India officially may not call it a blockade. But it smells like a blockade, it feels like a blockade and sounds like a blockade".

"By all accounts, Jaishankar was uncouth, brash and imperial in his behavior towards Nepal's politicians. It left no doubt in anybody's mind that the orders had come from the Prime Minister to act tough. Otherwise, Jaishankar is too sophisticated to resort to such things—

Kanak Mani Dixit, Nepalese journalist and political analyst, 'I will never forgive

what India has done to me'

Even a child can make out that it is a deliberate blockade—

Amit Dhakal, Nepalese political analyst, 'I will never forgive what India has done to

me'

How India's newspaper Hindustan Times framed Nepal's constitution and economic blockade

by

Arun Budhathoki

MA in International Relation, The University of Northampton, 2011

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Philosophy in Policy Studies

in the Graduate Academic Unit of Interdisciplinary Studies

Supervisor(s): Suzanne Hindmarch, PhD, Political Science
Carey Watt, PhD, History

Examining Board: Rob Moir, Phd, Faculty of Business**,** Chair
Shaun Narine, PhD, Political Science

This thesis is accepted by the
Dean of Graduate Studies

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

August, 2022

© Arun Budhathoki, 2022

Abstract

This thesis focuses on how India's *Hindustan Times* (*HT*) newspaper framed Nepal's political and economic landscape during the six-month unofficial economic blockade (20-09-2015 to 09-02-2016). Research for this thesis has shown that several framing strategies were used in the 19 articles published by the *HT* during the blockade—from September 20th until February 9th.

The two significant framings that emerged during the textual analysis of the 19 articles were political—almost all in a negative tone. The framings served as a tool for the Delhi establishment to deny their involvement in the economic blockade imposed on Nepal under the disguise of blaming an ethnic group of Nepal. The blockade had created a humanitarian crisis and evoked a war-like situation, which India's center continues to deny its role in to this day. This thesis, therefore, reflects on how the *HT* of India frames Nepal, primarily for their newspaper and India's geo-political and economic goals.

Dedication

To my wife Ranjana, daughters Arya and Sylvia, and parents—Nani Babu Budhathoki (father) and Nani Maiya Budhathoki (mother), for having Everest-like patience.

Acknowledgements

I want to express my deepest gratitude to numerous people who have been a part of this lengthy, challenging yet edifying, and arduous journey. I cannot believe my eyes that I could pull it off even after nearly giving up for years due to various seen and unseen reasons.

I will be forever grateful to Dr. Linda Eyre and Dr. Mary McKenna at the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, for supporting, accepting, and guiding international students like me in the Interdisciplinary Studies department. I would also like to thank my brilliant professors during my two years of coursework study between 2013 and 2015. And I cannot but express my deep gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Suzanne Hindmarch and Dr. Carey Watt, for their invaluable input and guidance. Despite my shortcomings, this thesis became a reality only because of their critical response to my work. I am also deeply thankful to Dr. Shaun Narine for helping me in completing the thesis. I would also like to thank James McClure for helping me to format the thesis.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank my family, especially my mother, Nani Maiya Budhathoki, and father, Nani Babu Budhathoki, for the support. I would also like to thank my younger sister Anu Budhathoki, brother-in-law Manoj Panthi, and niece Manasi Panthi for their continuous support.

Last but not least, I am thankful to my lovely friends in Fredericton, who gracefully helped me reach the finish mark. I shall always remain indebted to John Stewart, Jerry McFarland, Amrit Subedi, Aryan Adhikari, Sushant Adhikari, Ashok Thapa, Aashish Pokhrel, Nigam Khanal, Subasna Shrestha, Kristina Karki, Sachin Bhirud, Chris Lavoie, Lee MCcarty, and the Nepalese community in Fredericton.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

HT = Hindustan Times

BJP = Bharatiya Janata Party

INC = Indian National Congress

ST = Securitization Theory

Introduction

On September 20th, 2015, Nepal promulgated a historical constitution and opened the doors for liberal democracy as it became the youngest republic in the world. It was the seventh constitution in Nepal's democratic history. Before 2015 Nepal had witnessed six constitutions in 1948, 1951, 1959, 1962, 1990, and 2007. With a deep scar of civil war from 1996-2006, the Himalayan country had to wait for seven years as the 2015 constitution was endorsed on September 16th by a two-thirds majority. Sans constitution, the people of Nepal were worried about the country's political stability and future. The constitution stated Nepal is a federal democratic nation, giving executive rights to the Council of Ministers and having a president as the ceremonial head of the state ("Here Are Things You Need To Know", 2015).

The constitution, however, was not welcomed by ethnic Nepalese and its neighbor India, while the rest of the world embraced it. Soon communal violence erupted in Nepal, killing 40 people, and India imposed an unofficial economic blockade on Nepal from September 23rd, 2015, to February 9, 2016. It was the third time India had imposed an economic blockade on Nepal, and India had clearly expressed its disgruntlement on several provisions in Nepal's constitution. Several newspapers from India began to publish news, supporting India's stance and criticizing Nepal's constitution, denying India's role in the blockade.

The Indian Express reported that the Indian government proposed a seven-point amendment to the constitution through its embassy in Kathmandu. The amendment proposal was as follows:

* Article 63 (3) of the Interim Constitution provided electoral constituencies based on population, geography and special characteristics, "and in the case of Madhes on the basis of percentage of population". Under this provision, Madhes, with more than 50 per cent of the population, got 50 per cent of seats in Parliament. The latter phrase has been omitted in Article 84 of the new Constitution. "It needs to be re-inserted so that Madhes continues to have electoral constituencies in proportion to its population," a government source told The Indian Express.

* In Article 21 of the Interim Constitution, it was mentioned that various groups would have "the right to participate in state structures on the basis of principles of proportional inclusion". In the new Constitution (Article 42), the word "proportional" has been dropped—Delhi wants it re-inserted.

* Article 283 of the Constitution states that only citizens by descent will be entitled to hold the posts of President, Vice-President, Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Speaker of Parliament, Chairperson of National Assembly, Head of Province, Chief Minister, Speaker of Provincial Assembly and Chief of Security Bodies. This clause is seen as discriminatory for the large number of Madhesis who have acquired citizenship by birth or naturalisation. Delhi says this should be amended to include citizenship by birth or naturalisation.

* Article 86 of the new Constitution states that National Assembly will comprise 8 members from each of 7 States and 3 nominated members. Madhesi parties want representation in National Assembly to be based on population of the Provinces. This, Delhi says, should be done to address concerns.

* Five disputed districts of Kanchanpur, Kailali, Sunsari, Jhapa and Morang: Based on the majority of the population, these districts or parts of them may be included in the neighbouring Madhes Provinces.

* Article 154 of the Interim Constitution provided for delineation of electoral constituencies every 10 years. This has been increased to 20 years in Article 281 of the new Constitution. Echoing the Madhesi parties, India wants this restored to 10 years.

* Article 11(6) states that a foreign woman married to a Nepali citizen may acquire naturalised citizenship of Nepal as provided for in a federal law. Madhesi parties want acquisition of naturalised citizenship to be automatic on application. This also finds favour with Delhi". (Roy, 2015)

Nepal outrightly rejected the amendment proposal as some of the claims would push the country to the brink of another civil war as the nation has 125 ethnic groups. Carving out two provinces for one ethnic group would be suicidal for the Himalayan nation. Plus, if two provinces were given to one ethnic group, then that province would control 1,200 km of trade points with India, leaving the rest to other provinces. It would only create an imbalance in the country, and India would have more leverage and influence over the two provinces. The other problematic proposal was to allow naturalized citizens to hold higher official posts in Nepal. Several Nepali leaders opposed the provision (Republica, 2016). The other provision was the citizenship issue. In India, it takes almost seven years to acquire naturalized citizenship; however, India proposed that Nepal grant naturalized citizenship to foreign women married to Nepali men the very day they get betrothed. Analysts argue that the BJP party was supporting the claims of the Madhesis as it was eyeing the Bihar elections of 2015 (Bureau, 2015). Subsequently, the BJP party failed to impact the polls significantly. Cross-border marriage between people living in India's Bihar and Nepal's Madhes province is a common phenomenon, so it was a political tactic for the BJP party to support the Madhesi groups, to have some leeway with the Bihari voters. India was not happy that the new constitution had not given more political space to the Madhesi group, as it viewed the Madheshi parties as pro-India, and a suitable ally to deter any Chinese advancement within the region.

Moreover, India was also concerned with the security issue in the southern belt of Nepal as civil unrest had spread like wildfire. After much debate, Nepal made the first amendment to the 2015 constitution on January 23, 2016, and India welcomed the amendments even though it did not include the claim for two provinces. The unofficial blockade came to an end two weeks later.

The Hindu reported that India was optimistic about the developments and hoped that other issues would be resolved accordingly. Here are the amendments made in the constitution:

> "The amendments supported by 461 of the 601 members of the Nepali Parliament covered Article 42 to ensure more inclusive social justice, Article 84, to create House of Representatives and Article 286, which will create a new process of constituency delimitation helping the Madhesi groups.
>
> All the three elements of the amendment were part of a deal between the Nepal government and its mainstream political parties, and the rebel Madhesi political formation of United Madhesi Democratic Front (UMDF), which has been agitating for the changes in the Constitution.
>
> The amendment process, however, did not include the main demand of the Madhesis for the creation of two separate Madhesi provinces on the plains of Nepal". (Bhattacherjee, 2016)

The Madhesi parties were unhappy that India had welcomed the amendment and gave up on creating two provinces for the Madhesi group, and boycotted the session. But are Madhesis Indian immigrants as claimed by the BJP party? While Madhesis are the indigenous ethnic group in the southern region of Nepal, the influx of Indians immigrating to Nepal and politicians from Nepal and India using the term for both Madhesis and Indian immigrants have created long-term

confusion and discrimination against local Madhesi natives. This weaponization of the narrative that Madhesis are Indian immigrants has harmed the community in the longer run.

A 1983 report by Dr. Harka Gurung suggests:

> "With the gradual development of agriculture, trade and enterprise in the Tarai, it led to increased immigration of people of Indian origin related to the activities. According to the 1971 census, 7.7 percent of the total Tarai population comprised immigrants and among the immigrants, 97.7 percent were born in India. "According to the survey results, immigrants comprise 6.9 percent of the total Tarai population. According to the survey, 1.72 percent of the total households surveyed have Indian citizens as the head of the household. If the average size of the surveyed households, which is 5.97 persons, is taken into account, the percentage of people with Indian citizenship will increase to 10.3 percent, and this means one in every 10 persons in the Tarai is Indian". (RAI, 2016)

Although Madhesis have been at the center of this Nepal-India debate, other issues like secularism made India's BJP party unhappy. India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, is known for his Hindu nationalist beliefs and as a sympathizer toward Nepal, which was once the only Hindu nation in the world. It was apparent that the BJP party was unhappy that the Nepal was heading towards secularism. In a letter written by BJP MP Adityanath to the then Nepal Prime Minister Sushil Koirala the party demanded that Nepal become a Hindu nation again (Srivastava, 2015). However, the 2015 constitution barred religious conversion. Modi has visited Nepal several times, primarily on spiritual excursions. Because the BJP party is known for its Hindutva ideology and a strong leaning towards Hindu religion, the party could not accept that it was behind the economic blockade, as the party members would not like the idea of hurting a neighboring Hindu nation. On the

other hand, the Indian Congress leaders in the past did not deny their role in the economic blockade on Nepal. Modi, for sure, did not want his party cadres and followers to criticize him for imposing an unofficial economic blockade on a neighboring Hindu majority nation. So did India impose the economic blockade? Was India more concerned about the rights of the Madhesis, or were they becoming erratically frustrated with the deepening ties of Nepali politicians and Chinese officials? Before the promulgation of the constitution, several high-ranking Chinese officials had visited Nepal, and similarly, many top Nepali leaders had flown to China. Nepal's three major parties promulgated the constitution without notifying India, making the southern neighbor suspicious. India imposed the blockade in retaliation, although knowing that it surrounds Nepal from three sides, and has more influence than China. At the same time, with China, the great Himalayas divide the two nations, which make it evident that India and Nepal have closer ties geographically, economically, socially, et cetera.

On the other hand, the Chinese were concerned about creating provinces based on ethnicity and identity, as China did not want any external influence over Tibet from Nepal (Baral, 2016).

Blocking a 1,770 km open border for seven months is almost impossible unless the state has direct support. So what was the impact of the blockade? India, in the past, had imposed two economic blockades on Nepal: one in 1969 and another in 1989 for removing Indian check posts from Nepal's northern territories, annulling an

arms treaty, disputing trade treaties, initiating the purchase of ammunition from China, and laying out plans to open up roads in the north with China (Bhattarai T. N., 2015). Given the historical records, it is evident that India has often used economic blockade as a tool against Nepal to fulfill its agendas. Nepal is India-locked in terms of trade as the latter is the largest trade partner for the Himalayan nation. So the impact of the unofficial economic blockade was immense as it not only created a humanitarian crisis in Nepal but also the country suffered a US$5 billion loss because of the blockade, and the loss from the April 2015 earthquake was US$7 billion (Lamichhane, 2015). Most trade points were blocked by India's border police, Indian customs officials, and activists from the Madheshi communities. Nepal and India share a porous 1,770 open border as citizens of both nations are free to travel without a visa or passport. Although major trade points are regulated, it is almost impossible to put a check on the whole border area. The effect of the blockade was not only economical; it also affected people-to-people ties, and anti-India feelings skyrocketed in Nepal. Moreover, India's newspapers' role in framing issues of blockade and constitution is essential to understanding how geopolitics and regional dynamics unfold.

India's reservations regarding the stability in its northern region might have driven its push for amendments in Nepal's constitution. But there are opposing arguments that India used divide-and-rule to split Nepal by polarizing the Hill and Terai communities (DIXIT, 2015). The ethnic communities of Nepal were demanding revision of the new federal boundaries based on the population, while Nepal's

politicians were rushing to draft the constitution, which had faced a deadlock for over six years because of debate on federalism (DIXIT, 2015). Granting provinces based on ethnicity would have caused another civil war in Nepal and the country per se splitting into pieces.

Although India never acknowledged that it was behind the blockade, its impact was felt all over Nepal. For any layman, it would be almost impossible to impose border control for six months without orders from above.

How did *HT* newspaper frame above-mentioned issues for India then? This thesis explores how media frames issues and assists in securitization for the state, elites, and political actors. As the title of this thesis suggests, I explore how India's newspaper *Hindustan Times* published 19 news articles during the six-month economic blockade. And from the textual analysis of the 19 *HT* news articles, I explain how the newspaper tried to frame Nepal's constitution as anti-ethnic, discriminatory, and non-inclusive. And I also explain how the economic blockade was the doing of Nepal's ethnic people and not that of India. This process, termed securitization, was successful for the newspaper and India as it consistently disseminated the propaganda to audiences nationally and internationally. Securitization, in short, is a process where actors try to influence the perception of the larger audience via media or directly to establish to achieve their purpose.

My main analytical point in this thesis is that media is a mediator in securitization. Although the securitization theorists give media's role less attention, I believe that in the modern technological world, the role of media in pushing agenda and propaganda has only skyrocketed. To do this, I explore the concept of media, propaganda, and elites in both historical and present contexts. I also study various securitization theories, examined 19 news articles published by the *HT*, and dissected the newspaper's relationship with the Indian state and political parties in historical and modern contexts vis-a-vis its role in Indian democracy. I also touch briefly on the newspaper's effect on geopolitical relations between India and Nepal and how its news articles angered most Nepalis becoming anti-India during the blockade time.

1.1.1 Media, Propaganda & Elites

Why should media remain independent for a healthy democracy? That is one question everyone is asking all over the world as nations grapple with authoritarianism and where not democracy is under threat. Even though several states continue to adhere to democratic values, numerous countries are heading towards autocracy, subverting democratic values.

As mainstream media continues to possess immense influence over audiences globally (thanks to modern technology), powerful elites and actors are increasingly drawn toward using media as a tool for their endgame to further their agenda. In short, to control the masses and promote their plan, and while there is an extreme

focus on elites and actors, there is undoubtedly less focus on how media influences audiences and why its role is so imperative at this age. While media engaging in propaganda is nothing new, the renewed interest of elites and actors in controlling the masses by using the media has increased dramatically as the world gets connected technologically, and the reach of news is just a click away.

Today we live in a new brave world where the public encounters powerful and biased media that disperse weaponized narratives to convince us that the actions of the elites are correct on several issues. While the media is becoming an essential tool of the state, elites (irrespective of the state structure or ideologies) influence the public to normalize issues and create threats for their benefit. And in the words of Robert Fisk (Fisk, 2011), the media can fall into that trap where the elites and actors will churn out propaganda (information) to hoodwink the masses and manufacture consent on issues that benefit the elites and social actors. Therefore, the media presents issues often overshadowed by the elites and state actors, so the specific audiences accept the solution they offer. Today, several corporations-owned mainstream media possess immense influence, and any information they throw out will generate impact and result. Such corporate media are already actors in modern society where information is wealth. The top ten media companies worldwide have a market cap of $20 billion, with an audience of millions (Seth, 2022).

Media is not evil per se, but who uses it for what purpose and what results come out of it determines the quality of the media. Several elites, i.e., state actors, conglomerates, political parties, et cetera, have used media to legitimatize their narrative or spread propaganda to take hold of the masses. The role of media is crucial for a healthy democracy, and any cooperation with the state, elites, political actors, and even foreign powers is disadvantageous for the general public, who look up to the media for fair and unbiased news.

Elites and those who are in power or seek it have constantly sought to use media as a tool to promote their agenda to countless audiences. Sometimes, in the process, the worldview of audiences might change because of exposure to specific media propaganda. The constant bombardment of propagandist news will shape our worldview gradually, or we will reject its narrative. In short, this process where the public is fed with propaganda is a tactical move of elites and actors to control the masses indirectly—by discreetly using the media.

1.1.2 Securitization and Media

To understand the securitization process better, I have examined the state's role in using the media to influence securitization. I have also examined the process's theoretical assumptions and the interaction dynamics between the political actors, the media, and the public. I also incorporated the theoretical assumptions regarding the role of a securitizing actor and media in convincing the audience about the securitization process. The interaction between the political actors, media, and the public is the other theme of this study. I have found significant gaps in the role of media in the securitization process. However, I have agreed with the securitization theorists that media is a tool or medium acting out as an intermediary in a securitization process. I have argued the role of the media as a tool for elites (securitizing actors) and how they try to convince the audience that the counter-reaction of the securitizing actor on certain issues was right.

This thesis, therefore, embraces the idea of media and propaganda to view how states function in securitizing issues for their agenda. In that respect, I have explored the complicated relationship between the state and media and how the media's dependency on the state, elites, and actors sabotages democracy—botching up the rights of people for truth. I explain how India securitized Nepal's issues in the past and how imposing an economic blockade three times. It was no surprise for the Nepali public to deny India's securitizing claim in 2015 that it had no role in the economic blockade. Most of the Nepali public did not buy the narrative pushed

by India that it had no role in the economic blockade. In this sense, media plays an active role in the securitization process. This claim is validated in this thesis as I illustrate how the *HT* published 19 articles that acted as a medium for the Indian state to securitize Nepal's economic blockade and constitution. This validation, as a result, also points to the nexus between the state and media within Indian democracy and unfolds the fragile yet strong geopolitical relationship between India and Nepal.

Media, therefore, plays a vital role in the securitization process, and this thesis will make that contribution. This study must deploy securitization theory, especially speech act and "little security nothings" (Huysmans, 2011), to understand how the *Hindustan Times (HT)* acted as an intermediary to convince the audience for the Indian state or ruling party BJP's unofficial economic blockade on Nepal in response to Nepal's 2015 constitution. Although India never accepted that it was behind the blockade, India's Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), a border guarding force of India, confirmed that it had received direct orders from above to interfere in the transportation of petroleum products during the third week of September 2015 (Ians, 2015).

1.1.3 Research Questions

Here are the research questions that I answer in this thesis:

1. What role does the media play in India, and what is its relation to democracy?

2. To what degree does the nexus between the state government and political parties and media aggravate the securitization processes and, in return, accelerate the geopolitical conflict?

3. Why do state and media relations change over time?

The research questions mentioned above are imperative for my thesis as they have helped me understand what role media plays in a democratic state and how it can jeopardize the relations between neighboring nations. Question number one clearly states the role of the media in India from colonial to independence and post-1990s. This question helped me understand what journalism does in a democratic state and why keeping the state's power in check is crucial. Similarly, question two unfolds the nexus between the state power in India and the newspaper *HT* to better understand how the newspaper helped the Indian state accelerate the securitization process in securitizing Nepal's constitution and economic blockade. This question has helped me to understand what a nexus between the state and the

media will bring out. It is imperative for this thesis as I have dissected the relationship between the Indian state and the *HT*. The third question is a mirror to the readers as it will unfold how media changes over time from being independent to dependent and how the dependency of media on the state results in benefitting the states, elites, and the political parties and, in return, harms the democracy and relationship between two neighboring states.

The research questions above will enable me to investigate and develop my central argument as to why the role of media is important for any democracy or inter-state relations and why its influence should not be overlooked—and why media needs to be independent of political and economic influences to not act as a tool for the powerful political parties and elites. One of the central arguments I have as a research question is how the Indian media framed the blockade on Nepal and why it was framed as a security issue. The three questions above are answered in subsequent chapters where I discuss the role of media in India's democracy and also bring out the nexus between the *HT* and the BJP-led Indian government—and how the nexus played out concerning the coverage of the economic blockade and Nepal's 2015 constitution. The third question is also answered by explaining the historical and recent ties of the *HT* with the political parties of India (1920-present), i.e., BJP and the INC.

To understand questions one and two, I explore the themes in securitization chapter 2 and discuss the history of media and state relations in chapter 3. I also

answer this main statement by analyzing the 19 articles published by the *HT* during the unofficial economic blockade imposed by India on Nepal. The securitization of Nepal's constitution and economic blockade by India and the *HT* (a tool for the securitizing actor) led to a rise in Nepal's anti-India sentiments and worsened Nepal-India relations. The *HT* played one of the primary roles in disseminating India's propaganda that India was not behind the unofficial economic blockade. However, the majority of the Nepali audience rejected that frame. The securitization chapter focusing on the role of media in the securitization process will also help me answer to question three properly. This chapter's main argument is that media is an integral part of states and elites to accelerate or assist the securitization process.

Furthermore, to better understand question number two, I look into the history of media in India and its relations with the ruling government—from 1927 to post-independence, during the Emergency era, the economic liberalization phase, and post-1990s. I answer this by analyzing how the *HT* framed Nepal's constitution and economic blockade in 2015-16. I will use the speech act and little security acts theory to briefly understand the theme. I found a gap and limitation within the securitization theory regarding the role of media. Most ST scholars argue that media is just a medium for the securitizing actor. I agree because my thesis accepts the notion that media is a proxy of the securitizing actor most of the time.

Also, in question number three, I look into the relations of the *HT* with the Indian government from a historical and contemporary perspective and also by using securitization theory to understand in brief. I looked into the history of the *HT*. I understood how it was close to the Indian National Congress party (INC) during the colonial era and for several decades post-independence. I also answer why the *HT* changed its alliance from the INC to a right-wing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). I argue that the newspaper's shift in allegiance is also reflected in its coverage of Nepal's internal affairs. Historically, the *HT* rode high on Indian nationalism and was close to the INC. With the emergence of the BJP as a national stronghold party, unable to bear the brunt of economic collapse, the owner of the *HT* subsequently decided to get closer to the right-wing party, mainly for financial reasons.

1.1 History, Media, and the State

Media has always played an essential role in any society and political structure, especially in state relations, and its importance in the 21st century has only increased. In the age of misinformation, the importance of independent media has become crucial to fighting off propaganda. So why does media matter in state relations?

Independent media play a crucial role in the people-to-people relations of two states and can influence how a citizen of one nation perceives another state. We have seen worldwide how media instigates negative feelings in one nationality

against another, which can be a security concern, bringing out threats. Moreover, media is one of the pillars of democracy and plays an essential part in governments' electoral process and formation and regarding the relationship between the two states.

No doubt, media today cannot be excluded in a democracy. For democracy to function correctly, independent media is needed to make the government and politicians accountable. And also, the media needs to be responsible for them as it can positively and negatively impact people. So any media having a nexus with a securitizing actor is concerning and interesting as it will establish the role of the media in playing the intermediary role for the actors to convince the audience to establish the securitization.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Security is a top-to-bottom framework where the audience is on the bottom, the securitizing actors and elites are on the top, and there are intermediary elements in the middle. What is this top-to-bottom framework? At the top, the political actors and elites are situated; at the bottom, it is the audience or people with little access to power. In sort, security passes from top to bottom via an intermediary like media, civil society, institutions, et cetera. For example, security is achieved by the elites in securitizing immigrants and making policies that impact the audience and is often passed through the intermediary. In global and regional politics, we often see how the audience is influenced or manipulated by elite actors. The

securitization theory envisions that threats are socially constructed and must be addressed accordingly (Balzacq, 2010).

The Copenhagen School (CS) first envisioned the securitization theory at the end of the Cold War, and the early theorists argued that security is a social construct. In short, the CS theorists state that securitization is a process where a securitizing actor tries to convince an audience regarding their extraordinary measures to protect a referent object that has been threatened existentially. The securitization theory attempts to understand "who can securitize and on what conditions" (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998, p. 7).

I have primarily focused on the speech act of the Copenhagen School in the subsequent chapter of securitization to establish the role of the *HT* as a mediator for the BJP-led Indian government in securitizing Nepal's 2015 constitution and the economic blockade. This thesis uses securitization as the theory focuses on the role of an audience. The CS authors argue that it is vital for an audience to accept securitization to become successful. This is why the securitization theory is good for my thesis as I establish how the BJP-led government tried to convince the audiences in Nepal and India that it had no role in the blockade and securitized Nepal's 2015 constitution too. This is where I have my reservation as I contribute to the securitization theory that it is important to focus on the role of media in the securitization process as it also holds some power to convince an audience of the securitizing actor in the contemporary world. Moreover, Vultee's focus on media in

the securitization process is also useful for this thesis as it will help me to answer my research questions by highlighting the importance of media and broadening our viewpoint in understanding that securitization is not static but a developing process (Vultee, 2007). Media is an integral part of the securitization theory as it is an intermediary for the securitizing actor to convince the audience and, at the same time, helps form opinions in the audience.

In short, the securitization theory will help me to analyze the role of the Indian government led by the BJP in securitizing Nepal's constitution and economic blockade by dissecting the intermediary role of the *HT* and also by analyzing the 19 articles that it published during the blockade period.

I have answered in this thesis regarding the gap in securitization theory where most theorists do not focus extensively on the role of media in the securitization process. I try to understand how India treated Nepal's 2015 constitution as a threat to the existence of Madhesis (living in southern Nepal) after imposing an economic blockade for six months and using Indian media to convince its citizens. I will also be looking into different forms of securitization.

The role of media is a pressing issue in securitization theory as the public generally perceives a problem by what they receive from the mass media. Some authors now explore the role of media in theory in detail. So what frames a media produces is essential not only for the masses of one nation but for a neighboring state too—

when an extraordinary measure initiated by one state against another is executed, there will always be the issue of legitimization and counter-reactionary moves. The securitization theory's main focus is on how issues are securitized by elites or actors whereby they try to convince the audience about their action to safeguard the reference object that faces existential threat (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998). This thesis builds on the premise that media is indeed a tool for securitizing actors, but the gap lies where the media's role is ignored by most of the literature of securitizing theorists except Vultee.

1.3 Situating the thesis: engagement across disciplines

This thesis is interdisciplinary because it combines political science, history, and media studies literature. The three central bodies of literature are securitization theory literature from political science, scholarship on the relation of media and state (political parties) from history, and literature on media studies.

The second body of literature focuses on the role of media in India's colonial, post-colonial, and post-1990s concerning the relationship with media under various political parties and state structures. The literature explores the propaganda model to understand better media concentration and how information is passed out to the audience (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Furthermore, in regards to 'History and Media,' I have written about the history of media in India from colonial times until this decade. I also found out that the *HT* had a close relationship with the subsequent Indian governments even though they played the role of a nationalist newspaper. I also found that before the economic liberalization in India, the newspaper was closer to the INC and became a mouthpiece for them during the state of emergency imposed by Mrs. Gandhi. After the 1990s and particularly post-2015, the *HT* owner Bhartia switched her affiliation to the BJP partly because of financial reasons (Dev A. , 2018). I realized how the propaganda model and the manufacturing of consent via media apply to my thesis. Moreover, I have also discussed the relationship between the media and the state (especially the *HT*) and briefly touched on Nepal's civil war.

The third body of literature is on media, propaganda, and its role in democracy. The chapter also discusses the power and civil society and their roles in a democratic setup. The literature also examines how political parties understood that media control is imperative for propaganda (Israel, 1994). Hence, it is essential to understand the propaganda model and how media is used to manufacture consent on issues by elites (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). This chapter also brings out detailed literature on Guha's perspectives regarding how foreign nations influence media to further their agenda, and the literature is quite relevant to my studies.

The three bodies of literature have helped me to structure my thesis to answer my research questions on how media plays the role of an intermediary for elites and political actors to disseminate their propaganda to convince the audiences. My focus on the part of the *HT* during India's economic blockade on Nepal is also based on the literature I have discussed briefly above. Furthermore, I discuss the bodies of literature in more detail in subsequent chapters.

1.4 Methodology

I analyzed the 19 articles published by the *HT* between September 18th, 2015, and Feb 9th, 2016 using the textual analysis method. I chose the newspaper, the 19 news articles, and editorials as they mentioned the blockade and constitution. I found that the newspaper never criticized the Indian government during that period. However, other Indian newspapers were critical of India, too, then. It was also the period when India imposed the third economic blockade on Nepal, and that is why I found the 19 news articles quite relevant for this study. I haven't discussed the remaining five articles in much detail as it is not that related to this thesis. The five news articles did not discuss blockade or constitution, so I did not find them relevant for my thesis. The five news article only covered general news not relevant to my thesis.

After analyzing the 19 *HT* articles, I found that the articles are categorized into opinion pieces, analyses, and some news articles written by the *HT* staff. Most opinion pieces are written by Nepal-born Prashant Jha, who works for the *HT*.

Focusing on the news articles helped me to understand how the word economic blockade was avoided and how the term blockade was used to convince the audiences that India was not behind the blockade. Instead, it was the Madhesis for protesting against the constitution. The news articles also frame Nepal's 2015 constitution as divisive, discriminatory, and non-inclusive. So the role that the *HT*

played by framing Nepal's constitution as such and welcoming the intervention of the Indian government was nothing but an act of an intermediary in the securitization process and ultimately helped me answer my research questions.

The analysis of the news articles defines how mainstream media can act as an intermediary for a securitizing actor to convince audiences of their counter-reaction moves.

1.5 Plan and structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Following the introduction in the second chapter, I develop the theoretical framework for the thesis to be understood clearly. I argue that speech act and little security nothings are important vis-à-vis the role of media in the securitization process to convince the audience on various issues. The chapter argues that the role of media in the securitization process cannot be overlooked and that media acts as a tool for actors in the securitization process. The chapter develops the analytical claim that media is integral to the securitization process. It carries substantial weight in influencing the audience and assisting state actors or elites in securitizing the issues they want to effectively and quickly.

In the third chapter, this thesis explores the link between state, power, and media in the historical and present context of India, where India's newspaper *HT* is the focus—to establish the thesis's argument as to why mainstream media cozying up to the government or national party could be harmful for inter-nation or inter-people relations. For this, I bring out the historical and present ties of the newspaper with the Indian state and political parties.

In the fourth chapter, I argue how the 19 articles published by the *HT* during the economic blockade make sense in terms of the securitization process and justify the history of the *HT* as how it always sided with either the ruling government or

political parties that was bound to gain state-level power for its economic survival. In this section, I use the *HT* analysis to support my claims.

In the last chapter, I conclude the thesis and outline my thoughts on the journey of writing this thesis. I also conclude by emphasizing why the role of media is ever-important in the modern world where elites and actors tussle to convince the audience about actions they take on various issues.

What I have achieved in this thesis is to divert the focus from the elites and actors to the argument that the role of media is in how they influence the audience on the behalf of the aforementioned entities.

Chapter 2: Securitization: role of media in securitization

The main argument of this chapter is that media is a part of the securitization process that assists the securitizing actors in influencing the perception of the larger audience as a proxy to establish securitization. The process, however, is not one-time but a series of little security nothings—a gradual social construct (Huysmans, 2011, p. 372). According to Huysmans (2011),

> Speech acts of security seem to be displaced by the diffuse and associative securitizing work of what from the perspective of existential speech acts mostly appear as little security nothings, such as programming algorithms, routine collections of data, and looking at CCTV footage. (Huysmans, 2011, p. 372)

In this chapter, my core argument is that understanding the role of media in securitization is imperative to fuse speech acts and the "little security nothings"(Huysmans, 2011). Media can be a tool for the securitizing actor. However, this chapter identifies a gap in the securitization theory regarding media as the scholars of ST have classified media as a medium or tool only for the securitizing actors and have not focused much on the role of the media in the securitization process. In the modern world, some media hold immense influence over the audience and act as an intermediary for securitizing actors.

This chapter delves into theories related to securitization and tries to expand on how media works as a medium or tool in the securitization process—shaping up the influence of the audience on behalf of the state government in a geopolitical

context. I also argue why media in modern times should receive extra focus for being an intermediary between the state and the audience. I see this gap in the existing securitization theory literature. Furthermore, I also explain securitization as a media frame and how media acts as a mediator in modern politics. In that sense, media framing in the securitization process could be defined as what sort of influence media receives from the securitizing actor to convince the audience and how it influences the audience to establish the securitization process. Moreover, it is imperative to view the media in the light of its relationship with politicians and other groups. This chapter starts with the general explanation of what the Copenhagen School says about securitization theory (ST), explores the debates within the ST, touches upon the securitization of Nepal's constitution and economic blockade, and brings out the idea of media as an intermediary in the securitization process, and ends with a concluding section which agrees with the argument that media indeed plays a role in the securitization process. ST should further discuss the role of media in the securitization process.

2.1 Copenhagen School on Securitization

In this section, I explore how speech acts play a fundamental role in the securitization process whereby media acts as an intermediary to influence the audience. This chapter also explores the definitions of securitization as envisioned by the Copenhagen School. I have written in this chapter that securitization is a social construct and that threats are socially constructed, and threats do not exist per se in the first place. It is the basic premise of the securitization theory. Threats

are named by societies, states, communities, et cetera, and that is how security emerges.

Securitization theory argues that security is constructed. The theory emerged at the end of the Cold War when the definition of security was limited to state and military structures. The Copenhagen School (CS) was the frontrunner of this school of thought. The scholars associated with the theory were determined to broaden security concepts and move security studies away from the military-political sphere (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998).

The Copenhagen School aims to separate the process of securitization from politicization by using a constructivist operational method and seeks to understand "who can securitize what and under what conditions" (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998, p. 7). The CS authors were the most successful in arguing that the definition of security is not fixed and, at the same time, managed to develop a comprehensive framework to analyze security.

Securitization theory, therefore, defines threats as socially constructed. The social construct largely depends on how the securitizing actor and the audience interact with each other. This notion of social construction and interaction between the securitizing actor and the audience could be understood as one of the main claims of the securitization theory.

The CS views security as not having to deal with security threats but argues that nothing is inherently a security threat. It is more to do with communities, societies, and nations (securitizing actors) who choose to name (through a speech act) a particular issue as a security threat or security problem and then propose a counter-measure to contain the threats which must be accepted by the audience unilaterally. And after naming it, then there is a reaction and interaction on the case with a specific audience, and the action to secure the referent object is justified by using forceful measures—even if they are military or violent counter-measures. The action often varies from war to political violence, civil war, disrespecting international treaties, economic sanctions, blockade, et cetera.

Speech act, in particular, focuses on how language works and how securitizing actors securitize issues through speech acts. So what is a speech act, according to the Copenhagen School authors? The speech act plays a central role in CS's idea of securitization as how naming an issue as a threat will bring in the uttering of security and ultimately label issues as a threat (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998, p. 27). Speech acts need to follow the CS's structure to get established. Without the speech act, securitization is not possible within the CS framework as securitizing actors use it to make an issue as extreme (Munster, 2012). The CS's focus on words and excluding images and visuals are also critical features of the theory. This school of thought also focuses on the role of the audience and securitizing actors and argues that for the securitization to succeed the audience needs to accept the speech act.

The audience's role in accepting the speech act is imperative because if the audience rejects it, the securitization will fail, and it will only become a securitizing move (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998). According to the Copenhagen School, securitizing actors possess state or social power that can move an issue beyond politics. Also, securitizing actors will name the problematic issues and take extraordinary measures. This is where the role of the audience is imperative. The securitizing actor will try to convince the audience that the case asks for immediate steps and present a solution telling the audience that there is no way out. The authors argue that if an audience accepts what the securitizing actor says, then securitization becomes successful. Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde also argue that if an audience rejects the securitizing move, then the securitizing actor might withdraw the extraordinary measure fearing repercussions (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998, p. 26). Furthermore, Waever argues that an issue must be treated with care and a threat must imply posing an 'existential threat' that needs to be resolved immediately with extraordinary measures. To be precise, Waever argues that securitization is a process that discusses the widening of security and ponders on it carefully.

Vultee claims that threats can be securitized only when context or frame enables the securitizing move. The author also argues that securitization works as an independent media frame and that the security concept is either hidden or highlighted. The author's contribution to the securitization theory is that he

emphasizes the role of media in enabling the securitizing move and how the media has played a significant role in framing issues in the past. Vultee's other claim is that political actors seek to convince the audience regarding security issues by framing issues as a threat to the state's existence (Vultee, 2007). I have incorporated Vultee's claim on how media frames issues and how political actors try to convince the audience regarding security-related issues.

So who can speak of security and to what effects? And how do audiences become sensitized to extreme measures? (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998, p. 26). Vultee's approach to securitization as a media frame is worth noting as my study also focuses on the role of media in convincing the audience. The author focuses on a process model whereby the effect of content is examined in terms of what frames are created. The frames conceptualized by Vultee in terms of what effects a media has via content creation are hard to comprehend because the cognitive and psychological reaction is hard to measure on a large scale. How is it possible to measure if an audience rejected a specific frame? The thoughts, of course, cannot be analyzed precisely, but what the audience puts out publicly on social media will help theorists to understand better if the audience either rejected the framing or accepted it. Vultee's argument that the media use frames to manipulate the audience's thought process is applicable in the modern world to establish their perception of specific issues.

Vultee's other argument regarding the influence of political actors on media and the idea that securitization as a media frame does not need the acceptance of the entire audience to securitize an issue is not entirely factual. His argument is problematic because he does not make clear who the important audience is that needs to be convinced. Vultee, on the other hand, argues that securitization should be understood as a process rather than just focusing on uttering something to securitize an issue. The author has tried to explain securitization as a media frame.

Vultee (2010) argues that media is quite relevant in securitization as it forms a public opinion on various issues. I agree with Vultee that media is a tool in the securitization process since my thesis shows that the *HT* was indeed a propaganda tool for the Indian government to manipulate the blockade event and present it as if India did not do it to the Nepali audience. Vultee's argument that using media as a securitizing actor tries to convince the audience to accept the counter-measure action is valid because India attempted to persuade the Nepali audience that the Madhesis imposed the economic blockade because they were against the 2015 constitution.

2.2 Critiquing the Copenhagen School

The CS's focus on the speech act rather than the audience also comes under much scrutiny. Balzacq argues that the theory heavily depends on language and excludes images and videos. On the other hand, Huysmans argues that securitization should be viewed as little security things and that the process should be understood in a series of developing events. Wilkinson is heavily critical of the theory and terms it too euro-centric and limited because of its Westphalian trait. Hansen also points out that some cannot speak out about security. In short, critics of the Copenhagen School like Watson, Hansen, and Huysmans share the similar view that the theory is limited to the speech act, audience, and referent object—and they work to take the theory away from these three dimensions. Watson criticizes the scholars of securitization (developed by the Copenhagen School) that they heavily depend on the theory of discourse analysis compared to other non-traditional theories (Watson, 2012).

Balzacq (2010) defines securitization as a securitizing actor mobilizing contexts and trying to convince an audience to pass a policy so that the existential threat to a referent object could be stopped. The effect of external contexts is also crucial for securitization to succeed. While the Copenhagen School argues that the speech act modifies security, Balzacq (2005) argues that external reality is needed to win over the audience. The author also says that security is symbolic and a naturalized frame that is shaped by context and audience. Balzacq also says that securitization can be

better understood when practices are disclosed via policy tools. In short, Balzacq tries to define securitization in terms of audience, inter-dependence of agency and context, and usage of tools. Is security a speech act only then? Or is it the effect of speech? Huysmans (2011) argues that the core feature of 'act' is that it participates in the creation of scene politically and whatever decisions are made affect others. The political structure here is not standard, though. Security, in a sense, is much more than speech act as events unfold; the little security things come into action to construct security since securitization does not happen overnight. It is a gradual process. Huysmans (2011) argues that it is not that our everyday lives are securitized within the little security nothing framework but it is the "active involvement of daily activities in the process of securitizing itself" (Huysmans, 2011, p. 377).

Huysmans (2011) envisions speech act security as divisions of an issue that is securitized. For example, immigration can be a securitized issue and there will be other little security things that define the securitization process. Huysmans further argues that even our daily activities of our lives are securitized or a part of the securitization process. The author contends that decisions and choices define the security act and are connected with the political sphere and how the public views it. So we can combine Husyman's argument on little security things and CS's speech act to better understand how *the HT* framed Nepal's constitution and economic blockade in 2015.

On the other hand, Hansen argues that when a subject faces a security dilemma, they might not speak out due to particular circumstances (Hansen, 2000). I could not but agree with it because, during the 2015 economic blockade, the Nepal government could not speak about it in the international arena openly against India due to pressures and other reasons. Hansen puts forward the idea of 'security as silence' and argues that sometimes there are chances that security threats cannot be spoken and those who cannot face the more significant threat. Hansen provides the example of honor killing in Pakistan and says how Pakistani women are a victim, powerless to such security threats, and are left out of the securitization process, as argued by the Copenhagen School. Hansen is also skeptical of the CS school as it emphasizes too much on referent objects based on the traditional military-political approach. Therefore, Watson, Hansen, and Husyman share a similar view that the Copenhagen School is too focused on the speech act, audience, and referent object. Hansen argues that the theory of The Copenhagen School not only restricts other security issues from receiving priority but will also create situations where security cannot be spoken (Hansen, 2000).

A majority of the securitization theorists except Vultee have overlooked the importance of media and have somehow viewed media as a mere tool in the securitization process. There is a significant gap in terms of what role an independent media can play in a democracy or what roles an influential media can play to convince the audience in the securitization process to secure securitization. There is also an argument that in the process of securitization the critical aspect is

an issue that might be global but may be fought regionally. The philosophical part of securitization says that a speech act can only happen when its conditions are met fully. On the other hand, the sociological part defines securitization as a process within other elements and depends on rules. It also depends on language (Balzacq, 2010, p. 2). Thirdly, the audience is essential for both philosophical and sociological views. The audience is formal for the former, and the latter view the audience and securitizing actors acting mutually. In short, "security problems can be designed, or they can emerge out of different practices, whose initial aim (if they ever had) was not in fact to create a security problem" (Balzacq, 2010, p. 2). Does this mean any issue can emerge as a security problem or create one? To my understanding, the premise lies in the belief that every issue in the world has the potential to become a security issue. Moreover, The Copenhagen School largely relies on the idea of 'speech act,' whereas others view the theory in the light of how threat images are constructed. So primarily, two distinct views have originated in defining securitization: i) philosophical and ii) sociological. Just because a securitizing actor names an issue as a threat does not mean that the counter-action will happen immediately. Speech act limits securitization and the process is bound to fail as it heavily depends on the audience. The theory does not seek to influence the audience to make the securitization successful. Therefore, it is crucial to view securitization as a combination of speech act and little security things, not just a one-time event.

My central argument in this chapter is that securitization is not possible only because of speech act. I have argued in this chapter that the Copenhagen School heavily relies on the interaction between the speech act and the audience. I have also tried to answer whether framing theory and securitization are similar. Although Watson criticizes framing theory as being too focused on media and the audience, I think it is essential to understand the role of media in the securitization or framing process. I also agree with Watson that securitizing actors have a better chance of convincing the audience as they have access to media and they can target a large audience efficiently and quickly.

2.3 Is framing enough for securitization?

Watson argues that security is a master frame and that securitization might be studied as the subfield of framing and tries to compare the abovementioned theories. The author also says that securitization scholars heavily depend on discourse theory to define security. The master frame is often viewed within the historical or institutional framework and can translate into different contexts to address specific issues without losing its original meaning. For example, human rights can be deployed in various contexts and to innumerable people under other conditions.

On the other hand, he argues that framing incorporates diverse theories and is sometimes used to assess media effects (Watson, 2012). Watson criticizes framing theory for being too reliant on audience and media. However, I think media and the

public play an equally important role in the securitization process. According to Watson, both securitization and framing share the notion of emphasizing language and grammar, which could lead to constructing a proper theory. Watson argues that framing is both a broad and narrow process to define specific topics such as media effects, agenda setting, et cetera—combining several processes, whereby meanings are constructed. Watson also points out that some securitizing actors have a better chance of being accepted as they have access to media and can strategically target audiences. Watson echoes the CS ideology. Watson's argument is relevant for my thesis as I focus on how the Indian government led by the BJP party had considerable influence on the newspaper the *HT* in an economic capacity, and like the *Caravan* magazine reported that the owner of the *HT* checked what was printed daily, it can be believed that the newspaper had a role to play in framing Nepal's constitution and blockade. Therefore, having access to the *HT* was a strategic partnership as the newspaper successfully framed the blockade, and claiming India had no role in it.

2.4 Securitization of Nepal's Constitution and Economic Blockade

Table 1: Securitization Process in the context of Nepal

Unit	Explanation	Nepal economic blockade case
Referent object	India securitized Nepal's	Madhesis, Nepali public,

	constitution for being a threat to the Madhesis	India
Audience	Who was the audience for the securitization process?	Nepali and Indian public (also international readers)
Securitizing actors	Who were the securitizing actors?	BJP and the *HT*

In this section, I examine how India securitized Nepal's constitution and economic blockade via the *HT*. I argue that the speech act of Indian politicians led to the blockade and created mistrust between the Madhesis and hill people. I also briefly touch on how India's securitization led to most Nepalis unifying and instilling discontent among most Madhesis.

On September 20th, 2015, Nepal promulgated its new constitution, and India expressed displeasure via its embassy in Kathmandu. The Indian government (securitizing actor) told Nepal to make seven amendments to the 2015 constitution via diplomatic channels via the then ambassador Ranjit Rae as recorded by the *Indian Express* (Roy, 2015). Media in India had already started to play the role of intermediary in the securitization process. Soon the trade routes between Nepal and India were disrupted (countermeasure by India). In this sense, the Indian government led by the BJP is the securitizing actor, and its comments or dissatisfaction over Nepal's constitution is the speech act. Nepal's constitution is

the referent object, and the Madhesis are the ones facing an existential threat. The audience is the Nepali and Indian people, and the *HT* is the medium or a tool in the securitization process to convince the audience. The securitization process via the *HT* was gradual since it produced several news articles during the blockade period to convince the audience that India was not behind the blockade. Finally, the act of imposing an economic blockade is the ultimate counter-measure by India against Nepal.

In this process, India naming Madhesis as Indian nationals and not Nepalis became the speech act, and India was the securitizing actor. India portrayed Nepal's 2015 constitution as a threat to the Madhesis, and soon after the promulgation of the constitution, India imposed an unofficial blockade on Nepal from September 21st. Although India never openly accepted it, fearing a national and international backlash, it was evident in the process of successive events that the Madhesis groups could not block the trade routes between India and Nepal without the compliance of India.

Most Nepalis refused to believe that the Madheshis had obstructed the trade routes (imposed economic blockade) on their own. Instead, they accused India of doing so (Basnet & Naqvi, 2015)—a frame constantly manufactured by the *HT*. In the context of what happened post-2015 India economic blockade against Nepal, Watson's argument that "audiences do not passively accept elite frames' and 'that the presence of a frame in a communicating text does not guarantee that it will

influence the audience" is correct(Watson, 2012). The Indian government (securitizing actor) blatantly tried to legitimatize its official statement that it was the Madhesis people (threatened) behind the economic blockade (extreme measure) for dissenting against Nepal's 2015 constitution (referent object) and the *HT* (a tool in the securitization process) also tried to legitimatize that claim by publishing news articles that proposed the idea that India was not behind the blockade—to convince the audience (Nepali and Indian audience).

India, firstly, stated its embassy in Kathmandu regarding the 2015 constitution—which told the Nepal government to make seven changes (Roy, 2015) to the constitution. This was the first act of securitization—even though in written form—it was indeed the act of uttering security because Nepal is a sovereign nation and for a neighboring country to mete out such a statement meant nothing but an act of securitization. India's reservation was for its citizens who had migrated to Nepal, but a majority of the Nepalese saw India's criticism as a grand design to either annex or divide Nepal (Pti, Nepal deputy PM accuses India of trying to annex Terai, 2015) like how it had done with Sikkim on April 9, 1975. *The Indian Express* on the article mentioned above has a note that the reporter did confirm that India had handed out the seven-point amendment note to the then Nepalese government. This was, perhaps, the first instance of how media played the role of an intermediary to establish securitization by convincing the audience in India.

The crisis, however, united the majority of the Nepalese as they became anti-Indian and refused to accept the Indian rhetoric that the Madhesis were behind the economic blockade. This refusal by the Nepali audience did not invalidate India's securitization. Most of the people in Nepal indeed were the audience who did not accept the claims made by the securitizing actor, aka BJP-led Indian state, and the securitizing tool the *HT*. However, the economic blockade was still imposed for six months, and it had a significant economic impact on Nepal. So the assertion of the CS that the audience needs to accept the securitization is true in this case and has the power to reject the securitizing move—which forced India to annul the blockade albeit India was successful in securitizing.

I do not think it is not easy to view these people as an audience within the ST framework. However, some groups from the Madhesis communities and the majority of Indians reiterated that India had no role in the blockade. How can a small ethnic group block so many trade points? The Nepali public would often make the argument. Even on social media, hashtags like #BackoffIndia trended, and many Indians wondered why the hate for India had increased drastically. Since Nepal and India share an open border, we understand each other's language, culture, and religions, but politics and media have widened the rift and created a mutual hatred now and then.

The Madheshis parties, who hoped that India would continue to support them, were disappointed in early February after the Nepal Army (NA) generals spoke

with their Indian Army (IA) counterparts to end the blockade or face the consequences from within the army. Hundreds of Nepalese serve in the Indian Army and even protect their borders. The Nepali public was not convinced at all, so India's effort to securitize Nepal's constitution and economic blockade via using the *HT* and its rhetoric backfired in Nepal. The articles from the *HT* also created mistrust and rift between a few sections of Madhesis and the Hill people in Nepal. So the securitizing effort of the *HT* did have some impact as it also created some hardliner Madhesis who started to view the Nepali state as hegemonic, while the hill population viewed some Madhesis as anti-national so the schism that *HT* played in the social divide was immense.

Indian PM Modi had also called the late Nepali PM Sushil Koirala on August 25, 2015, to maintain social harmony. The reaction to the economic blockade in Nepal was severe as anti-India sentiments raised significantly (Ghosh, 2015), while the consequences were severe too. The blockade was discussed in the Indian parliament, where the Modi-led BJP refused to acknowledge that India had imposed the economic blockade despite Nepal raising the issue to the United Nations (Ani, 2015). In contrast, the opposition INC party leader Shashi Tharoor vehemently criticized the governing party for straining relations with Nepal. Tharoor also opined that most Nepalis believed that the Madhesis had protested with the support of India and that perception was damaging the relationship between Nepal and India (Narayan, 2015). The late Indian foreign minister Sushma Swaraj denied that India had any involvement in the economic blockade or that Nepalis faced problems, supported Madhesis rights, and blamed them for the

blockade (Ians, 2015). This speech act by Swaraj helped the ruling party to continue the economic blockade.

Interestingly, BJP leader Subramaniyam Swami said that the 'economic blockade' was foolish to do by the BJP government and pointed out that it was the idea of the Indian bureaucrats (Republica, 2019). Swami also insisted then that Nepal should be declared a Hindu state again. It is clear that India was behind the economic blockade; instead, the BJP government securitized Nepal's constitution and economic blockade and blamed the Madhesis for their act. As India securitized Nepal's constitution and economic blockade, debates emerged in the Indian parliament as opposition leaders like Tharoor, via (counter) speech act, criticized India's role in the economic blockade. After national and international pressure, the trade normalized between India and Nepal. Soon the Madhesis were forgotten by India, and now the Madhesis also distrust India, whereas Nepal's constitution continues to live on and is witnessing second elections this November.

Post-blockade, India's Prime Minister Modi lost the public fanfare in Nepal that he enjoyed in 2014. And most Nepalis still believe that India can impose an economic blockade again in the future, and the unity that was seen in 2015 has also revealed Nepalis' resilient nature.

2.5 Role of Media in Securitization

In this section, I argue that the securitization theorists must pay more attention to the role of media in the securitization process as in the modern world mainstream media is essential to disseminating securitizing moves of securitizing actors or elites to audiences. The securitizing theories have paid little attention to what role media can play in the securitization process, how effective they are, and how securitizing actors can indirectly convince the audience using the mass media. We have many instances in this century where mainstream media influenced the audience to accept the securitizing move of elites—for example—Iraq war (Taibbi, 2019), the Afghanistan turmoil (Liptak, 2021), the impact of the Russian hack on US elections (Abrams, 2019), rise of right-wing nationalism in Europe(Olsen, 2021) and other parts of the world including India (Leidig, 2020), et cetera.

Without going into excessive details, I would like to emphasize that media today can easily create a particular perception among the audience because of the continuous bombardment of news, images, and videos. And this is not a one-time process like the speech act, but it is a constant development like little security things.

According to Huysmans (2011), little security things are defined as—

Speech acts of security seem to be displaced by the diffuse and associative securitizing work of what from the perspective of existential speech acts mostly

appear as little security nothings, such as programming algorithms, routine collections of data, and looking at CCTV footage. The third section demonstrates that it remains nevertheless important to engage the concept of 'act' for a political study of securitizing. Such re-engaging will require letting go of the exceptionalist rendition of acts in the securitization approach, however, and developing conceptions of acts that can account for rupture in the diffuse politics of little security nothings.

The *HT* published at least 19 articles during the 2015 blockade to convince the readers in Nepal and India that India had no role in the securitization of the constitution and the economic blockade. However, most of the Nepali public and some sections of India did not accept it. So, in this case, multiple audiences rejected and accepted the securitization channeled by the *HT*. The *HT* played the role of a medium or acted as a tool for the Indian state or the BJP party in the securitization process of treating Nepal's 2015 constitution posing an existential threat to the Madhesis people. It is imperative to understand the role of media in the securitization process as it is an effective and powerful tool or medium to disseminate propaganda—which in return helps the securitizing actor i.e. the elite actors like the state to convince the audience of its securitizing move and establish its securitization. The role of media has increased mainly over the years as mainstream media holds immense influence in the highly digitalized world. It only takes seconds for news to spread among the audiences, and it is easier for securitizing actors to convince the audience indirectly. Modern mainstream media play this bridging role for states run on different ideologies. It is not just that the media holds relevance within an autocratic state. Even in democratic states like the United States, Canada, and India, media plays a crucial role in convincing the audience of the elites. While the entire population might not agree with the

propaganda spread by any media, we have seen many examples where mainstream media have been successful in convincing the audience on specific issues.

The newspaper *HT* also spun a narrative that Nepal's new constitution was against Indians who had migrated to Nepal and created a sense of hatred against the Nepal state for its audiences. Whereas the coverage of Nepal prompted a majority of Nepal's population to become anti-Indian and also view the newspaper as anti-Nepal, the negative role that the *HT* played is essential because the relations between the two neighboring nations not only deteriorated, but the image of India as a big brother bully was established, and the majority of Nepalis never accepted the rhetoric created by the critical articles in the *HT* that India had no role whatsoever in the economic blockade. However, my thesis is limited in scope. Therefore, one should pay attention to the media like the *HT* because it tells us what role mainstream media plays in modern geopolitics. Securitizing actors like states have been using media over the years to spread their propaganda to convince audiences that their counter-move is relevant.

Interestingly, several media in Nepal and some in India published news stating that India was behind the economic blockade. The role media played is crucial because young English-language educated Nepali youths turned to Twitter and started hashtags like #BackOffIndia, which signaled that the securitizing move of the Indian state was not acceptable to them despite the effort of the newspaper. Interestingly, the *HT* also covered the social media protest however asserted that

the Madhesis protests and violence were to be blamed (Parashar, 2015). The newspaper continued with the narrative that India had no role in the blockade. Although the paper never published any news from its pool of journalists about the issue, it did run an opinion piece by a Nepali editor in 2020 which mentioned India's unofficial border blockade (Upadhyay, 2020).

Media frames like agenda-setting tell audiences what to think about issues and not just to accept the issues. This is quite relevant to my thesis since the majority of the Nepali audience thought about what was happening during the blockade and did not buy India's version. Suppose the Indian government securitizes Nepal's constitution, and an economic blockade via the *HT* is indeed one way to communicate with the audience. However, Vultee, like the CS authors, tends to disregard the audience and the power imbalance between the two. Therefore, it is imperative to study the power imbalance between the securitizing actors and the audiences and what role the media plays to deepen the imbalance or challenge it, as we've seen with mainstream media worldwide.

2.6 Conclusion

It is clear from the scholars of securitization that media is a medium or tool in the securitization process even though there is little focus on the role of media by the ST theorists even though the securitization theories fail to acknowledge the importance of media. There is a significant gap in the theory on the role of media. The importance of media in the modern world vis-à-vis convincing the audience is imperative as it is easier for the securitizing actors to disseminate their propaganda to a larger audience in an effective and fastest manner. And sometimes, audiences get convinced because of the media's repetitive nature of producing propaganda. And when that happens, it is easier for the securitizing actors to establish the securitization process without being heavily invested in speech-act only.

My main argument is that the scholars of securitization have limited their view of media as a medium only in the securitization process. I think media should be treated as a securitizing actor in modern times because we have seen how political elites have used media to establish their propaganda, as seen in the case of the BJP and the *HT*. This is where I find the gap in the securitization studies, as scholars in the past did not treat media as a securitizing actor. However, they are right because media is a medium for several securitizing actors. But as the role of the media and its influence increases in the modern world, it is imperative that the study of media as a securitizing actor needs further research.

This chapter has focused on the Copenhagen School's definition of securitization, the debates within the field, the role of media in the securitization process, and the securitization of Nepal's constitution and economic blockade. I have tried to look into the focus on the speech act of CS authors and also emphasized why the audience must not be overlooked in the securitization process. Also, I have briefly elaborated on how India securitized Nepal's constitution and economic blockade and how the *HT* played a role in it. I also mentioned how the majority of the public (audience) in Nepal did not accept the move by the securitizing actors. Therefore, I have tried to establish that media plays the role of a medium in the securitization process. In the following chapters, I will examine how the *HT* played the role of a medium to securitize Nepal's constitution and economic blockade.

In the following two chapters, I will discuss the relationship between media and the state, a brief history of the HT, and analysis of 19 articles published by the *HT* during the economic blockade.

Chapter 3: Media, Civil Society, Power, and the State

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks into the history of the *HT* and briefly navigates the history of India; concerning the *HT,* it explores the role of the newspaper in framing Nepal's constitutional difficulties and India's economic blockade of Nepal in 2015. This chapter, furthermore, delves into—and acknowledges—some of these complexities regarding the *HT and* whether media is expected to act as a check on state power. It would be difficult to portray the *HT* as a direct propaganda conduit for the Indian government or to side with political parties of India for economic survival if not for the nationalist stance in the beginning, but its pro-government stance during the 2015 blockade, unlike most other Indian newspapers, can be distinguished from its published 19 news articles during that period. Most importantly, the history of the *HT* points out that its allegiance toward one political group of the ruling party is often motivated by economic prospects, which eventually affects the newspaper's independence. The main analytical point of this chapter is to make readers realize what a close relationship between a newspaper and the political parties and elites can bring out. I briefly discuss the history of the *HT* and its evolution as a close ally of the ruling party irrespective of ideologies.

I think it is also worth observing that—as Herman & Chomsky's materials show—media outlets such as the *HT* may be more reliant on "official sources" when covering "foreign affairs," as in the case of India and Nepal—despite their

geographic proximity. The ties of newspapers in India with the state and political parties can be traced back to colonial times when India was ruled by the British. Israel asserts that politicians in India's colonial times had understood the importance of media and considered control of a newspaper as a base for a political career (Israel, 1994).

India, although a subject of the British for more than 100 years, gained independence in 1947 and has tried desperately to micromanage Nepal's political and economic affairs since then. India also has imposed three economic blockades on Nepal: 1969, 1989, and 2015. India securitizing Nepal's development as a threat to India's interests has often led to economic sanctions that have severed the ties between the two close-knit (religiously, culturally, and economically) countries. In the past, India was led by the more liberal INC, yet the economic blockades were a surprise. However, whenever Nepal tried to get closer to China via economic or political means, India resorted to extraordinary measures to protect its interests during the economic blockade of 1989 and 1975 (Anupam, 2020).

The *HT* was used to target Indian audiences and international, too, since its reach is way more than the papers of Nepal. Media is considered the fourth pillar of democracy, yet sometimes it can become entangled with the state in the securitization process. The entanglement is a dangerous precedent for the media's independence and the public who depend on the media to deliver free and fair news. This corruption leads the public to lose faith in media, and at the same time,

media will stop playing its beneficial role as the fourth pillar of democracy. When this happens, democracy will be in danger, and those who suffer will be the people, not those in power.

I will discuss the history of the *HT*, how it was close to the INC, and how it changed its allegiance to the BJP post-economic liberalization. I will also look into media concentration and the role of power and state vis-à-vis media owning up to their propaganda.

3.2 Colonial vs. Independent India

The *HT* was born out of a civil society movement. The *HT* newspaper was founded by Sunder Singh Lyallpuri in 1924 and was a part of the Akali movement, funded by Sikhs in Canada. It was later sold to Ghanshyam Das Birla. Israel mentions how J.N. Sahni, after taking over the *HT* (of course with the help of Birla money, the conglomerate owner who took over the newspaper), wished to make the newspaper like the *Guardian* and the *Times*. The newspaper played a crucial role in India's independence movement. In subsequent post-independence years, the paper was seen as close to the INC and termed a Congress newspaper (Pandey, 2001). So the nexus between the INC and the newspaper was visible since its early days as a nationalist daily before the independence. In its heyday around 1946, when the INC led the interim government up to 1947, it was found that *HT* had close ties with the INC.

In 1937, the Birla group took complete control over the Delhi-based newspaper, and now it is managed by Shobana Bhartia, a controversial figure recently linked with India's BJP leaders, who were close with the INC previously before 2015. The *HT* began its life as a newspaper close to the INC and supported Indian nationalism, and Guha mentions that the *HT* used to be known as a nationalist paper (Guha, 2007).

3.3 1947-1975 Era

India gained independence on 15th August 1947, but on January 26th, 1930, the INC declared India a free state. The party essentially played a role in igniting nationalist movements to oust the British imperialists. Mahatma Gandhi used to run a journal called *Young India* to motivate Indians in the fight against British imperialism. Guha records that the *HT* was known as a leading nationalist daily and had access to Gandhi during the occasion of independence (Guha, 2007, p. 24).

The early fifties also meant India had to deal with the emergence of domestic turmoil, the rise of Pakistan as a new nation, and the rampant schisms between Hindus vs. Sikhs and Muslims.

The assassination of Gandhi on January 30th, 1948 opened a crack in the fragile nation, and the division of India on religious lines in 1947 would haunt the country for decades to come as the debate on partition persists. However, communal

violence in India has been increasing since the 1920s. In 1948 the conflict between Hyderabad and the new India had reached its nadir, and the Nizams used "radio, newspapers, dramas, et cetera against the Indian Union" to spearhead their propaganda (Guha, 2007, p. 69). British officials, in particular, wrote articles that expressed curiosity about whether the new India and Pakistan would divide further or stay united.

Guha records that India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru of independent India, was against the prosecution of minorities, especially Muslims (Guha, 2007, p. 140). In the early fifties, Nehru had to ward off Hindu nationalistic politicians and keep his party and country secular. Nehru, however, was criticized by Ambedkar for not doing enough for lower caste people. Interestingly, the first election of India (1951-1952) was made possible by the heavy use of visual media as the literacy rate at that time was very low. Similarly, in Nepal, for a long time, the Madhesis have felt alienated and oppressed by the state. The media have heavily influenced them as the literacy rate among the Madhesis groups is relatively low.

Guha writes:

> Speeches and posters were used by all parties, but only the communists had access to the airwaves—not those transmitted by All India Radio, which had banned party propaganda; but those of Moscow Radio, which relayed its programs via stations in Tashkent. Indian listeners could, if they wished, hear that the non-communist parties in the election were corrupt stooges of Anglo-American imperialists and oppressors of the workers. (Guha, 2007, p. 147)

For those who were literate, a weekly in *Madras Pravda* had translated a critical article on the ruling Congress and tried to convince the readers that the best alternative party was the Communist Party of India (CPI).

The tendency of newspapers and editors to take sides with political individuals is best recorded by Guha when he writes that the editor of the popular weekly in Bombay, *Current*, wrote a magnanimous lengthy piece of Nehru's speech to twenty-thousand plus crowd in Chowpatty beach (Guha, 2007, p. 151). Guha points out that Nehru won the elections solely because of his popularity. *Madras Mail* had criticized Nehru's win as a farce in the name of democracy as around 200 million eligible voters were illiterate. However, a visiting Turkish journalist admired Nehru's inclination towards democracy and elections as they noted that approximately 107 million Indians had voted (Guha, 2007, p. 158). Nirad C. Chaudhari wrote that Nehru was the reason India had united (Guha, 2007, p. 160).

During the Asian Relations Conference held in New Delhi in the last week of March 1947 Journalist, G.H. Jansen noted Nehru's speech as "not directly or strongly anti-colonial" (Guha, 2007, p. 163). The conference participants felt Nehru was the dominant force, but newspapers like *Dawn* (owned by the Muslim League) had another say. The newspaper complained about Nehru:

> Skillfully he [Nehru] has worked himself into some sort of all-Asian leadership. That is just what this ambitious Hindu leader had intended—to thrust himself upon the Asian nations as their leader and through his attainment of that prestige and

eminence to further the expansionist designs of Indian Hinduism. (Guha, 2007, p. 163).

American media admired Nehru in his 1949 visit to the United States. The *Chicago Sun-Times* wrote that Nehru was like Thomas Jefferson and *the Christian Science Monitor* named him a world titan. *St. Louis Post Dispatch* and *Time* magazine admired Nehru (Guha, 2007, p. 166).

Although Nehru presented himself as someone who was standing for the whole of Asia, Republican leader William F. Knowland told the U.S. News and World Report that Nehru "did not represent all the nations of peoples of Asia" (Guha, 2007, p. 167). Guha notes that Gandhi's influence on Nehru meant that he was more inclined towards non-violence, western liberalism, electoral democracy, and a free press (Guha, 2007, p. 171).

The close connection between the owner of the *HT*, G.D. Birla, and Nehru is recorded by Guha when the latter received a letter on the role of the United States in the Far East from Nehru in May 1954 (Guha, 2007, p. 169). G.D. Birla, an industrialist, wanted close ties between India and the United States and visited the States in October 1954 and 1956 to forge better relations between the two nations.

3.4 Emergency Era: A Country under Siege

The INC ruled India post-independence, and practically there was weak opposition to the INC. Under the leadership of Indira Gandhi (daughter of Nehru), who led the INC government, India had to face a state of emergency on June 26, 1975, at 6 a.m., and media freedom and all civil liberties were curtailed. Thousands were detained in the subsequent month and put under house arrest, and others were sent to overcrowded jails under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). In a series of interviews given by Indira Gandhi to western media, she labeled the press of the west as India-baiting for attacking her decisions while completely overlooking the neighboring authoritarian regimes like China and Pakistan. The nexus between Indira Gandhi's government and its army of copyeditors came to light when the latter was forced to write slogans that promoted Indira's propaganda vis-à-vis the state of emergency. The slogans, interestingly, were plastered on billboards and vehicles and almost everywhere to influence the psyche of the public (Guha, 2007, p. 492).

Indira Gandhi made use of every form of media to convince the people. She went to a great length and even spoke for hours with the public defending her government's acts (Guha, 2007, p. 493). The media was one of the victims of Indira's emergency rule as supposedly independent editors of independent newspapers lost their independence and were forced to exercise pre-censorship. They had to submit any potential critical reporting on the government for review.

The press was barred from reporting on open protests, and many news articles were suppressed and left unpublished in the process (Guha, 2007, p. 498). Instead, anyone praising Indira was passed quickly, and those who preferred to publish materials involving freedom and so forth faced some form of punishment. However, some journalists managed to print cryptic news that criticized the government. The Indian government's reign over news agencies in India was also severe as the autonomous watchdog Press Council was abolished. Altogether 253 journalists were put under house arrest, although the editor of the *HT* remained independent. The author also mentions that most editors kept mum as they feared closure or seizure of their property. Those who kowtowed received advertisement funds from the government (Guha, 2007, p. 499).

Guha presents an interesting fact that among the newspapers that agreed to side with Indira Gandhi was the *HT,* and others were the *Hindu* and the *Times of India*. This historical past also confirms the continuing role of the *HT* in acting as an intermediary for the Indian state in the securitization of Nepal's constitution and blockade. The then editor B.G. Verghese was fired by the owner K.K. Birla so the owner could appease Mrs. Gandhi. Guha reveals:

> Birla was a devoted acolyte of the prime minister—after the decision by the Allahabad high court of 12 June, he had taken a delegation of 500 businessmen to plead with her to stay on in office. (Guha, 2007, p. 500)

Other newspapers like the *Indian Express* and *The Statesman* struggled to maintain their existence as they were against Mrs. Gandhi. These two newspapers resisted

Mrs. Gandhi's propaganda by visiting the doors of the courts, and other times they published blank pages instead of disseminating her propaganda. Other popular newspapers like the weekly *Mainstream* and the monthly *Seminar* were shut down rather than riding on the government's propaganda. The weekly Bombay *Himmat* was shut down after they failed to pay the hefty sum imposed by the government after they published quotes of Mahatma Gandhi. On the other hand, literary magazines also shut their business as independence had been stifled by the INC government (Guha, 2007, p. 500).

As Indian journalists suffered under the Emergency rule, people in business were elated as the unions had become defunct. Western journalists who visited India at that period questioned if India could ever become a reliable democracy and felt that the country was more concerned about its economic issues rather than freedom and independence. Other journalists agonized over the decline of civil society—including the press—and democracy in India, and the issue of democracy was heavily discussed in the British newspapers (Guha, 2007, p. 505).

Mrs. Gandhi soon had to manage a confrontation with her son Sanjay Gandhi who used media *Surge* to counter his mother by giving interviews. He continued to give interviews to other newspapers, and Mrs. Gandhi was unimpressed by his acts and was swift to curb his activities.

Mahatma Gandhi's son Devdas was the *HT*'s longest-serving editor. During the Emergency period in India (1975-1977), the then-owner K.K. Birla fired an editor who had dared to criticize the Congress government. As a close associate of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Birla was compelled to leave the country before returning in 1984. He was given a membership in the Congress party and eventually got elected to the Rajya Sabha (Dev A. , 2018). Before the 1990s, the *HT* was a part of India's vibrant civil society despite being close to the INC, and it appeared to be independent of the government. However, there were instances when it was too close to the ruling party; after the liberalization of the 1990s, the newspaper seems to have been getting away from the weakened INC and instead marched towards the Hindu nationalist BJP.

Especially during the emergency period, various newspapers in India had acquiesced to Indira Gandhi's INC, including the *HT*. Perhaps the Emergency period is a rather extreme example of how a liberal and democratic state can quickly change, censor vibrant media, and put massive illiberal pressure on civil society. This also shows how securitization concerns can destroy or stifle democratic institutions. And among those institutions, free and independent media are also hit hard.

3.5 The Effects of Economic Liberalization on India's Media

With a tumultuous era to preserve its status as a sovereign and unified nation, India entered economic liberalization in 1991 while exercising liberal approaches to fix the faltering economy. The then prime minister Rajeev Gandhi and his Congress party scrambled to win confidence over their economic liberalization policy. Ironically the liberal approach to modernizing India's economy by the INC was bereft of policies that ensured votes for the next elections. However, India slowly integrated with the global economy, and after three years of reforms, the GDP skyrocketed to seven percent (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012, p. 284). India's foray into the technological world during that era saw the emergence of two cities in the south—Bangalore and Hyderabad—to establish themselves as IT hubs, ultimately boosting the nation's economy. However, the country's overall development lagged, and illiteracy remained an issue despite efforts to expand the economy. High illiteracy rates also meant that a large section of the population was excluded from the economic growth (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012, p. 286). India's economic liberalization focused on technological development and other economic strategies, and the INC and the BJP party have focused in the subsequent years. The liberalization policy has also shown the rise of entrepreneurs becoming billionaires (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012, p. 288).

The authors state that India today is number one in newspaper circulation, even beating the West (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012). After the introduction of the internet,

the sale of newspapers rose to 40% between 2005-09, and there are now more than 500 satellite and cable television channels in India. Although India has managed to develop over the years, it is still behind China concerning both GDP and HDI (2021) (Ninan, 2021), but with a younger population, India holds the advantage. The authors also firmly believe that a free country like India would mean quick progress. However, with the emergence of the BJP as a Hindutva nationalist party, things look dreary for India's democracy as the governing party transforms India into a Hindu state. This, in return, has a direct effect on India's press freedom.

3.6 Media Concentration & Ownership

The propaganda model opines that media like the *HT* play a crucial role in pushing forward the propaganda of a group or a government while agreeing that not all media fall into this category (Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

The propaganda model further suggests that propaganda is much more difficult to trace in a democratic setup where the media are private than in an autocratic system where the media is centrally controlled, enjoys little freedom, and promotes the elite's ideas. For example, it would be easier to say that a news channel in North Korea is a state propaganda machine than *The Guardian*. In short, a fiercely independent media that exposes the ills of a government and upholds free speech would be the opposite of a propaganda tool. This is where the authors lament that

there is not enough literature to discuss how the private media like the *HT* behaves and performs (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p. 2).

The authors, therefore, define the propaganda model as a tool that focuses on wealth inequality and power and how it affects the mass media and its processes. The model, in simpler terms, tells us how a client influences mass media (as we will discuss below on *HT*.) through the means of wealth and power to control what would be published and decide what ought to be. They present five filters that constitute the essential ingredients of a propaganda model: "a) the size, concentrated ownership, owner of wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; 2) advertising as the primary source of the media; 3) the reliance of the media on information provided by the government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; 4) "flak" as a means of disciplining the media, and 5) "anti-communism" as a national religion and control mechanism.

The five filters explain how the news goes through a propaganda process to succeed. For any propaganda campaign to succeed, news plays an important role. At times like during the rule of Indira Gandhi during the emergency, the media helped her make sustained propaganda. During the 2015 Indian economic blockade of Nepal, the Indian government developed propaganda, but it denied any role, blaming the Madheshis (a minority group in Nepal) for the obstruction. The

propaganda machinations, altogether 19 news, were published by India's *HT*, which helped the Indian government sustain its propaganda.

On the other hand, Madhesis reiterated that they were the ones to blame for the economic blockade, although most Nepalis did not believe such statements. Nepal's former PM K.P. Oli accused India of meddling with the country's internal affairs, used anti-Indian sentiments among Nepalis for his election purposes, and won. In this sense, it is evident that not every propaganda succeeds.

We often fail to understand that most mainstream media are not that independent, even in a democratic state. Herman and Chomsky reveal how states, high-level social units, and independent media are intertwined. Therefore, it will be interesting to dissect the role of the *HT* in the next chapter to understand the complex nature of media, state, and actors. With the advent of newer technologies, states today struggle to effectively control what they want to say to the public. However, still, there are state-owned or state-funded media in almost every part of the world that still fulfill the purpose of the state or corporations in a world of decreased advertisements. This only shows how Anderson's argument stays relevant in the modern age, where control of the press is seen as a right move in democratic and autocratic states (Anderson, 1983, p. 58).

In the interview of P. Sainath, a celebrated Indian journalist, he exposes how corporations and Indian media like the *Times of India* have worked together to

promote advertisements as stories and says how he worked hard to fail them (Franklin, Cynthia G; Shankar, S.; Sainath, P, 2014, p. 25). He further explains how the media give an award to top corporations, hoping for advertisements and pushing their agendas. In short, Sainath says that journalism has become a mere stenography to the powerful ones and corporations. Journalists sometimes cannot tell stories because something grand is happening elsewhere.

It is also imperative to understand the more significant issue of how ostensibly independent news sources in a free and democratic society (whether the USA or India) are often not as independent or objective as they seem. Herman & Chomsky show some complex, subtle, and nearly invisible ways that the state's interests, "establishment" or elite/dominant social forces, and a supposedly independent media overlap.

In 2015 the *HT* appeared to be close to the BJP party, as explained below, as the newspaper owners soon realized that the INC had lost control over the polls and the rise of the Hindu nationalist BJP party held a significant meaning for the paper. The *HT* owners had to decide to change sides despite having a historical relationship with the weakened INC.

The beginning of Bhartia's ascent to control the media group can be traced back to 2005, when she sold shares of the *HT* media and raised around Rs. 400 crores. Each share had a price value of (Indian Rupees) Rs. 530. British investor Henderson

Global Investor initially bought the company's five percent share in 2003 and exited entirely in 2013. An ambitious person, Bhartia sold the idea of establishing an English-language newspaper in India around 2007. But a decade later, the K.K. Birla group stared at a failing media enterprise. Its share price got downgraded to Rs. 10. In 2019, the readership of the *HT* was reduced to 1.32 crore from 1.84 crores.

The other group company, the 102-year-old Hindustan Media Ventures Ltd, previously known as The Behar Journals Ltd, which runs Hindi newspapers and magazines, was also under financial loss. The Bhartia family owns *HT* media and HMVL—69.5 percent and 74.30 percent (Anto T Joseph & NL Team, 2020).

Since the last decade, this economic trouble for the *HT* meant that Bhartia was in no mood to fight against the BJP party. The *HT* former editor Bobby Ghosh launched a project entitled 'Hate Tracker' in 2016. The project essentially tracked all forms of hate happening in India. BJP's Chief PM Narendra Modi was unimpressed and took the project as an offense to his government. Ghosh quit *HT* after fourteen months, and the project from the online website was shelved after a new editor was hired (Anto T Joseph & NL Team, 2020). Soon it appeared that the *HT* was rescinding its support for the INC and slowly moving into the BJP party's illiberal circle.

Inside sources have informed the Indian online news site Newslaundry that Bhartia keeps a tab on senior editors and oversees the newspaper's front page. Writers and

reporters are also told by the senior editors if Bhartia liked their articles or not. Bhartia used to be a Rajya Sabha member of the INC from 2006 to 2012 and has often used the position for her media (Anto T Joseph & NL Team, 2020).

The phenomenon above is also reiterated by prominent former journalist Robert Fisk of *The Times* (London) newspaper (Fisk, 2011). In his insightful article "Why I Had to Leave the Times," Fisk reveals the nexus between the owner Rupert Murdoch and the then British PM Douglas-Home, who seemed concerned about Fisk publishing investigative reports on Israel. Murdoch and Douglas-Home had met with the Israelis after the invasion, and his choice of editor, Charles Wilson, soon after his death, was appointed at the *Times*. Fisk was observing whether Murdoch would uphold editorial independence and journalistic integrity. But soon, Murdoch fired the newspaper's first editor, Harold Evans, and vowed to retaliate against the trade unions. Slowly Murdoch exhibited pro-Israeli affiliation and even accepted an award from an Israeli organization.

Fisk makes a profound reflection on what it meant to work for Murdoch. He saw the nexus between the media owner and state officials, and that collusion was reflected in various events—impending the sustenance and growth of democratic values. He also rued the fact that most Arab journalists had created a space for non-critical reporting and weak journalism to flourish under the thumb of dictators. His sharp comparison of the democratic United Kingdom with dictator-led Arab

nations was that the former controlled the public by using new technologies, and the latter was busy appointing officials that would heed their call.

I think, either way, Fisk's experience with *The Times* and his reflection of two worlds call us to deeply ponder on the fragility of media independence and how media owners can erode a newspaper's ability to write and get published without coercion by linking up with the state for economic reasons or spearheading state propaganda. It also makes us think about how journalists in non-democratic nations or states having weak democracies engage in self-censorship—which deprives the public of facts and truth about how their governments are running things.

Under the leadership of Bhartia, *the HT* is now the third most-read English newspaper in India and the number one in Delhi. Bhartia took over the newspaper in 1985 at the age of twenty-nine and inherited it from her father, K.K. Birla. Bhartia's close ties with former finance minister Arun Jaitley were established when she published news reports quoting Jaitley in the case of Vijay Mallya (Dev A. , 2018).

Bhartia's executive editor, Shishir Gupta, was close to the National Security Advisor (NSA) chief Ajit Doval and Jaitley (close to PM Narendra Modi). Bhartia is the editorial director and above Prashant Jha, a Nepal-born journalist with the *HT*, and Sukumar Rangananthan. The *Caravan* magazine reports that Bhartia is briefed

every eight in the evening about what is being published the next day and is especially careful not to hurt her close friends and the party in power (Dev A. , 2018).

For an extended period, the newspaper was known to be a pro-Congress party, and only after the rise of the BJP party it is now a puppet or proxy of the newspaper. However, it is wrong to say that the *HT* might not have independence, although it is for sure that it has some level of nexus with the BJP government.

According to Israel (1994),

> On 29 April 1929, the Hindustan Times sent a confidential circular to Government of India employees regarding retrenching lower-paid employees. Since clerks in the Government could not press their case, the Hindustan Times announced its intention to carry on a propaganda campaign on their behalf. It provided a questionnaire: 'Please state your personal and departmental grievances'. It had become clear that the Government's interests were better served by a critical Hindustan Times that regularly published Government news than a major paper and editor with a professional grievance.(Israel, 1994, p. 63)

This was because other major newspapers at that period did not—publish governmental news and only criticized the colonial government.

Furthermore, the *HT* received a letter from Jawaharlal Nehru—sent to several independent and nationalist newspapers—seeking support for its confrontation with the then government (Israel, 1994, p. 169), and the newspaper was among many known to be a Congress or independent nationalist newspaper. G.D. Birla was

also close to Gandhi and used to organize campaigns for the latter financially. Birla's resources ensured that the *HT* was run continuously without any bottlenecks (Israel, 1994, p. 199). The *HT* also supported Porbander and other states. The newspaper gained advertisement revenue from the princely states, which in return helped in the circulation of the newspaper in those states (Israel, 1994, p. 201).

The author further reveals that even editors like Sahni, who confronted the Birla-controlled board at the *HT*, had to quit their jobs. The book also mentioned that the *HT* had published an editorial in February 1945 on articles written by Chaman Lal that touched upon British propaganda in the United States of America (Israel, 1994, p. 277). Lal's articles criticized British propaganda for portraying the INC and Gandhi negatively.

3.7 *Hindustan Times* after 2015

The burning question here is: how did a newspaper that was part of civil society and independent of the colonial or post-colonial state, though, as we have seen, with some connection to the INC, make a switch to the right-wing BJP? It is worth noting, however, that the INC has seen a dramatic transformation since the erstwhile Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Although it cannot be forgotten that India had imposed two economic blockades on Nepal during the era of Indira Gandhi and Rajeev Gandhi—1969 (Thapa, 2019) and 1989 (Weintraub, 1989), and historically

the HT has been biased in covering issues of Nepal as it is reflected on India engaging in micromanagement or interfering in Nepal's political and economic affairs post-1951. Perhaps the *HT* owners were familiar that an Indian ruling government would act when there was another blockade on Nepal in 2015.

K.K. Birla, the former owner, had slyly used the *HT* as a foundation to start his political career. Editors like S Mulgaonkar and B.G. Verghese had to part ways with H.T. for writing critically about Indira Gandhi. Another editor, Khushwant Singh, landed the job as Indira Gandhi recommended him in the 1980s. And yet another editor, Prem Shankar Jha, had to lose his career in 1969 for refusing to write against VP Singh, the rival of Rajiv Gandhi (Dev A. , 2018). So Bhartia had learned these appeasement tricks from her father, K.K. Birla. The legacy had to continue for the newspaper and her survival in the highly politicized country where the state pressures on a mainstream newspaper had become a norm.

The Caravan magazine also mentions that Bhartia and Narendra Modi had a meeting before the exit of Ghosh from the prime minister's office. Former executives of the *HT* had revealed to journalist Patel that Amit Shah and his secretary were complaining to Bhartia frequently regarding the newspaper's critical coverage of the Modi government (Dev A. , 2018).

After the exit of Ghosh, Modi personally attended the *HT* Leadership Summit (Party, 2017) in 2017. It was a massive boost for Bhartia's *HT* as she welcomed Modi amid

high-ranking attendees. The summit per se is a significant source of revenue for Bhartia, and additionally, *HT* and Hindustan (Hindi daily) draw significant advertisement revenue from the government (Dev A. , 2018). So Bhartia needed to establish a working relationship with the Modi government.

Bhartia's husband, Sunder Bhartia, and his brother run a billion-dollar conglomerate and defaulted loans from government-run banks (Dev A. , 2018). Essentially, Bhartia is a part of a conglomerate group running a national newspaper that cannot go against the government no matter what because without the support of the state, it would be difficult for the *HT* to survive in a competitive market.

But the *HT*, which was always close to the INC, had covered the Dadri lynching in 2015 and the suicide of Rohith Vemula—which irked the BJP government. And the calls from the prime minister's office increased in 2016. Although there are no official records of whether the prime minister's office phoned Bhartia in 2015 regarding the economic blockade on Nepal, news had broken out that the executive editor Gupta was working for the prime minister's office and Amit Shah. These revelations only affirm suspicions (Dev A. , 2018).

My writing on the history of the *HT* and Fisk's experience with *The Times* might show the similar structures existing in India and other democratic nations that newspaper owners tend to embrace the ruling government's propaganda—

whereby they are willing to sacrifice the editorial independence despite existing in a state with a strong civil society. I believe it lays out the foundation for this thesis: how the nexus between the media and the state or political parties (that is bound to accumulate power and receive immense public support) erodes democratic values and forces journalists and editors to practice self-censorship and imitate the government's propaganda and can affect how relations with other states–like Nepal–are framed and securitized.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the history of the *HT,* its proximity to the INC, and how it changed its position by getting closer to the new BJP government after the 1990s. Irrespective of its suspected allegiance and alliance, the *HT* appeared to remain close to its nationalistic roots, and possibly because of economic challenges, the new owners of the *HT* have forsaken editorial and journalistic values in a democratic state and rather become a meager tool for the BJP's propaganda to sustain its business. The damage can be cross-border, too, as we have seen the coverage of the *HT* on Nepal's blockade and constitution. It destroys inter-country ties in the long run.

Furthermore, I have also discussed media concentration and power concerning the state and media alliances. I have also tried to discuss how the position of the *HT* with the BJP government reflected on its reporting of India's economic blockade on Nepal in 2015. I have tried to show the link between the state and the media and how this is reflected in the coverage of various issues, specifically by a newspaper like the *HT*. This extends to national and international themes. The next chapter will shed more light on this issue by assessing the 19 articles published by the *HT* during the 2015-16 blockade of India on Nepal. If the history and present are clear, the future will be too. Therefore, I am trying to establish here that the 19 news articles published by the *HT* during the 2015 economic blockade were securitized and seemed to have a high degree of BJP propaganda against Nepal's constitution.

Chapter 4: Analysis of 19 *Hindustan Times* news articles

This chapter applies the theories and insights of the previous chapters that dealt with what the theoretical framework (securitization) means, the historical concept of media, and the evolving nature of media concerning the state, power, and political parties. The central argument of this chapter is that the 19 articles illustrate how securitization works via a medium, "i.e., media (*HT*)" and how a mainstream media outlet tries to securitize issues of another country to influence audiences on behalf of the state or political parties. In this chapter, I connect the dots between the [non] use of the word blockade and how India's BJP tried to securitize Nepal's constitution and the blockade to nullify the accusation from Nepal that India was behind the blockade. The chapter explores how the *HT* attempted to pass the blame of the economic blockade to the ethnic group Madhesis and even called them Indian origin inhabitants in Nepal that creating a perception among readers in India and Nepal that the 2015 constitution was against the Madhesis and they were the ones behind the blockade.

This chapter establishes how the *HT* framed Nepal's constitution and economic blockade during the 2015-16 timeframe by taking lessons from the securitization theory to look at whether the *HT* played the influential role of a tool for the Indian state or the BJP party. As we have seen in previous chapters, I have put forward the idea that media plays a key role in the securitization process and that securitizing actors often fail to pay attention to its role in the 21st century.

This chapter states how the Indian state securitized Nepal's constitution and the blockade by analyzing the 19 articles published by the *HT* during the economic blockade period. I use qualitative or textual analysis of the news articles. This chapter also unravels how the *HT* acted as a tool for the Indian government to convince audiences that India had no hand in the economic blockade and the constitution was a threat to the ethnic Madhesis, and India was not happy about it.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section is the methodology and discusses how the newspaper the *HT* uses the word and does not use the phrase blockade in the news articles. The second section discusses the 19 *HT* news articles that securitized Nepal's constitution and dealt with how India denied the blockade. The third section touches on the Madhesi factor—how *HT* framed them and wrote extensively that the Madhesis were behind the blockade and India did not do it. The fourth section establishes how the *HT* securitized Nepal's constitution; the fifth section is the conclusion. In short, this chapter enunciates the idea that the *HT* pressed hard to convince audiences in Nepal, India mainly, and elsewhere that the Indian state had no role in the economic blockade and that "Nepal's constitution was malicious against the ethnic group, especially Madhesis."

4.1 Methodology & Rationale

As I started my career as a journalist in 2015, I experienced the economic blockade, and the work I did help me to understand the situation better. In the previous chapter regarding the history of the *HT* and how its relationship with India's BJP grew significantly after 2015, you will understand the statement I am making now. The article by the *Caravan* magazine also brought up a closer insight into how the newspaper had closer ties with the right-wing Hindutva party. This observation also led me to go deeper. As I read the first article published by the *HT* on Sept 20th, the day after Nepal's 2015 constitution was promulgated, it got more apparent to me that the newspaper was publishing what the Indian government was telling the masses. Therefore, this chapter establishes how I chose the news articles, why, and how the events unfolded.

The 19 articles under analysis are comprised of two opinion articles, one interview article, and the remaining thirteen news articles. One editorial and two news articles were written anonymously under the name '*HT Correspondent*'.

A few journalists wrote several news articles and editorials for the *HT*. For example, Prashant Jha, a Nepal-born national from the Madhesh province, wrote five news articles during the blockade period. Jha wrote one opinion article, two editorials, one interview article, and one news article.

Utpal Parashar wrote the most for the *HT*. Parashar wrote eleven articles in total for the *HT* during the economic blockade. The journalist has written mostly news articles on the blockade, trade ties, security issues, et cetera. Moreover, Furquan Ameen Siddiqui wrote one news article on the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake. Furthermore, the other journalist Jayanth Jacob wrote one opinion article.

Interestingly, the "*HT* Correspondent" (whose identity we do not know) had written the remaining six news articles. One article was an editorial, the four news articles were about the trade blockade, refuting India's involvement in the blockade, and one news article was about the former king not paying his electricity bills.

I chose India's mainstream English newspaper, the *HT,* and searched on Google Search and the *HT* archive page (www.hindustantimes.com) to find out the 19 articles by setting a timeframe of September 18th, 2015, to Feb 9th, 2016. I selected this timeframe as it is the period of the unofficial third economic blockade imposed by India on Nepal. The inclusion criteria for the news articles and editorials were as follows: if they mentioned anything about the blockade, constitution, and Madhesis rights, I included them. Although other news articles were published during the same timeframe, I excluded them because they were irrelevant to this thesis. Out of the 19 news articles twelve articles were my particular focus as they consistently used words such as 'blockade,' 'blocking,' and 'blocked' interchangeably, along with the consistent use of the term 'Madhesi blockade.'

The selected news articles are appropriate for the research questions I have set out in the previous chapters because these news articles, directly and indirectly, mention the blockade and constitution issue—two key themes that I have covered in this thesis. Firstly, these news articles align with the securitization theory chapter, and, secondly, it also goes well with the chapter regarding the historic and modern aspect of media and its relation with the state, power, and political parties. At the beginning of the thesis, I explained the role of the media in a securitization process: in seeing how it can help the securitizing actor convince or persuade its target audience. The 19 news articles supported India's claim that the country had no role in imposing an economic blockade on Nepal. The articles also endorsed the Indian state's position on Nepal's constitution that it was discriminatory and non-inclusive and targeted ethnic groups like Madhesis, Tharus, et cetera.

At first, I chose the *Times of India* and the *HT* for this thesis. Still, I realized I could focus more on the latter as the newspaper employed a Nepali national. The newspaper had always had a close connection with the government or political parties (Congress and BJP) in the past, as I have mentioned in the history chapter. The close nexus between the owners of the *HT* and Congress and BJP leaders in the past and present also prompted me to choose the newspaper. While working as a freelance journalist in Kathmandu, Nepal, I had the opportunity to observe how national and international media framed Nepal's issues.

I deployed a textual analysis method, and while reading the news articles and editorials, I identified the following three words as central themes after reading the news articles: constitution, blockade, and Madhesis. These were the keywords for me as I discovered that they were used frequently in the 19 news articles and editorials. While analyzing these documents, I aimed to understand how the newspaper portrayed Nepal's constitution and the blockade during the economic blockade timeframe.

Also, in the beginning, I read through the documents and was careful to be objective as I come from Nepal, and I would have some bias against the newspaper and the neighboring country. I reread the news articles and editorials several times to see what recurring themes and frames existed.

I compared the September 20th, 2015, editorial with the Indian government's statement by the then foreign secretary Jaishankar on his two-day visit to Kathmandu, Nepal, on the 18th Sept 2015. The comments are below:

> The appeal from Prime Minister Narendra Modi was carried by Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar on a two-day visit to Kathmandu, where he met key political leaders including Madhesi leaders, and pushed the need to forge a "full consensus" before unveiling the Constitution. A senior diplomat told The Hindu Mr. Jaishankar had suggested that the Nepal government "could make a public commitment or bring an amendment to assuage Madhesi concerns or even postpone the ceremony for the moment". In a statement on his return to Delhi, he said that while India had been "strongly supportive of the Constitution making in Nepal," it "would like its completion to be an occasion for joy and satisfaction, not agitation and violence. (Haidar, 2015)

This quote makes it simpler to understand that India was worried about Nepal's constitution and had taken up the Madhesi issue to oppose Nepal's decision. The *HT* published Sept 20th editorial (as discussed above) openly mentioned that the Indian PM Modi was unhappy about the constitution. The editorial then went on to say how Nepal's constitution was divisive, non-inclusive, and anti-ethnic. The rhetoric seemed consistent in several news articles published after that date.

I examined the 19 news articles to identify if the Madhesis were a threatened referent object. I identified these constructions by choosing the following words: 'perpetuate,' 'shrinks,' and 'draconian citizenship provisions.' The following quote includes these words that indicate that the Madhesis were identified as threatened.

> The Constitution draws federal boundaries in ways that would perpetuate the dominance of certain communities, at the cost of Terai's Madhesi, Tharu and hill ethnic groups. It dilutes the principle of affirmative action. It shrinks political representation for those in the Terai, both by reducing constituencies in the region and the share of proportional representation. It includes draconian citizenship provisions against the interests of women and Madhesis. (Correspondent H. , 2015).

I also identified the following words to indicate the Madhesis were identified as threatened: 'demoralized,' 'Madhesi discontent,' and 'do not feel politically or constitutionally integrated' (Jha, 2016).

I also identified the following words that were used to securitize Nepal's constitution as an existential threat: 'deepened rift', 'entrench elite dominance', 'deepen social cleavages', 'lost opportunity', and 'perpetuate the dominance of

certain communities, at the cost of Terai's Madhesi, Tharu and hill ethnic groups' (Correspondent H. , 2015). The following quote is also a prime example of how India securitized Nepal's constitution:

> India has rightly assessed that such a constitution will only lead to instability and chose not to welcome it. (Correspondent H. , 2015).

Additionally, the following words have been used to securitize Nepal's constitution as an existential threat to the Madhesis.

> The residents of the Terai plains bordering India, who comprise nearly 30% of Nepal's population, feel the Constitution does not guarantee equal rights to them. They want proportional representation in state organs, delimitation of constituencies, fresh demarcation of federal boundaries so that the stretch in the Terai from east to west falls within two Madhes states and a change in citizenship laws (Parashar, 2015).

Moreover, it is clear from the following quote that the Indian embassy in Kathmandu was actively securitizing Nepal's constitution. The December 20th news article states further:

> It seems from many accounts, that the Indian embassy in Kathmandu had been sending messages to the external affairs ministry about the need for a diplomatic intervention to press for an all-inclusive Constitution. But New Delhi was undecided on how to go about it. Finally, foreign secretary S Jaishankar was sent to Nepal as a special envoy, 37 hours before the new Constitution was to be promulgated. It was too late in the day. Dashing the foreign secretary across also left many counter-questions in its wake. (Jacob, 2015)

Furthermore, the following words were used to securitize Nepal's constitution:

The ruling class has done its best job for preserving its agenda and benefits. It is not surprising at all. It is not for Madhesis at all. All articles have been written to exploit Madhesis. (Jha, 2016)

Lastly, the following quotes from one news article by Prashant Jha justify how India

and the *HT* had securitized Nepal's constitution:

Here is a brief recap. Nepal's Constitution was promulgated on September 20. Madhesis and Tharus, indigenous tribes of Nepal's Tarai region, had been protesting in the run up the promulgation, and claimed the constitutional draft had eroded their political representation, compromised the architecture of inclusion, divided up their territory and carved out federal units which would deprive them of self rule, and institutionalized discriminatory citizenship provisions.

India only noted the Constitution and said its transporters, fearing insecurity, were unwilling to move in to Nepal. It urged the government to address the political problem.

The biggest drawback of the amendment process was that it was not owned by Madhesis, and thus the Constitution could not widen its legitimacy.

Secondly, a generation has got radicalized, and has begun seeing Kathmandu as the enemy. They feel little sense of ownership of Nepal's institutions, symbols and this Constitution.

India must remember that the fundamental problem persists: That Madhesis still do not feel politically or constitutionally integrated within Nepal's current mainstream structure.

Till there is a constitutional correction – which lays the ground for inclusive Nepali political structures and forces it to reflect the enormous social diversity of the country–the battle will continue in Nepal. (Jha, 2016)

4.2 The Denial of Blockade and Securitization of Nepal's constitution in the 19 *Hindustan Times* news articles

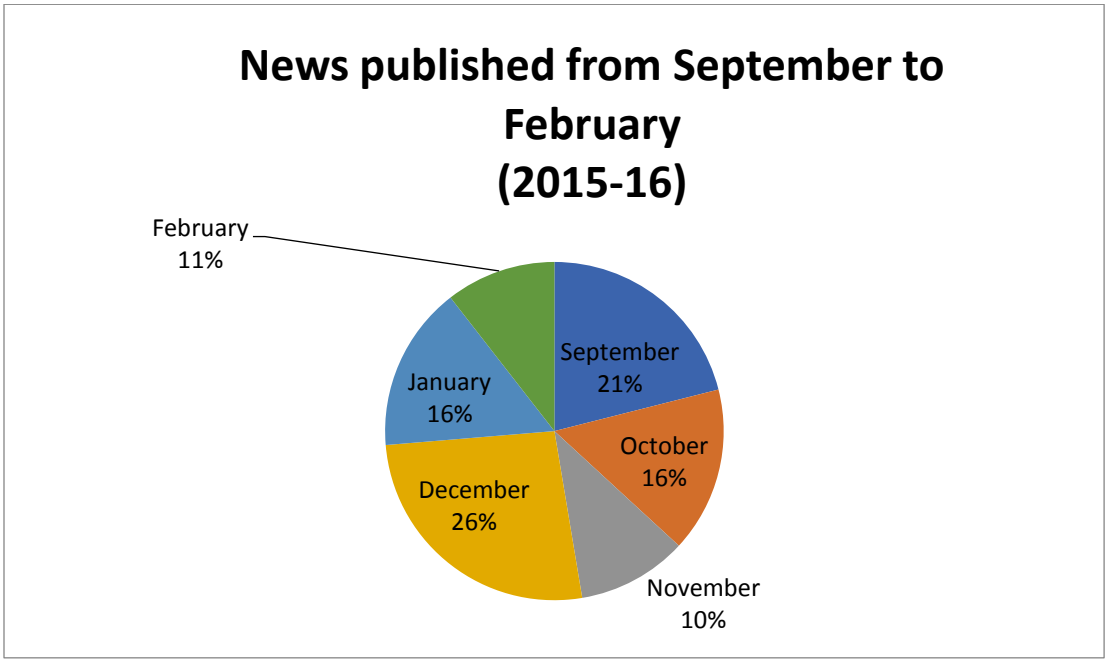

Table 2: News published from September to February

The percentage above indicates the number of published news articles, where thirteen mentioned the blockade, during the consecutive months from September 2015 to February 2016. As I said above, India imposed an unofficial economic blockade on Nepal after the promulgation of Nepal's 2015 constitution on September 19th. India only noted the constitution and continued with the blockade while denying any role. The 19 news articles, therefore, are an example of securitizing speech acts. India's external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj even

denied the country's role in the blockade at a United Nations session and said it was "totally false" (Correspondent H. , 2015).

4.3 Use & Non-use of the word 'blockade'

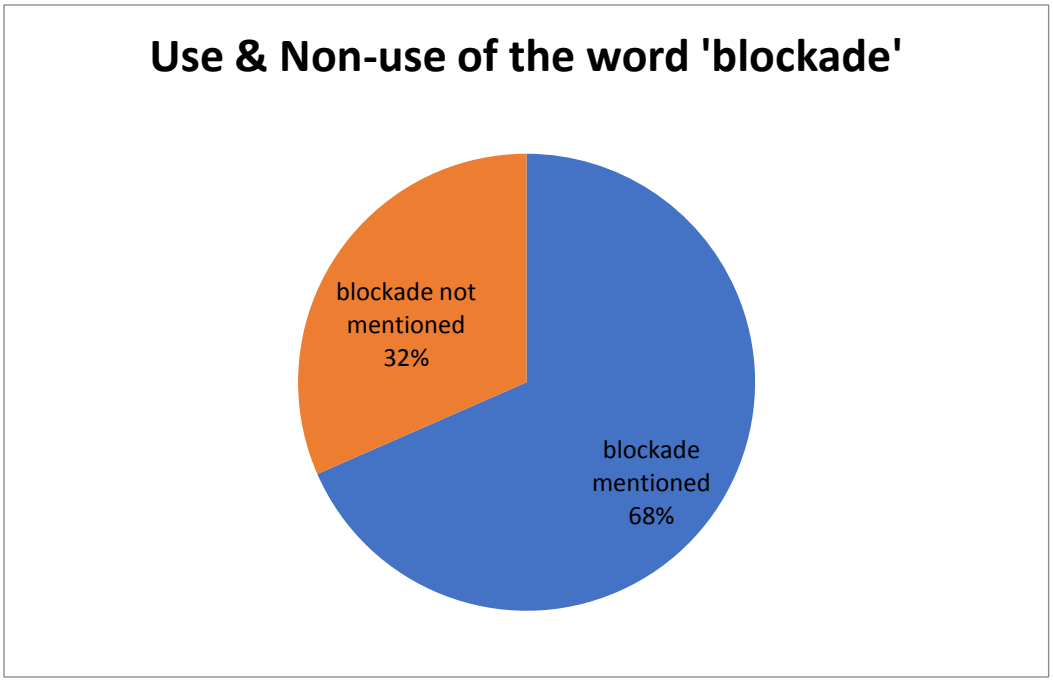

Table 3: Use & Non-use of the word 'blockade'

The above pie chart indicates how two words were mentioned in percentages. During the six-month blockade period, the word 'blockade' was not mentioned in 32%, and the blockade was mentioned in 68%. This chapter establishes how the *HT* deployed the word 'blockade' and wholly avoided the terms such as 'blockade by India' or 'economic blockade imposed by India.' The main argument of this chapter

is that the *HT* followed the official line of the BJP's statement that India had no role in the economic blockade, and instead, the newspaper tried to establish the narrative that it was the Madhesis who were behind the blockade for opposing the constitution via publishing news articles and editorials sharing the sentiments of the Indian government. The term 'Madheshi blockade' has an impact because it tries to convince the audience that the economic blockade was not imposed by India but by the Madhesis as they were opposing the constitution. And the newspaper was successful in establishing that narrative as it consistently ignored the term Indian blockade. It matters how these words are used as the 'denial of the blockade' created a counter-reaction in Nepal, and most Nepalis became anti-Indian. Such usage of words significantly affected relations between India and Nepal.

Even trends such as #BackoffIndia were used by young Nepalis:

> India's reaction to the new Constitution promulgated by Nepal has not gone down well with thousands of people, who are using #BackOffIndia on social media to accuse New Delhi of interfering in the country's internal matters. (Parashar, 2015)

The impact of denying the blockade by the Indian government and newspapers like the *HT* angered the majority of Nepalese, and the relationship between India and Nepal dropped to the lowest point.

It is interesting to note in this news article that the term "blocking a key trade checkpoint on the border with Nepal" is often used (Correspondent H. , 2015). The

word ‘blockade’ is only used once in the sentence where the word ‘Madhesi groups’ is used. This is fascinating because the word blocking and blockade completely change a sentence's existence. The latter word “blockade” definitely has a more assertive tone and it appears the newspaper tactfully avoided the word where India appeared in the sentences (Correspondent H. , 2015).

In another news article, written by the *HT* Correspondent, the newspaper reports about former Indian ambassador to Nepal, Ranjit Rae, gifting 40 ambulances and eight buses to Nepal on India’s republic day. The news mentions that Kathmandu accuses India of the economic blockade, acknowledging it had strained Nepal-India relations. It does not note that India denies the role and instead waters it down by saying that India is always for Nepal’s development. The blockade is mentioned a key trade point just once (Correspondent H. , 2016).

In another news article Parashar, the journalist states that Nepal confiscated seventy-seven Dabur Nepal containers. The word ‘blockade’ is mentioned four times, along with the word ‘Madhesis’ (Parashar, 2015).

Words such as blockade imposed by Madheshi groups opposing the promulgation of the constitution have been used by the newspaper to deny the Indian state’s role in the blockade and even used words such as false allegations to deny India’s role. The sentence below also suggests that the *HT* had kowtowed to the BJP’s stand on denying the blockade and criticizing Nepal’s constitution.

The trucks had been stranded on the Indian side for more than five days due to the ongoing blockade imposed by Madhesi groups opposing the promulgation of the new constitution (Correspondent H. , 2015).

The above lines suggest that the *HT* had played the role of a medium or tool for the BJP party to securitize Nepal's constitution, deny its role in the blockade, and vilify Madhesis by accusing them of the blockade instead, and at the same time portraying the Madhesis as purely Indian-origin nationals who were being threatened by the new constitution.

Moreover, the following lines from the *HT* also match with the BJP's stand on Nepal's constitution—

India has rejected "false" allegations of blocking a key trade checkpoint on the border with Nepal, amid protests over the country's new constitution. (Correspondent H. , 2015)

The word 'false' here is used intensely to deny India's role in the economic blockade and follows the official stand of the BJP (Tnn, 2015).

The newspaper, the *Times of India*, records now-deceased former Indian foreign minister Sushma Swaraj's speech at India's Rajya Sabha (upper house)—

Replying to a short duration discussion on the state of India-Nepal relations in Rajya Sabha, Swaraj said, "Why would we create any blockade for a country we share good relations with?" She said India was keen to send medicines to Nepal even by air and had asked the Nepal government to send a list, which has not come so far. "We are not inhuman...There are more than 11, 000 Indian trucks stranded near the India-Nepal border due to Madheshi protests. (Tnn, 2015).

The *HT* successfully diverted the audience's attention by deploying repetitive use of blockade at a critical trade point by Madheshis opposing the constitution and avoiding the use of economic blockade.

The newspaper *HT* repeatedly used the word 'blockade' along with interchangeable words such as 'blocking' (Correspondent H. , 2015) (Parashar, 2015), 'blockading' (Jha, 2016), and 'blocked' (Parashar, 2016). The word blockade was used in one news article (Correspondent H. , 2016). The news article also mentioned that Nepal had accused India of imposing an unofficial economic blockade. The pie chart below indicates how four words were used interchangeably and mentioned in percentages. During the six-month blockade period, the word 'blockade' was used 20%, "blocked" was used 20%, the word "blockading" was used 20%, and the word "blocking" was used 40%.

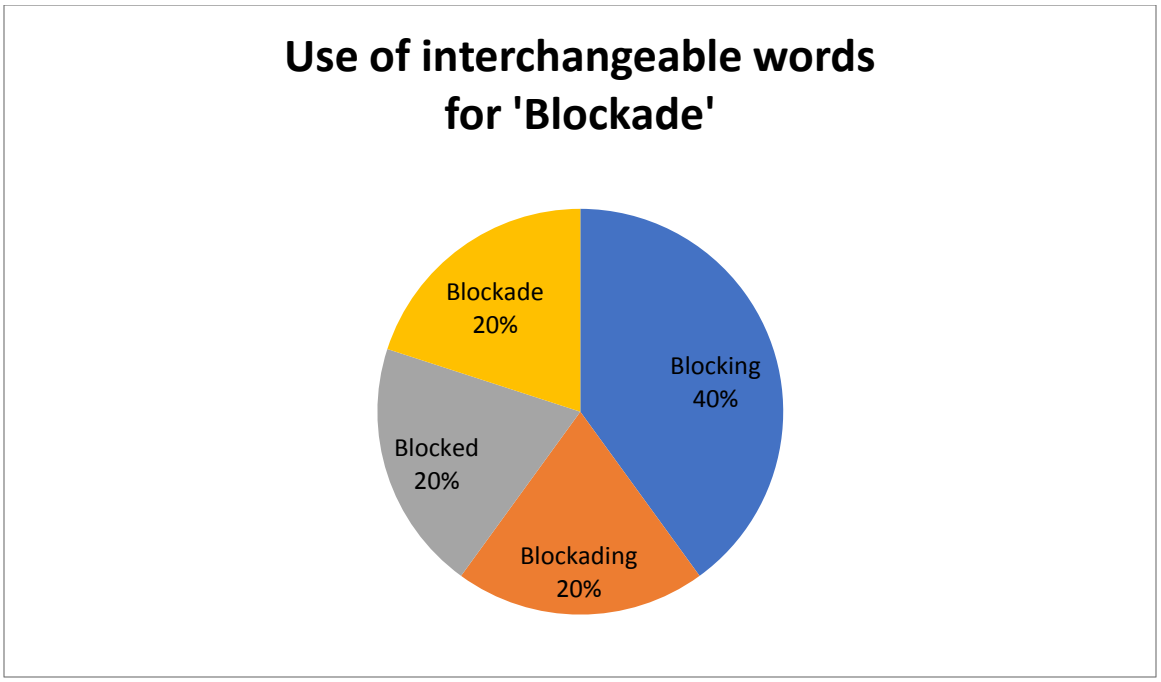

Table 5: Use of interchangeable words for 'Blockade'

4.4 The Madheshi Factor

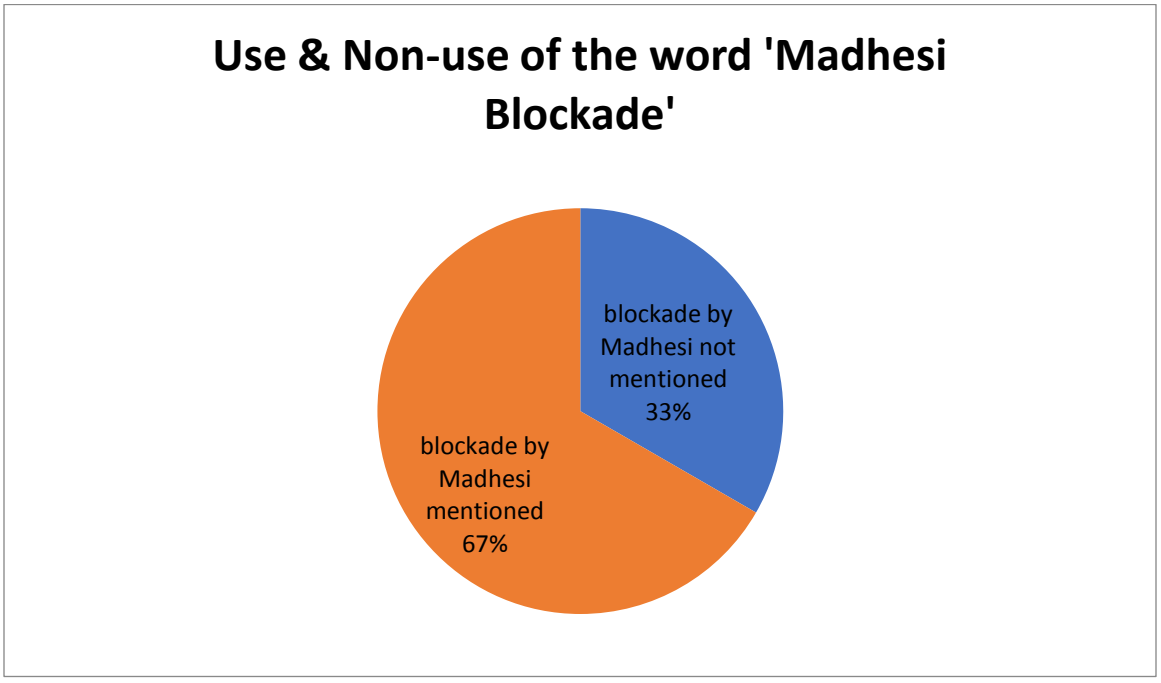

Table 4: Use & Non-use of the word 'Madhesi Blockade'

The above pie chart indicates how two words were mentioned in percentages. During the six-month blockade period, the word 'blockade by Madhesi' was not mentioned at 33%, and the "blockade by Madhesi" was mentioned at 67%. Two news articles consistently constructed Nepal's constitution being a threat to the Madhesis. The following quotes validate the point:

Q. How do you see the current constitution?

A. The ruling class has done its best job for preserving its agenda and benefits. It is not surprising at all. It is not for Madhesis at all. All articles have been written to exploit Madhesis (Jha, 2016).

Here is a brief recap. Nepal's Constitution was promulgated on September 20. Madhesis and Tharus, indigenous tribes of Nepal's Tarai region, had been protesting in the run up the promulgation, and claimed the constitutional draft had eroded their political representation, compromised the architecture of inclusion, divided up their territory and carved out federal units which would deprive them of self rule, and institutionalized discriminatory citizenship provisions. (Jha, 2016).

In another news article, written by the *HT C*orrespondent, the first paragraph mentions that Nepal finally got some respite as more than 100 trucks entered after "protestors opposing the constitution" had imposed a blockade at key trade points. The news article mentions that five major key trade checkpoints had faced blockade and people in the capital and various parts of Nepal were facing hardships. The newspaper again affirmed in this news that India had no role in the blockade and interestingly blamed Indian traders who refused to enter Nepal fearing threats. The newspaper yet again securitized Nepal's Madhesis groups by

calling them Indian-origin and emphasized that they were against the creation of seven provinces (Correspondent H. , Nepal gets respite as cargo trucks enter from India, 2015).

In another interview article of C.K. Raut written by Jha, the Nepal-born journalist continues with the rhetoric that Madhesis and Nepalis are two different nationalities in Nepal and the former ought to be protected by dismantling the 2015 constitution. There is no mention of the word 'blockade,' and it is interesting to note that Jha has so far avoided the word and instead tried hard to portray Nepal's constitution being an existential threat to the Madhesis group (Jha, 2016).

Jha wrote:

> Even as moderate Madhesi parties wage a movement to seek revision in Nepal's new constitution, the country is witnessing a nascent separatist movement in the Tarai. (Jha, 2016)

The interviewee, C.K. Raut, has already abandoned his free Terai agenda and is busy creating a space in the Madhesh region for political space within mainstream politics—of course resorting to violence and creating conflicts in southern Nepal (Dev S. , 2022).

In another opinion article by Jha, the journalist wrote that the Madhesi blockade (Jha, 2016) had ended. It is interesting to note that Jha, in particular, was keen on

referring to the blockade as the Madhesi blockade, and the newspaper's securitization of Nepal's constitution that it was against the Madhesis group had been justified because the Madhesis had protested against the constitution and hence they were behind the blockade. This is evident in the opinion article. Interestingly the journalist Jha uses the word 'blockade' seventeen times, unlike in previous news, and only because the journalist used the two-word Madhesis blockade. The newspaper went to such an extent by delineating the word blockade and attaching it to Madhesis. And this was a gradual process for the newspaper as it did not mention the Madhesi blockade in the beginning but later switched to this terminology in the September 30 news article written by journalist Parashar. In the three news articles published the same month before the 30th, there was no mention of the blockade vis-a-vis Madhesis. The Sept 30th article mentions the word 'blockade' for the first time indirectly as follows:

> Blockade of highways and targeting of custom points in the border areas by Madhesis and Tharus since last week has affected entry of goods into Nepal creating a severe crisis of essential goods, mainly petroleum products. (Parashar, 2015)

In total, four news articles on *HT* were published in September 2015. In October, six news articles were published where the word Madhesi blockade (directly and indirectly) is used three times. Two news articles were published in November 2015, and the November 2nd news article mentions the word blockade but instead of using the term 'Madhesi blockade,' it used the word 'groups.' However, the 30th November news article does mention the Madhesis blockade.

Five news articles were published in December 2015. The term Madhesi blockade was used three times in December, and there was no mention two times. Four news articles were published in January 2016. There is mention of the term Madhesi blockade twice, and one news article does not mention anything, but one news article only mentions the word blockade. Three news articles were published during February. The February 6th article written by journalist Jha mentions the term Madhesi blockade and announces the end of it. The term Madhesi blockade was mentioned eleven times, and there was no mention thirteen times in the 19 articles published during the economic blockade phase.

The news article continued upping the ante that Nepal had raised anti-India sentiments in Nepal, denying that the blockade was the sole reason for the majority of the Nepali public to feel hatred against the Indian government. The news article's rhetoric was simple: a) securitize Nepal's constitution by terming the blockade as the Madhesi blockade, b) portray Madhesi groups as facing an existential threat from the Nepal state, and c) justify India's interventionist nature while omitting India's role on the blockade. These three agendas were carried out well by the *HT*. The news article also mentions that the blockade ended because of local business people. The Nepali public never believed that the Madhesis were behind the blockade or that local traders ended it because Nepalese believe that India is a far larger country than Nepal, both economically and militarily, would not kowtow to such elements.

In another editorial by Jha, there was the continuation of the rhetoric that the 2015 constitution had isolated Madhesis and the legacy of former late Nepal Prime Minister Sushil Koirala had made a blunder doing so and playing a role in making the constitution non-inclusive (Jha, 2016).

In another news article written by Utpal Parashar, the journalist mentions the arrest of 13 personnel of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) after they had crossed the border carrying ammunition. The journalist continues with the rhetoric that the Madhesis were behind the blockade as they opposed the constitution. The journalist also briefly mentions the illegal smuggling and hardships in Nepal (Parashar, 2015).

Parashar continues with the same rhetoric in another article where he mentions the word 'blockade' four times but only by including the word Madhesis (Parashar, 2015). This demonization or clever securitization by the *HT* was a gradual process to make everyone believe that India had no role in blocking the key trade checkpoints. The article, however, mentions how Nepalese suffered from the blockade and faced a humanitarian crisis like in war times. The blockade was indeed a crime against the Nepali people by the Indian government, and they feared repercussions from their people. That is why the government and the newspaper quickly portrayed Madhesis behind the blockade. This article continues with the same securitization of Nepal's constitution as being non-inclusive, divisive,

protests justified against the constitution by Madhesis, not guaranteeing equal rights to every citizen, and India seeking amendment of the constitution.

In another news article by Parashar, the journalist states that Nepal and China signed a fuel deal—ending the monopoly of India. The news says that Nepalis faced severe hardships because of the blockade and yet again wrote that the Madhesis had imposed the blockade by protesting against the constitution.

Parashar furthermore writes in another article describing the hardships faced by Indians in Nepal during the blockade and pays little attention to what Nepalis were going through during that period (Parashar, 2015). The word 'Madhesi blockade' is used twice in this article, whereas the word 'blockade' is used eight times. The unofficial blockade imposed by India had created a humanitarian crisis in Nepal then.

Parashar also writes regarding the injury of Madheshi leader Rajendra Mahato and states that despite Nepal tabling an amendment bill at the parliament, the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) had rejected it. The party does not exist today.

By the end of January 2016, the blockade by India on Nepal was coming to an end (Parashar, 2016). Around five trucks entered Nepal via Birgunj, but the *HT* had not given up the securitization of Nepal's constitution. The word 'blockade' is used seven times. Strangely, this news article contradicts what the newspaper told the

audience before: the Madhesis groups blocked all the trade points. The journalist writes: “though goods were traded through other border points, which were unaffected by the blockade, it was not enough to cater to Nepal’s demands.” This sentence contradicts what the newspaper was saying in previous articles, opinion pieces, and editorials that the Madhesis blocked all the trade checkpoints. This is one of the reasons why the majority of the Nepali public did not believe that the Madhesis were capable of blocking the trade checkpoints for six straight months. The Nepal government finally passed an amendment accepted by the UDMF. Other Madhesis parties rejected the amendment. The news article mentions that Nepal continued to accuse India of imposing an unofficial economic blockade by supporting the Madhesis. The then Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Oli had told journalists that he would not visit India unless the blockade were lifted. The blockade ended in the following weeks of February.

Parashar also writes that the blockade had stoked anti-India sentiment in Nepal, and young Nepalis had used the hashtag #BackOffIndia on Twitter and Facebook to protest the blockade (Parashar, 2015). India’s securitization of Nepal’s constitution and imposing blockade had backfired. The Nepali audience rejected India’s securitization and as the blockade ended so did India’s securitization of Nepal’s constitution. After the 2015 April earthquake, young Nepalis used the hashtag #GoHomeIndianMedia. It continued trending as the public denounced the "insensitive" coverage by Indian television channels of the aftermath of the devastating April earthquake. Hence, it was not the first time India or Indian media

had securitized Nepal's issues. But, on the other hand, many Indian readers accepted the *HT's* rhetoric on Nepal's constitution and blockade. Hence, the readers can conclude from this chapter that when a media kowtows to state or elite power for economic or political reasons, then it will be easier for the securitizing actor to securitize an issue using media as a tool to convince audiences sustainably and consistently. We can also understand why a media dependent on state power is harmful to democracy and destroys people-to-people relations, and further weakens geopolitical ties between neighboring states.

4.5 Securitizing Nepal's 2015 constitution?

India's mainstream newspaper, the *HT*, helped establish the Indian government's narrative that it was the Madhesis behind the economic blockade and not India, as it opposed Nepal's 2015 constitution. The narrative that the Madhesis were behind the blockade was first used in the September 30th news article by the *HT*.

> Blockade of highways and targeting of custom points in the border areas by Madhesis and Tharus since last week has affected entry of goods into Nepal creating a severe crisis of essential goods, mainly petroleum products. (Parashar, 2015)

The *HT* played an essential role as a mediator for India to securitize Nepal's constitution as discriminatory, non-inclusive, and anti-ethnic, validating their claim that the economic blockade was not imposed by India but by the Madhesis.

In one editorial written by the *HT* Correspondent, the newspaper securitizes Nepal's constitution by framing it as divisive, non-inclusive, and elite-oriented. It also mentions that the constitution divides people from Hill and Terai and focuses on the killing of 40 people in the Terai region. The editorial acted as a double-edged sword as it tried to convince the audience on behalf of the Indian government that since the constitution was against the ethnic communities, the constitution was bound to be opposed and meet failure.

The news article claims:

> Nepal's new Constitution institutionalizes some of the core elements of a new Nepal—particularly republicanism, secularism and federalism. Many Nepali citizens are relieved that the prolonged political transition has ended. But the constitution also is a lost opportunity. This CA was to bring the nation together and overcome social cleavages; instead, it has deepened the rift between the hills and the Terai, and between various communities. (Correspondent H. , 2015)

The newspaper continues to affirm that the constitution threatens the existence of the Terai region in twelve news articles (one opinion article, one interview article, and one editorial). So it is clear in this news that the newspaper has securitized Nepal's constitution by stating that it poses an existential threat to the ethnic communities and that Nepal must rectify its mistake, and emphasizes that India's decision to not welcome the constitution is right because the Indian government sensed that the constitution would only bring instability. The newspaper does not mention the blockade but blames Nepal for stoking anti-India nationalism despite Indian Prime Minister Modi's efforts to strengthen the relationship between the two nations:

> Despite PM Narendra Modi's personal investment in improving ties, Kathmandu's elite has not listened to wise Indian counsel. Instead, it has chosen to stoke chauvinistic ultra-nationalism targeting India. (Correspondent H. , 2015)

The newspaper says that the anti-India hate should have been avoided but does not mention that the Nepali audiences (English readers) have out-rightly rejected India's claims that it had no role in the blockade—"New Delhi should have paid more attention and prevented such an outcome." The last paragraph is the prime example of securitization as the editorial writer openly says that India should

continue to pressure Nepali leaders to amend the constitution while pressuring for an inclusive Nepal. But did India want an inclusive Nepal or was the BJP-lead India displeased with Nepal's secular-leaning constitution? Fast forward to 2022, Nepal's constitution is not amended completely, and the Madhesis and other ethnic groups have resorted to disowning the constitution.

In another editorial by Jayanth Jacob, the newspaper acknowledges the rise of anti-India feelings in Nepal. It reveals the words of Indian Prime Minister Modi to former late Nepal Prime Minister Sushil Koirala. Modi told Koirala: "I request all political stakeholders to draft the Constitution by early next year as committed through consensus, which will reflect aspirations of all communities, including Madhesis, Pahadis, and Maoists." Jacob writes that India was keen on strengthening ties with Nepal but faced anti-India sentiments from the Nepali public for siding with Nepal's ethnic groups. Although the writer does not mention the blockade, he tries to pass the information indirectly—"Nepal has accused India of enforcing a blockade on roads to Nepal through India. The blockade, they say, has stopped the flow of essential commodities to the country and brought untold miseries to the ordinary people. India has denied the charge". The writer does mention that Nepal accused India of imposing the unofficial economic blockade and how the blockade had brought hardships to the common Nepalis. Furthermore, the writer says the newspaper's consistent securitization (India did not impose a blockade on Nepal) and argues why India failed to read Nepal's constitution-writing process. The paper reveals India's securitization of Nepal's constitution in the following sentences:

It seems from many accounts, that the Indian embassy in Kathmandu had been sending messages to the external affairs ministry about the need for a diplomatic intervention to press for an all-inclusive Constitution. But New Delhi was undecided on how to go about it. Finally, foreign secretary Jaishankar was sent to Nepal as a special envoy, 37 hours before the new Constitution was to be promulgated. It was too late in the day. Dashing the foreign secretary across also left many counter-questions in its wake. (Jacob, 2015).

Off-the-record statements made to me while I was working as a freelance journalist in Kathmandu, Nepal, reveal that Nepali politicians had turned off their cellphones when Indian foreign secretary Jaishankar had rushed to Nepal to halt the promulgation of the constitution. The result, of course, was the imposing of the third economic blockade after a few days on Nepal by its neighbor India.

This news article is more nuanced as it reveals how India had amended its constitution 100 times and had no patience with a sovereign neighboring nation's constitution (Jacob, 2015). It also shows how 105 out of 116 Terai representatives voted in favor of the constitution that India termed non-inclusive and discriminatory. The article continues with the newspaper's rhetoric that India continued to deny any role in the blockade despite Nepal saying that it was India who had done it, not the Madhesis or other ethnic groups. Interestingly, the article is more balanced because it states that India had some explaining to do to Nepal if it had no role whatsoever in blocking the key trade checkpoints. The word 'blockade' is used six times in this article (Jacob, 2015).

In another news article written by Prashant Jha, the journalist reveals India's securitization of Nepal's constitution by terming it as posing an existential threat to those across the borders reaching Indian states:

> The Nepali political leadership, India feels, has not exercised the flexibility to bring on board all regions and sections of society. This, Delhi fears, could sow the seeds for future instability, right across the open border. Jaishankar pointedly asked Nepal's leaders how they expected India to welcome such a Constitution. (Jha, 2015)

The Indian government, the newspapers, and the journalist Prashant Jha, in particular, were heavily engaged in creating non-existent threats to securitize Nepal's constitution. The journalist also mentions that "National Security Advisor Ajit Doval spoke to Nepali leaders on September 12 to put off the Constitution vote by a few days, " which is an example of little security things. India went to such an extent that it blocked the UN Security council's discussion on Nepal. It was clear that India was afraid to confront international criticism and did not want the label of interventionist or expansionist (Jha, 2015).

In another article written by Jha, the journalist writes about the killing of an Indian national by Nepal Police during the protests. Interestingly, the journalist states that the protests and violence had proved why India was right in securitizing Nepal's constitution. There is no mention of the word 'blockade,' but one sentence states that the border has been blocked for more than 40 days (Jha, 2015). The newspaper's securitization of Nepal's constitution being anti-Madhesis was deeply explored in this article to justify India's blockade.

Parashar also writes that anti-India sentiment had increased significantly after India imposed the blockade and stated that India had blamed Nepal instead for dragging New Delhi into the blockade scenario (Parashar, 2015). Interestingly, the newspaper failed to acknowledge that most Nepali public accused India of the blockade and did not believe that the Madhesis could block all trade points for five months without the compliance of India. The word 'blockade' is only mentioned once in this article. The journalist continues with the securitization of the Indian government that the Indian drivers were too scared to enter Nepal due to the security threat of the protests. But the Nepali public did not believe this to be true.

4.6 Conclusion

The analysis of the 19 articles published by the *HT* reveals how the newspaper supported the securitization agenda of the BJP-led Indian government on Nepal's constitution and the blockade and how it played the role of a tool for the Indian government and led by the BJP party by portraying the 2015 constitution as posing an existential threat to the Madhesis and bandwagoning its blockade to the Madhesis by stating that they had protested against the constitution and they were behind it. It is clear from the analysis above that not all trade points were blocked, and the Madhesis groups were divided and in no way capable of blocking all trade points for five months without the support of India.

India never accepted that it was behind the blockade during that period and insisted that its support to Madhesis was only to amend Nepal's constitution for security reasons. By terming Nepal's constitution a threat to the Madhesis and the *HT* openly calling for intervention and justifying India's actions proves that India did impose the blockade—a humanitarian crime that no Nepalis can ever forget or forgive, including the Madhesis. The *HT* acted as a tool for the BJP-led Indian government to securitize Nepal's constitution and the inhumane economic blockade by framing these issues via the 19 news articles.

Conclusion

In the introduction, I stated that I would explore the role of media in influencing the audience so that it can normalize the narrative of the securitizing actors and elites. I demonstrated how the media acts as an intermediary in the securitization process and also established how the nexus between the state, power, and the media is a threat to not only democracy but to inter-country and inter-people relations, as illustrated in the Nepal-India relations during the economic blockade imposed by India on Nepal for the third time from September 20th, 2015 to February 6th, 2016. I also brought out the close relationship of the *HT* with the pre-independence political parties like INC and with the BJP post-independence. I argued that the newspaper had, at infrequent times embraced the political ideology of the parties that holds the central power of India.

I also wrote about the propaganda model and how media acts as a negative intermediary to control the masses on behalf of the influential actors and elites. Hence, this final chapter establishes the argument that media should play a healthy and independent role in maintaining beneficial ties between two states and people-to-people relations between two nations. Unfortunately, around the world, most media have succumbed to the poison of powerful actors and elites—resulting in division among the masses and assisting the securitizing actors in securitizing issues how they want, when, and where.

The bigger picture that the readers can derive from this thesis is that media should remain independent so that the relations between two neighboring states, Nepal and India, stay positive and healthy. Over the years, we have seen how the majority of the media in both nations kowtow to state pressures and stoop to securitize issues that ultimately harm the relations of people from both countries—including state relations. Also, the conclusion readers can take from this thesis is that the relationship between media and the state will always remain complex and competitive for power, money, and ideology.

Similarly, the larger question that the readers can take from this thesis is whether media should be independent or not. Can media function independently within a functioning democracy? In developed nations, we can see how media is free from state pressure, albeit the influence continues to exist in such states, too—primarily because democracy is not perfect vis-a-vis media.

Most importantly, the role of media in the securitization process is also imperative as it tells us how media is often used as a tool to further the agenda of elites. And in the modern world, the relationship between the media and democracy is highly significant. As media is a part of civil society and has access to elites, it is high time that the media play a positive and constructive role in protecting democracy in its capacity.

5.1 Should media be independent?

One of the key points that anyone can derive from this interdisciplinary study—which combines securitization theory with the role of media and with the historical and current aspects of media and propaganda—is that this thesis calls for mainstream media to act independently so that they do not act as an intermediary for elites and actors to hoodwink or control the masses.

At a time when the trust in mainstream media has declined substantially, it is even more crucial that the role of the media be scrutinized and evaluated in light of any geopolitical conflict. The *HT*'s role in the geopolitical conflicts is a prime example of how the newspaper only aggravated the situation and created hatred among most Nepalese for its neighbor India. Secondly, by becoming a tool for the BJP, the *HT* also helped weaken India's foreign policy and democracy.

This thesis, therefore, contributes to researching more on securitization theory focusing on the role of media in influencing the audience. This field area has been ignored by both the Copenhagen School and the other theorists of securitization theory.

With changing times in an inter-connected world, it is high time that the theories surrounding securitization and media be updated to understand better why media is so crucial for both public and elite actors. I briefly discussed why the nexus

between the media and state is dangerous in Chapter Three. Using a historical perspective, I outlined how the nexus between the *HT* and the Indian state and parties had created a dangerous precedent for democracy and India's neighbors. In Chapter Four, I used textual analysis to understand the 19 news articles and editorials published by the *HT* during the economic blockade. This thesis, therefore, brought out how the newspaper avoided the term Indian blockade and instead used other words consistently, proving that it had embraced the official stand of the BJP on its blockade against Nepal. The newspaper also played a crucial role in establishing BJP's propaganda that it was the Madhesis behind the blockade, not them.

Hence, this thesis contributes to a better understanding between Nepal and India so that the economic blockade imposed by India is never forgotten and will be a lesson for both nations in the coming days. Although India was a more powerful nation and had access to the *HT,* India was forced to end the blockade, despite securitizing Nepal's constitution, fearing the relationship with Nepal would further worsen. This is not only a lesson for both countries but it is also a precursor to the fact that an influential mainstream media must remain independent in their coverage of any geopolitical issues and not become a tool for the state to establish their propaganda against a smaller neighboring nation as it will only destroy inter-state and people-to-people relations.

What is done is done, but history should never be forgotten, and any negative event should not be repeated. As the saying goes that if you do not learn from history, then you are bound to repeat it.

5.2 Lessons from the blockade and constitution

As I worked as a freelance journalist for five years and also got the chance to work in mainstream media in Nepal, I got the chance to understand the geopolitical dynamic between Nepal and India closely, and also I was able to understand how the media ecosystem worked in Nepal and India. I had first-hand experience of the blockade as I saw people struggling to get hold of daily essentials like petroleum, medicine, baby foods, and gas cylinders for cooking, et cetera.

This thesis did not include several other newspapers that covered the economic blockade and the 2015 constitution. Also, researchers in the future could focus on how Nepal's newspapers securitized India's economic blockade. Also, several questions about the independence of media have been left out in this thesis, and there is a scope in this area for the future. I also firmly believe that future researchers, mainly from Nepal, can take up questions as to why a democratic nation might try to influence media as a tool to influence its smaller neighbors. I hope in the distant future young researchers from Nepal and elsewhere will try to dissect the role of the media in the securitization process.

The experience made me critical of India's BJP party despite studying for my bachelor's degree in Hyderabad, Telengana. My thesis, therefore, will be a reminder for the future of what has happened in the past. Perhaps securitizing actors and media will acknowledge that using propaganda to securitize an issue can succeed and fail despite establishing the securitizing move. Audiences worldwide, no matter where, what time, and under whatsoever circumstances, will always remain critical if they feel foreign powers threaten their existence.

19 Hindustan Times Articles

Timeline chronology

September

Jha, P. (2015, 09 20). How India was both right and wrong on Nepal. Retrieved 09 19, 2021, from Hindustan Times: https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/how-india-was-both-right-and-wrong-on-nepal/story-rnWkh9DU7dk8kSIHE1KceJ.html
(blockade not mentioned) (op-ed)

Correspondent, H. (2015, 09 22). Nepal's constitution was to unite people but has deepened rift. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/editorials/nepal-s-constitution-was-to-unite-people-but-has-deepened-rift/story-JwTS6Imxv4jK6c5kiguehK.html
(blockade not mentioned) (editorial)

Parashar, U. (2015, September 23). #BackOffIndia! Nepal protesters slam 'interference' over statute. Retrieved from The Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/backoffindia-nepal-protesters-slam-interference-over-statute/story-hIFyfqraPRRq3KYnGkkJLP.html
(blockade not mentioned) (news article)

Parashar, U. (2015, 09 30). 'Anti-India sentiments being whipped up by some sections in Nepal'
https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/anti-india-sentiments-being-whipped-up-by-some-sections-in-nepal/story-XduQaRNuTDDZGZAB8IZw9J.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned) (news article)

October

Correspondent, H. (2015, 10 01). False allegations of blocking trade at Nepal border, says India. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/false-allegations-of-blocking-trade-at-nepal-border-says-india/story-5g4Vsa23LCR3zDBZ711gcK.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned) (word blocking used) (news article)

India, N. g. (2015, 10 04). HT Correspondent. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times: https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/nepal-gets-respite-as-cargo-trucks-enter-from-india/story-R68b8Bv9IDwUVnHMHOtwlN.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned) (news article)

Parashar, U. (2015, 10 29). Ending Indian monopoly, Nepal signs deal with China to import fuel. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/fuel-starved-nepal-turns-to-china-after-india-restricts-supply/story-Nlpx8zyEuwlOVBBXxczSKP.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned) (news article)

November

Jha, P. (2015, 11 02). Indian killed in Nepal police firing amid protests near border. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times :

https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/indian-killed-in-nepal-police-firing-amid-protests-near-border/story-UIjul32KWwbcpB911Bb1OM.html
(blockade not mentioned) (news article)

Parashar, U. (2015, 11 30). 13 SSB personnel released after being detained by Nepal Police. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/13-ssb-troops-released-after-being-detained-by-nepalese-police/story-B3cWwXZolXhn5GpKWzdZ1H.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned) (news article)

December

Parashar, U. (2015, 12 14). Dabur containers bound for India confiscated by Nepal authorities. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/dabur-containers-bound-for-india-confiscated-by-nepal-authorities/story-3eSmALfYCJRbkpRwTgRw4M.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned) (news article)

Parashar, U. (2015, 12 20). At crossroads: Nepal strife worsens by black market, difficult winter. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/at-crossroads-nepal-strife-worsens-by-black-market-difficult-winter/story-Mv346iyOLnRvoTMh44UptN.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned) (news article)

Jacob, J. (2015, December 20). Sincere engagement with Nepal will help curb anti-India sentiment. Retrieved from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/sincere-engagement-with-nepal-will-help-curb-anti-india-sentiment/story-iko436OGX1M0A1PHcpiceJ.html
(blockade by Madhesi not mentioned) (news article)

Parashar, U. (2015, 12 27). Madhesi leader Rajendra Mahato injured in clashes with Nepal police. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/madhesi-leader-rajendra-mahato-injured-in-clashes-with-nepal-police/story-NLjp6osC1a3WMNJJ45uc1H.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned—but the word 'blocking' used) (news article)

Parashar, U. (2015, 12 30). Indians in Nepal hit hard by Madhesi blockade at key trade points. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times :

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/indians-in-nepal-hit-hard-by-madhesi-blockade-at-key-trade-points/story-cT50Ydgu6fMGqZV47qG46J.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned) (news article)

January

Correspondent, H. (2016, 01 26). India gifts Nepal 40 ambulances, 8 buses on Republic Day. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/india-gifts-nepal-40-ambulances-8-buses-on-republic-day/story-dQuZu62XjPRnoWUgQP385I.html
[blockade word mentioned but not Madhesi blockade] (news article)

Jha, P. (2016, 01 26). 'Hrithik Roshan riots' turned me from Nepali to Madhesi, says CK Raut. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/hrithik-roshan-riots-turned-me-from-nepali-to-madhesi-says-madhes-activist-ck-raut/story-RfRrxOu0zKyPotJRvfb6qL.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned — but the word 'blockading' used) (interview article)

Parashar, U. (2016, 01 29). Trucks enter Nepal through Birganj for first time in 5 months. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/trucks-enter-nepal-through-birganj-for-first-time-in-5-months/story-T7yvLaaVTcgKqaHN7CZAWO.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned—but the word 'blocked' used) (news article)

February

Jha, P. (2016, 02 06). End of the Madhesi blockade: What it means for Nepal. Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/end-of-the-madhesi-blockade-what-it-means-for-nepal/story-JixO1gsdWLprj8Lc6G0hQL.html
(blockade by Madhesi mentioned) (op-ed)

12. Jha, P. (2016, 02 09). Why Sushil Koirala leaves a contested legacy in Nepal. Retrieved 09 19, 2021, from Hindustan Times:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/why-sushil-koirala-leaves-a-contested-legacy-in-nepal/story-vCtuo5VgrPapSCOcuIq3YM.html
(blockade by Madhesi not mentioned) (news article)
(blockade not mentioned)

Bibliography

Nepal (1946-present). (n.d.). Retrieved from University of Central Arkansas: https://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/asiapacific-region/nepal-1923-present/

Abrams, A. (2019, April 18). "Here's What We Know So Far About Russia's 2016 Meddling". Retrieved from *Time* : Here's What We Know So Far About Russia's 2016 Meddling

Anderson, B. R. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso.

Anderson, B. R. (1983). Regarding the role of the media in building "national communities in anonymity". In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso.

Ani. (2015, October 04). "India rejects Nepal's contention of economic blockade in UN". Retrieved 11 03, 2011, from *Times of India*: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/videos/news/india-rejects-nepals-contention-of-economic-blockade-in-un/videoshow/49217396.cms

Anto T Joseph & NL Team. (2020, 05 30). "Who owns your media? A look at Hindustan Times" Retrieved 09 17, 2021, from *Newslaundry*: https://www.newslaundry.com/2020/05/30/who-owns-your-media-a-look-at-hindustan-times

Anupam, B. (2020, June 18). "5 Factors Driving Anti-India Sentiment in Nepal". Retrieved from The Diplomat: https://thediplomat.com/2020/06/5-factors-driving-anti-india-sentiment-in-nepal/

(2021). *Autocratization Turns Viral.* V-Dem Institute.

Balzacq, T. (2010). A theory of securitization. In T. Balzacq, *Front cover image for Securitization theory : how security problems emerge and dissolve.* Routledge.

Balzacq, T. (2005). The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context. *European Journal of International Relations*, 171-201.

Baral, B. (2016, March 2). “India's 'Blockade' Has Opened the Door for China in Nepal”. Retrieved 17 08, 2022, from *The Wire*: https://thewire.in/diplomacy/indias-blockade-has-opened-the-door-for-china-in-nepal

Basnet, P. B., & Naqvi, M. (2015, October 1). "Anti-India anger in Nepal as essential supplies dry up". Retrieved from *Associated Press*: https://apnews.com/article/8b19c0bf62ef402281e774b1edf4f21b

Berg-Schlosser, D. (2000). Long Waves and Conjunctures of Democratization. In P. B.
Christian Haerpfer, *Democratization.*

Bhattacherje, K. (2019, January 24). “India welcomes amendments in Nepal constitution. Retrieved from *The Hindu*: https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/India-welcomes-amendments-in-Nepal-Constitution/article14017647.ece

Bhattarai, K. D. (2021, May 9). "Why Was Nepal PM Oli so Desperate to Woo Hindus?" Retrieved from *The Wire India*: https://thewire.in/south-asia/nepal-pm-oli-hindu-voters-vote-of-confidence

Bhattarai, T.N. (2015, October 5). “Remembering the 1989 blockade”. Retrieved from *The Nepali Times*: https://archive.nepalitimes.com/article/from-nepali-press/Remembering-the-1989-blockade,2651

Biswas, S. (2021, March 16). "'Electoral autocracy': The downgrading of India's democracy". Retrieved from *BBC News*: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56393944

Brinks, D., & Coppedge, M. (2006). Diffusion Is No Illusion: Neighbor Emulation in the. *Comparative Political Studies*, 463-489.

Budhathoki, A. (2020, December 2). "Nepal nationwide protests to call for restoration of monarchy". Retrieved from *Nikkei Asia*: https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Nepal-nationwide-protests-to-call-for-restoration-of-monarchy

Budhathoki, A. (2021, June 14). "Nepal’s Vaccine Disaster Has Left Millions Unprotected". Retrieved from *Foreign Policy*: https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/06/14/nepal-vaccines-coronavirus-disaster/

Bureau, T. (2015, October 25). “I will never forgive what India has done to me”. Retrieved 08 24, 2022, from *The Telegraph*: https://www.telegraphindia.com/7-days/39-i-will-never-forgive-what-india-has-done-to-me-39/cid/1313727

Buzan, B., Waever, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). Security: A New Framework for Analysis. In *Security: A New Framework for Analysis.* Lynne Rienner.

Comparing China and India by Economy. (2021, 05 16). Retrieved from Statistic Times: https://statisticstimes.com/economy/china-vs-india-economy.php

Correspondent, H. (2015, 10 01). "False allegations of blocking trade at Nepal border, says India". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/false-allegations-of-blocking-trade-at-nepal-border-says-india/story-5g4Vsa23LCR3zDBZ711gcK.html

Correspondent, H. (2015, 10 04). "Nepal gets respite as cargo trucks enter from India". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/nepal-gets-respite-as-cargo-trucks-enter-from-india/story-R68b8Bv9IDwUVnHMHOtwlN.html

Correspondent, H. (2015, 09 22). "Nepal's constitution was to unite people but has deepened rift". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/editorials/nepal-s-constitution-was-to-unite-people-but-has-deepened-rift/story-JwTS6Imxv4jK6c5kiguehK.html

Economist, T. (2020). *Democracy Index 2020*. (2020). Retrieved from *The Economist Intelligence Unit*: https://www.dnevnik.bg/file/4170840.pdf

Dev, A. (2018, December 01). "Same Old News: History repeating at Shobhana Bhartia’s Hindustan Times"*.* Retrieved 09 18, 2021, from *The Caravan*: https://caravanmagazine.in/media/history-repeating-shobhana-bhartias-hindustan-times

Dev, S. (2022, February 3). "CK Raut’s search for his space invites new conflicts in southern Nepal". Retrieved from *Online Khabar English*: https://english.onlinekhabar.com/ck-raut-search-space-madhes.html

Dixit, K. (2015, November 17). “India and Nepal Have No Choice but to End Their Border Dispute and Move On”. Retrieved from *Time*: https://time.com/4115801/nepal-india-border-blockade-madhesh/

Editorial. (2011, January 6). "India gave army training to the Maoists". Retrieved from Nepali Times: https://archive.nepalitimes.com/news.php?id=17792

Editorial. (2021, March 22). "Guilty until proven innocent?" Retrieved from The Kathmandu Post: https://kathmandupost.com/editorial/2021/03/22/guilty-until-proven-innocent

Eroukhmanoff, C. (2018, 01 14). *Securitisation Theory: An Introduction*. Retrieved from E-International Relations: https://www.e-ir.info/2018/01/14/securitisation-theory-an-introduction/

Fisk, R. (2011, October 23). "Robert Fisk: Why I had to leave The Times". Retrieved from *The Independnet*:

https://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/press/robert-fisk-why-i-had-to-leave-the-times-2311569.html

Franklin, Cynthia G; Shankar, S.; Sainath, P. (2014). Against Stenography for the powerful: An interview with P. Sainath. *Biography*.

Ghosh, B. (2015, December 27). "Anger against India over blockade snowballs in Nepal". Retrieved 11 03, 2021, from *The Hindu*: https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/anger-against-india-over-blockade-snowballs-in-nepal/article8032072.ece

Giri, A. (2021, July 28). "US interest, Nepal foreign policy under Beijing’s watch with changes in Kathmandu". Retrieved from *The Kathmandu Post*: https://kathmandupost.com/national/2021/07/28/us-interest-nepal-foreign-policy-under-beijing-s-watch-with-changes-in-kathmandu

Guha, R. (2007). *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy.* New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Güven, F. (2015). Decolonizing democracy: Intersections of philosophy and postcolonial theory. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 123-126.

Haidar, S. (2015, September 20). "Kathmandu ignores Delhi's concerns on Constitution". Retrieved from *The Hindu*: https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/Nepal-prepares-to-unveil-its-new-Constitution-Kathmandu-ignores-Delhi%E2%80%99s-concerns-on-

Constitution/article60327392.ece

Hansen, L. (2000). The Little Mermaid's Silent Security Dilemma and the Absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 285-306.

Hansen, L. (2011). Theorizing the image for Security Studies: Visual Securitization

and the Muhammad Cartoon Crisis. *European Journal of Internatinal Relations*, 51-74.

Hansen, L. (2020). Are 'core' feminist critiques of securitization theory racist? A reply to Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit. *Security Dialogue*, 51(4), 378–385.

Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (2002). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Huysmans, J. (2011). What's in an act? On security speech. *Security Dialogue*, 42(4-5) 371–.

Ians. (2015, December 07). "India denies blockade of India-Nepal border". Retrieved 03, 2021, from *Business Standard*: https://www.businessstandard.com/article/news-ians/india-denies-blockade-of-india-nepal-border-115120701134_1.html

Ians. (2015, October 20). "Nepalese thorn will only get worse for India (Comment: Special to IANS)". Retrieved from Business Standard: https://www.businessstandard.com/article/news-ians/nepalese-thorn-will-only-get-worse-for-india-comment-special-to-ians-115102000203_1.html

Israel, M. (1994). *Communications and Power: Propaganda and the Press in the Indian Nationalist Struggle, 1920-1947.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jacob, J. (2015, December 20). "Sincere engagement with Nepal will help curb anti-India sentiment". Retrieved from *Hindustan Times:* https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/sincere-engagement-with-nepal-will-help-curb-anti-india-sentiment/story-iko436OGX1M0A1PHcpiceJ.html

Jacob, J. (2015, 12 20). "Sincere engagement with Nepal will help curb anti-India sentiment". Retrieved 09 19, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*:

https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/sincere-engagement-with-nepal-will-help-curb-anti-india-sentiment/story-iko436OGX1M0A1PHcpiceJ.html

Jha, P. (2015, 09 20). "How India was both right and wrong on Nepal". Retrieved 09 19, 2021, from *Hindustan Times:* https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/how-india-was-both-right-and-wrong-on-nepal/story-rnWkh9DU7dk8kSIHE1KceJ.html

Jha, P. (2015, 11 02). "Indian killed in Nepal police firing amid protests near border". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/indian-killed-in-nepal-police-firing-amid-protests-near-border/story-UIjul32KWwbcpB911Bb1OM.html

Jha, P. (2016, 01 26). "'Hrithik Roshan riots' turned me from Nepali to Madhesi, says CK Raut". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/hrithik-roshan-riots-turned-me-from-nepali-to-madhesi-says-madhes-activist-ck-raut/story-RfRrxOu0zKyPotJRvfb6qL.html

Jha, P. (2016, 02 06). "End of the Madhesi blockade: What it means for Nepal". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/end-of-the-madhesi-blockade-what-it-means-for-nepal/story-JixO1gsdWLprj8Lc6G0hQL.html

Jha, P. (2016, 02 09). "Why Sushil Koirala leaves a contested legacy in Nepal". Retrieved 09 19, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/why-sushil-koirala-leaves-a-contested-legacy-in-nepal/story-vCtuo5VgrPapSCOcuIq3YM.html

Jiadong, Z. (2021, July 19). "China-Nepal ties solid despite pro-India leader". Retrieved from *Global Times*: https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202107/1229067.shtml

Kaphle, A. (2019, September 24). "A blueprint for consolidating power: China exports Xi Jinping Thought to Nepal". Retrieved from *The Kathmandu Post*: https://kathmandupost.com/national/2019/09/24/a-blueprint-for-consolidating-power-china-exports-xi-jinping-thought-to-nepal

Kendall-Taylor, A., Lindstaedt, N., & Frantz, r. (2019). International Drivers of Democracy. In A. Kendall-Taylor, N. Lindstaedt, & E. Frantz, *Democracies and Authoritarian Regimes.* Oxford University Press.

Khadka, N. (1993). Democracy and Development in Nepal: Prospects and Challenges. *Pacific Affairs*, 44-71.

Khatiwada, N. (2021, August 3). "Is it time to abolish federalism in Nepal?" Retrieved from *Nepal Live Today*: https://www.nepallivetoday.com/2021/08/03/is-it-time-to-abolish-federalism-in-nepal/

Lal, C. (2020, September 30). "Jumping on the Hindutva bandwagon". Retrieved from *The Kathmandu Post:* https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2020/09/29/jumping-on-the-hindutva-bandwagon

Leidig, E. (2020, January 21). "The Far-Right Is Going Global". Retrieved from *Foreign Policy*: https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/21/india-kashmir-modi-eu-hindu-nationalists-rss-the-far-right-is-going-global/

Limbu, R. (2020, October). *From Monarchy to the Republic: European Union Democracy.* Retrieved from Instituto Universitario De Lisboa: https://repositorio.iscte-iul.pt/bitstream/10071/21065/1/master_robot_limbu.pdf

Liptak, K. (2021, August 24). "Bush, Obama, Trump, Biden: How four presidents created today's Afghanistan mess". Retrieved from *CNN*:

https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/23/politics/how-four-presidents-created-afghanistan-mess/index.html

Metcalf, B., & Metcalf, T. R. (2012). *A concise history of modern India.* New York: Cambridge University Press,.

Munster, R. v. (2012, June 26). *Securitization*. Retrieved from Oxford Bibliograhies: https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0091.xml

Narayan, R. (2015, December 25). "Spectacular incompetence in Nepal policy". Retrieved 11 03, 2021, from *The Statesman:*

https://www.thestatesman.com/opinion/spectacular-incompetence-in-nepal-policy-112693.html

Nepal profile - Timeline. (2018, February 19). Retrieved from *BBC News:* https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12499391

Nepal: experts affirm the need for reform of Transitional Justice legislation to ensure the right to an effective remedy to all victims and survivors, particularly women. (2021, May 14). Retrieved from International Commission of Jurists : https://www.icj.org/nepal-experts-affirm-the-need-for-reform-of-transitional-justice-legislation-to-ensure-the-right-to-an-effective-remedy-to-all-victims-and-survivors-particularly-women/

Nepal: Freedom in the World 2021. (2021). Retrieved from Freedom House: https://freedomhouse.org/country/nepal/freedom-world/2021

Nepal-China Relations. (2019, February). Retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal: https://mofa.gov.np/nepal-china-relations/

Ninan, T. N. (2021, 02 26). "Poverty alleviation: Why India is not able do to what China has pulled off". Retrieved from *Business Standard*: https://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/poverty-alleviation-why-india-is-not-able-do-to-what-china-has-pulled-off-121022601172_1.html

Ojha, H. (2015, November 27). "The India-Nepal Crisis". Retrieved from *The Diplomat*: https://thediplomat.com/2015/11/the-india-nepal-crisis/

Olsen, H. (2021, March 18). "Europe is proof that right-wing populism is here to stay". Retrieved from *The Washington Post*: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/03/18/europe-is-proof-that-right-wing-populism-is-here-stay/

Pandey, G. (2001). *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Parashar, U. (2015, September 23). "#BackOffIndia! Nepal protesters slam 'interference' over statute". Retrieved from *Hindustan Times:*

https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/backoffindia-nepal-protesters-slam-interference-over-statute/story-hIFyfqraPRRq3KYnGkkJLP.html

Parashar, U. (2015, September 30). *"Anti-India sentiments being whipped up by some sections in Nepal"*. Retrieved from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/anti-india-sentiments-being-whipped-up-by-some-sections-in-nepal/story-XduQaRNuTDDZGZAB8IZw9J.html

Parashar, U. (2015, 11 30). "13 SSB personnel released after being detained by Nepal Police". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/13-ssb-troops-released-after-being-detained-by-nepalese-police/story-B3cWwXZolXhn5GpKWzdZ1H.html

Parashar, U. (2015, 12 20). "At crossroads: Nepal strife worsens by black market, difficult winter". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/at-crossroads-nepal-strife-worsens-by-black-market-difficult-winter/story-Mv346iyOLnRvoTMh44UptN.html

Parashar, U. (2015, 12 14). "Dabur containers bound for India confiscated by Nepal authorities". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/dabur-containers-bound-for-india-confiscated-by-nepal-authorities/story-3eSmALfYCJRbkpRwTgRw4M.html

Parashar, U. (2015, 10 29). "Ending Indian monopoly, Nepal signs deal with China to import fuel". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/fuel-starved-nepal-turns-to-china-after-india-restricts-supply/story-Nlpx8zyEuwlOVBBXxczSKP.html

Parashar, U. (2015, 12 30). "Indians in Nepal hit hard by Madhesi blockade at key trade points". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times:* https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/indians-in-nepal-hit-hard-by-madhesi-blockade-at-key-trade-points/story-cT50Ydgu6fMGqZV47qG46J.html

Parashar, U. (2015, 12 27). "Madhesi leader Rajendra Mahato injured in clashes with

Nepal police". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/madhesi-leader-rajendra-mahato-injured-in-clashes-with-nepal-police/story-NLjp6osC1a3WMNJJ45uc1H.html

Parashar, U. (2016, 01 29). "Trucks enter Nepal through Birganj for first time in 5 months". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/trucks-enter-nepal-through-birganj-for-first-time-in-5-months/story-T7yvLaaVTcgKqaHN7CZAWO.html

Party, B. J. (2017, 11 30). "PM Shri Narendra Modi's inaugural address at Hindustan Times Leadership Summit 2017". Retrieved 09 18, 2021, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3bR_ITGSTA

Pattison, P. (2015, November 18). "Nepal border blockade 'threatens the future of the country itself', says UN". Retrieved from *The Guardian*: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/nov/18/nepal-border-blockade-india-threatens-future-un-unicef

Paudyal, M. (2016, December 10). "Why federalism is failing". Retrieved from Republica: https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/why-federalism-is-failing/

Pradhan, T. R. (2021, June 23). "In a big blow to Oli, Supreme Court annuls appointments of 20 ministers". Retrieved from The Kathmandu Post: https://kathmandupost.com/politics/2021/06/23/in-a-big-blow-to-oli-supreme-court-annuls-appointments-of-20-ministers

Pti. (2015, November 7). "Nepal deputy PM accuses India of trying to annex Terai". Retrieved from *The Economic Times*: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/nepal-deputy-pm-accuses-india-of-trying-to-annex-terai/articleshow/49703629.cms
Pti. (2021, July 31). "Sher Bahadur Deuba becomes Nepal PM for 5th time". Retrieved from *The Times of India*: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/sher-bahadur-deuba-becomes-nepal-pm-for-5th-time/articleshow/84372249.cms

OnlineKhabar. (2016). "Rabindra Mishra: Let's abolish federalism, hold a referendum on secularism". (2021, July 26). Retrieved from *OnlineKhabar* English: https://english.onlinekhabar.com/rabindra-mishra-lets-abolish-federalism-hold-a-referendum-on-secularism.html

Rai, Bhrikuti. (2016, April 27). "Harka Gurung's report did not portray all Madhesis as Indians". Retrieved 17 08, 2022, from *South Asia Check*: http://southasiacheck.org/fact-check/not-all-madhesis-are-indians/

Republica. (2019, July 29). "Blockade on Nepal was 'foolish thing': BJP leader". Retrieved 11 03, 2021, from *Republica*: https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/blockade-on-nepal-was-foolish-thing-bjp-leader/

Republica. (2016, November 7). "Proposed amendment lets naturalized head key state posts". Retrieved 08 24, 2022, from *Republica*: https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/proposed-amendment-lets-naturalised-head-constitutional-bodies/

Roy, S. (2015, Septemeber 24). "Make seven changes to your Constitution: India tells Nepal". Retrieved 11 03, 2021, from *The Indian Express*: https://indianexpress.com/article/world/neighbours/make-seven-changes-to-your-constitution-address-madhesi-concerns-india-to-nepal/

Scott Gates; Kaushik Roy. (2014). "In Unconventional Warfare in South Asia: Shadow Warriors and Counterinsurgency". Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company.

Seth, S. (2022, April 14). *The World's Top Media Companies*. Retrieved from Investopedia: https://www.investopedia.com/stock-analysis/021815/worlds-top-ten-media-companies-dis-cmcsa-fox.aspx

Shah, F. (2016, Feruary 25). "Nepal's Balancing Act". Retrieved from *Foreign Affairs*: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2016-02-25/nepals-balancing-act

Shah, F. (2021, July 18). "A year after India-China border clash, Ladakh hopes

tourists will return". Retrieved from *South China Morning Post*: https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3141465/year-after-india-china-border-clash-ladakh-hopes-tourists-will

Siddiqui, F. A. (2015, 10 18). "What's left behind: Life six months after Nepal's earthquake". Retrieved 09 22, 2021, from *Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/world/what-s-left-behind-life-six-months-after-nepal-s-earthquake/story-7nuS2qv5Tsyw5ZQSadR2cO.html

Spokesperson, O. O. (2021, July 27). *Secretary Blinken's Call with Nepali Prime Minister Deuba*. Retrieved from U.S. Department of State: https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-call-with-nepali-prime-minister-deuba/

Subedi, R. R. (2021, January 3). "Why China Is Upset At NCP Split". Retrieved from *The Rising Nepal*: https://risingnepaldaily.com/opinion/why-china-is-upset-at-ncp-split

Suhrwardy, Z. (1996). "*India's Relations with Nepal". Pakistan Horizon*, 35-54.

Srivastava, R. (2015, July 24). "Nepal must declare itself a Hindu rashtra: Adityanath". Retreived 08 22, 2022 from *The Times of India*: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/48194975.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst#

Taibbi, M. (2019, March 22). "16 Years Later, How the Press That Sold the Iraq War Got Away With It". Retrieved from *Rolling Stone*: https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/iraq-war-media-fail-matt-taibbi-812230/

Thapa, H. B. (2019, 04 16). "Vault of history XVI: Good riddance". Retrieved from *The Annapurna Express*: https://theannapurnaexpress.com/news/vault-of-history-xvi-good-riddance-1642

Tnn. (2015, December 8). "India has not imposed any blockade on Nepal: Sushma Swaraj". Retrieved from *The Times of India*: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-has-not-imposed-any-blockade-on-nepal-sushma-swaraj/articleshow/50084655.cms

Upadhyay, A. (2020, May 29). "Decoding the India-Nepal dispute | Opinion". Retrieved from *The Hindustan Times*: https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/decoding-the-india-nepal-dispute/story-PiPkxTMySMB5NI7hAS6FcP.html

Venkatesh, A. (2019, October). *Right-Wing Politics in India.* Retrieved from Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective: https://origins.osu.edu/article/right-wing-politics-india-Modi-Kashmir-election

Vultee, F. (2010). Securitization as a media. In T. Balzacq, *Securitization theory : how security problems emerge and dissolve* (pp. 77-93). New York: Routledge.

Wæver, O. &. (2020). Racism and responsibility – The critical limits of deepfake methodology in security studies: A reply to Howell and Richter-Montpetit. *Security Dialogue*, 389.

Waever, O. (1995). Securitization and Desecuritization. In R. d. Lipschutz, *On Security* (pp. 46-86). New York: Columbia University Press.

Waever, O. (2014, October 3). *Securitisation theory - International Relations*. Retrieved October 29, 2021, from

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQ07tWOzE_c

Watson, S. D. (2012). 'Framing' the Copenhagen School: Integrating the Literature on Threat Construction. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies.*, 279-301.

Weintraub, R. M. (1989, April 13). "INDIA SHOWS ITS MUSCLE TO NEPAL". Retrieved from *The Washington Post*: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1989/04/13/india-shows-its-muscle-to-nepal/636ae049-d573-4d3f-912a-dda8cf072966/

Weldes, J. (1996). Constructing of National Interests. *European Journal of International Relations*, 275-318.

Wilkinson, C. (2007). The Copenhagen School on tour in Kyrgyzstan: Is securitization theory unseable outside Europe? *Security Dialogue*, 5-25.

Williams, M. C. (2003). Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics . *International Studies Quarterly*, 511-531.

Williams, M. C. (2010). The continuing evolution of securitization theory . In T. Balzacq, *Securitization theory : how security problems emerge and dissolve* (pp. 212-222). New York: Routledge.

Xi Jinping Arrives in Kathmandu for a State Visit to Nepal. (2019, October 13). Retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/yzs_663350/xwlb_663352/t1707862.shtml

CURRICULUM VITAE or CV

Candidate's full name: Arun Budhathoki

Universities attended: Osmania University: Bachelor of Arts (Political Science, Public Administration) 2006-2009, The University of Northampton: Masters of Arts (International relations) 2010-2011

Publications: Prisoner of an IPAD (2014)

Conference Presentations: None