the government of Nepal and the government of the People's Republic of China. <https://mofa.gov.np/site/uploads/files/treaties/11/49-TreatyofPeaceandFriendship.pdf>
- [26] Jha, H. B. (2024, June 18). Sweeping changes in Nepal-China relations. Observer Research Foundation. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/sweeping-changes-in-nepal-china-relations>
- [27] Johnston, A. I. (2013). How new and assertive is China's new assertiveness? *International Security*, 37(4), 7–48.
- [28] Government of Nepal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2019). Joint press statement on the official visit of the Prime Minister of Nepal to the People's Republic of China (19-28 June 2018) and the signing ceremony of the agreements and memorandum of understandings. <https://mofa.gov.np>
- [29] Khanal, P. (2020, June 19). *Food that divides us*. *The Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/food/2020/06/19/food-that-divides-us>
- [30] Khanna, P. (2021). Asia in the roaring twenties: Accounting for Chinese expansionism. *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, 18, 52–69. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48614112>
- [31] Khobragade, V. (2016). India-Nepal relations engagement and estrangement. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 20(3), 146–163. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48505299>
- [32] Kissinger, H. (2011). *On China*. The Penguin Press.
- [33] Kohn, R. J. (2001). *Lord of the dance*. State University of New York Press.
- [34] Kumar, S. (1963). Nepal and China. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 24(1/2), 79–93. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41853961>
- [35] Levi, W. (1957). Nepal and world politics. *Pacific Affairs*, 30(3), 236–248. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2753421>
- [36] Levine, N. E. (1987). Caste, state, and ethnic boundaries in Nepal. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 46(1), 71–88.
- [37] Liang, G. (2023, September 21). Time to synchronise. *The Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/opinion/2023/09/21/time-to-synchronise>
- [38] Stiller, L. F. (1976). *The silent cry*. Educational Publishing House.
- [39] Lui, M. K. K. (2022, August 23). What is Mid-Autumn Festival all about? *South China Morning Post*. <https://multimedia.scmp.com/infographics/culture/article/3189752/mid-autumn-festival/index.html>
- [40] Nayak, N. R., & Poudel, P. (2024, January 19). Trends in Chinese investment in Nepal. *The Annapurna Express*. <https://theannapurnaexpress.com/story/47299/>

- [41] Mahbubani, K. (2020). Is China expansionist? *PRISM*, 9(1), 130–139. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26940164>
- [42] Merrill, D. T. S. (2010). *The dragon and the elephant*. The National Academies Press.
- [43] Mulmi, A. R. (2020, January 5). In Kathmandu, the Nepalese chef making authentic Sichuan food. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/1/5/in-kathmandu-the-nepalese-chef-making-authentic-sichuan-food>
- [44] Mulmi, A. R. (2021, March 18). Nepal's road to China. *The Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2021/03/18/nepal-s-road-to-china>
- [45] Panigrahi, D. N. (2016). *The Himalayas and India–China relations*. Routledge.
- [46] Pletcher, K. (Ed.). (2010). *The geography of China: Sacred and historical places*. Britannica Educational Publishing.
- [47] Pokhrel, U. (2018, August 3). Rhino diplomacy. *The Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/opinion/2018/08/03/rhino-diplomacy>
- [48] Rana, M. S. (2013). China meets India in Nepal: A historical and future perspective. *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, 26(1/2), 59–73. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43550356>
- [49] Sang, K. (2023, June 10). Chinese food in Nepal and famous Chinese restaurants in Kathmandu. *Tibet Travel*. <https://www.tibettravel.org/nepal-tour/chinese-food-in-nepal.html>
- [50] Shah, D. H. (2021, October 1). China and Nepal: Friends in weal and woe. *My Republica*. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/china-and-nepal-friends-in-weal-and-woe/>
- [51] Shah, D. H. (2023, January 16). The Chinese New Year: Rabbit year. *my Republica*. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/the-chinese-new-year-rabbit-year/>
- [52] Shah, S. (2008). Civil society in uncivil places: Soft state and regime change in Nepal. *East-West Center*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06500>
- [53] Sharma, B. P. (2018). China-Nepal relations: A cooperative partnership in slow motion. *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, 4(3), 439–455. <https://doi.org/10.1142/S2377740018500239>
- [54] Sheng, D. A. (2022, August 1). Nepal-China relationship from political, economic, and social perspectives. *The Telegraph Nepal*. <https://www.telegraphnepal.com/nepal-china-relationship-from-political-economic-and-social-perspectives/>
- [55] Shrestha, N. (1972). Nepal-China relations: A historical perspective. *Asian Survey*, 12(4), 363–374.
- [56] Subba, P. (2021). Nepal's survival strategy during the Shah era. *Unity Journal*, II, 175–189. <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/unityj/article/view/38824/29781>
- [57] *The Kathmandu Post*. (2021, July 17). Nepal imports 85% of goods from China: Report. *The Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2021/07/17/nepal-imports-85-of-goods-from-china-report>
- [58] *The Himalayan Times*. (2019, October 13). Nepal-China FTA comes into effect. *The Himalayan Times*. <https://thehimalayantimes.com/business/nepal-china-fta-comes-into-effect>
- [59] *The Himalayan Times*. (2023, September 7). Proper assessment in classrooms critical for students' future. *The Himalayan Times*. <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/proper-assessment-in-classrooms-critical-for-students-future>
- [60] Tenzin, A. K. T. L., & Dhondup, K. (1982). Early relations between Tibet and Nepal (7th to 8th centuries). *The Tibet Journal*, 7(1/2), 83–86. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43300047>
- [61] Upadhya, S. (2012). *Nepal and geo-strategic rivalry China-India*. Routledge.
- [62] US Institute of Peace. (2020). China–Smaller South Asian states relations. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27534.9>
- [63] Vaidya, T. R. (1993). *Prithvinarayan Shah: The founder of modern Nepal* (2019 ed.). Educational Publishing House.
- [64] Wang, J. (2018). Globalization of Chinese food and catering industry. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 5(1), 16. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jef.2018.01.016>
- [65] *Xinhua*. (2022, August 18). Nepal's 2nd Confucius Institute expected to deepen ties. *China Daily*. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202208/18/WS62fd9160a310fd2b29e72da0.html>